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Art on the Docks, Reunion Gallery, Felixstowe September 5th—October 3rd 2009

**‘Ghosts of Progress’ June 2009 89 x 60cms oil on canvas unframed**

This is the view from Trimley Marshes towards the docks on the northern bank of the River Orwell. My initial sketches were done in situ, on a bright May day, with a very typical Suffolk sky contrasting with the vivid fields. The Marshes is a nature reserve but on the horizon are the peculiar prehistoric shapes of the cranes at the docks, revealing the presence of commerce and industry. Despite the growth of the docks in recent times, in the long term, I believe that the natural world will prevail, and in years to come the sky will still be there, dominating the manmade environment, or what is left of it. It is an optimistic vision of the future but my preoccupation with painting skies makes me believe that, in the ‘bigger picture’, we’ll always have the clouds!

**‘Yang Ming: (Freight)Trainspotting’ May 2009 12.5 x 10.5cms oil on canvas unframed**

Researching this project, I came to a stop at a small station in Trimley, at a level crossing. I sat in the car and watched as container after container filled my vision above the barrier of the crossing. I saw China Shipping, Maesk, Yang Ming, over and over, like a reel of film running before my eyes, mesmerising me, filling the landscape with globalised trade made manifest. And yet above it all, there was still the Suffolk sky, bright blue, the clouds free and lively, a total contrast to the metal rigidity of the freight train running inexorably down to the docks. I love the contrast between the elusive and uncontainable sky and the cuboid containers. Living in this part of Suffolk means seeing these names on the roads and railways, filling your windscreen; this is a representation of that, a reminder of the dominance of China as a trading nation and the decline of British manufacturing.

**‘Love on the Docks’ May 2009 12.5 x 10.5cms oil on canvas unframed**

The docks are full of containers, wonderful cuboids of Indian Red, Cobalt blue and Ochre. There are also the traditional ideas of adventure in the docks, with the connection to far-away, exotic parts, the Jack-the-Lad ideas of love in every port, and a certain sexuality about night-time in the docks, an area often known for illicit relationships. I wanted here to suggest the possibility of romance, the moonlight giving a softer atmosphere to the area around the containers.

**‘If We Two, Like Cranes...’ August 2009 30 x 30cms oil on canvas unframed**

The distinctive shapes of the huge cranes at the docks are full of character and suggest animate beings. They seem to be in relationship with each other, and yet constrained by their rigid structure, condemned to be forever in proximity, going about their business, and yet forever unable to connect. They make an interesting metaphor for human relationships today, where each partner is frantically engaged in their own ‘business’ and unable to reach the other or to find a way out of isolation. This painting is full of the energy of frustration swirling around the inanimate structures and the chaos of constant commercial activity (the docks operate day and night) which is nonetheless an activity of isolation.

Kate Ackerley is an intuitive painter, sensitive to the atmosphere of place and the emotions in a natural or built environment, and the contrast between the landscape and sky, and the manmade. She lives, paints and exhibits in Suffolk, most recently with the solo show, ‘Landscapes of the Heart’ in Saxmundham.

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