



**Ed Isaacs
Drawing Places
Wolverhampton Art Gallery
16.12.23 - 24.03.24**



Mud (Detail) 2021 – not on display ↑

Artist's introduction

In the mid-1980s I came to Wolverhampton for an interview with the local council. After it had finished, I was asked to come back a couple of hours later to hear the result. To kill the time, I made my first visit to Wolverhampton Art Gallery. I knew it had a well-known Pop Art collection, but what has stuck in my memory most of all was Richard Wilson's magnificent painting of the Falls of Niagara. Any 18th century painting of an American scene is incredibly rare, let alone one of the quality of Wilson's; I asked myself why it was here in Wolverhampton of all places. I later learnt that Wilson never visited North America and the scene is a fanciful 'mash-up' of the Falls based on written notes sent to him by an army officer.

It would never have occurred to me that nearly four decades later, I would have my own exhibition in the gallery including some 'mash-ups' of my own.

The work in this exhibition represents a cross-section of my output over the past three years. The earlier ones include cows and people often ask me why they are there. The story is that I wanted to produce a drawing of Heath Town, a high-density council estate, just north-east of the city centre, but as the drawing progressed, I felt it needed something else. At the time, I was looking at some artworks by the Belgian surrealist artist and poet Marcel Broodthaers that included images of cows that he had repurposed from some farming magazines. I decided to repurpose them once more by using one of the images in my own artwork. I have been told that the cows might represent Wolverhampton's agricultural past, a statement on the relationship between modern retailing and the land or a menacing presence that contrasts with the banality of their setting. All of these interpretations, plus many more, are equally valid and I want people to read into my art whatever they want to. It is quite likely that these meanings were there deep in my sub-conscious when I was drawing.

I moved on from cows to producing detailed and sometimes large-scale drawings of landscapes and seascapes, sometimes including contrasting images. What fascinates me is the act of drawing in a slow and methodical way. I hope this often slows the viewer down and they look deeply into my artworks and study the marks I have made. The heroic scale of an artwork such as 'In Praise of Limestone' echoes that painting I originally admired during my first visit to the art gallery. Most recently I have been exploring themes of war and violence.

Ed Isaacs RBSA



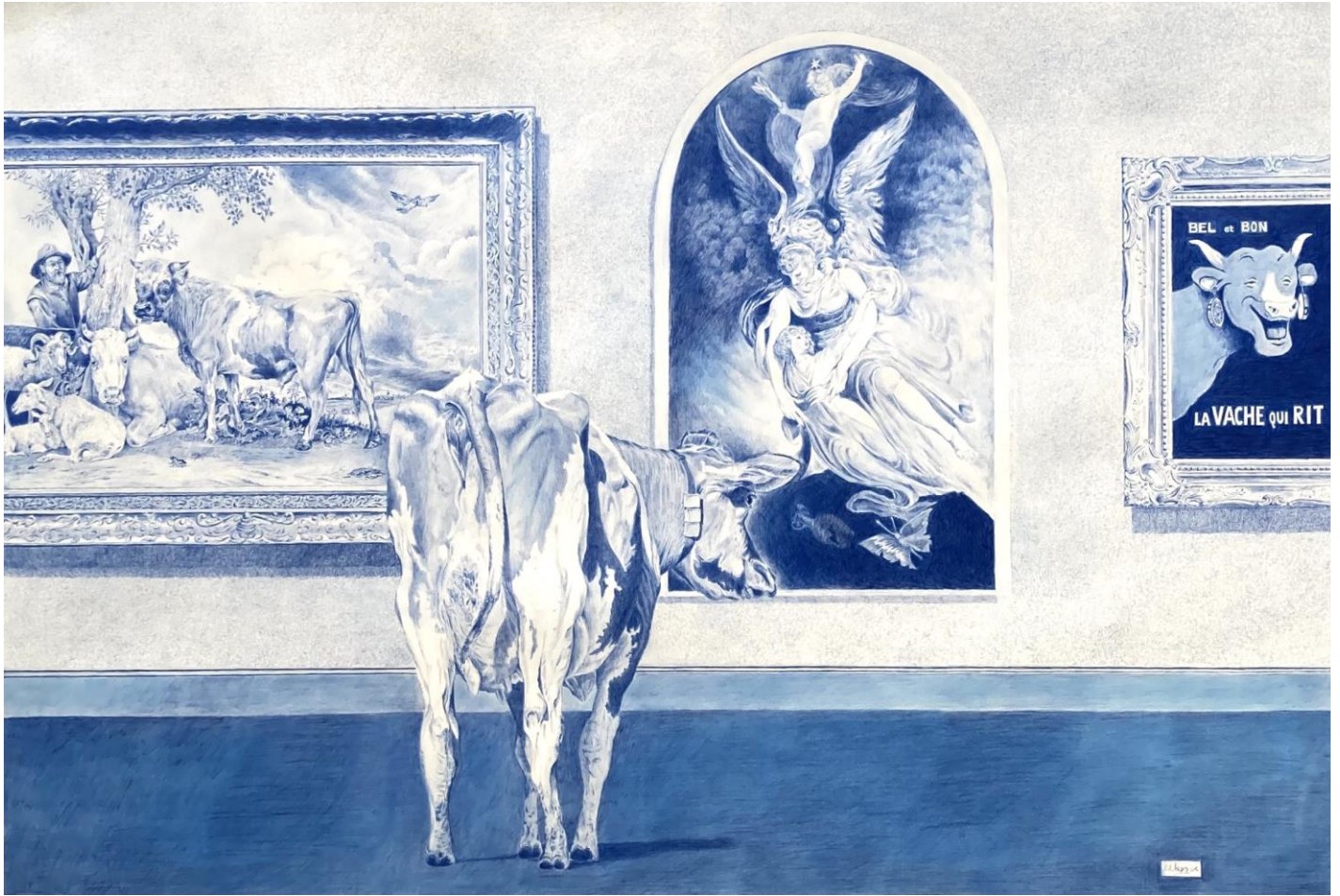
Ring Road Eagle – 2020 ↑
Pencil crayon
110cm x 125cm



Heath Town Cow – 2020 ↑
Pencil crayon
95cm x 110cm



Aldi Cow – 2020 ↑
Pencil crayon
95cm x 120cm



Love, Death and Dairy – 2020 ↑
Pencil crayon
120cm x 160cm

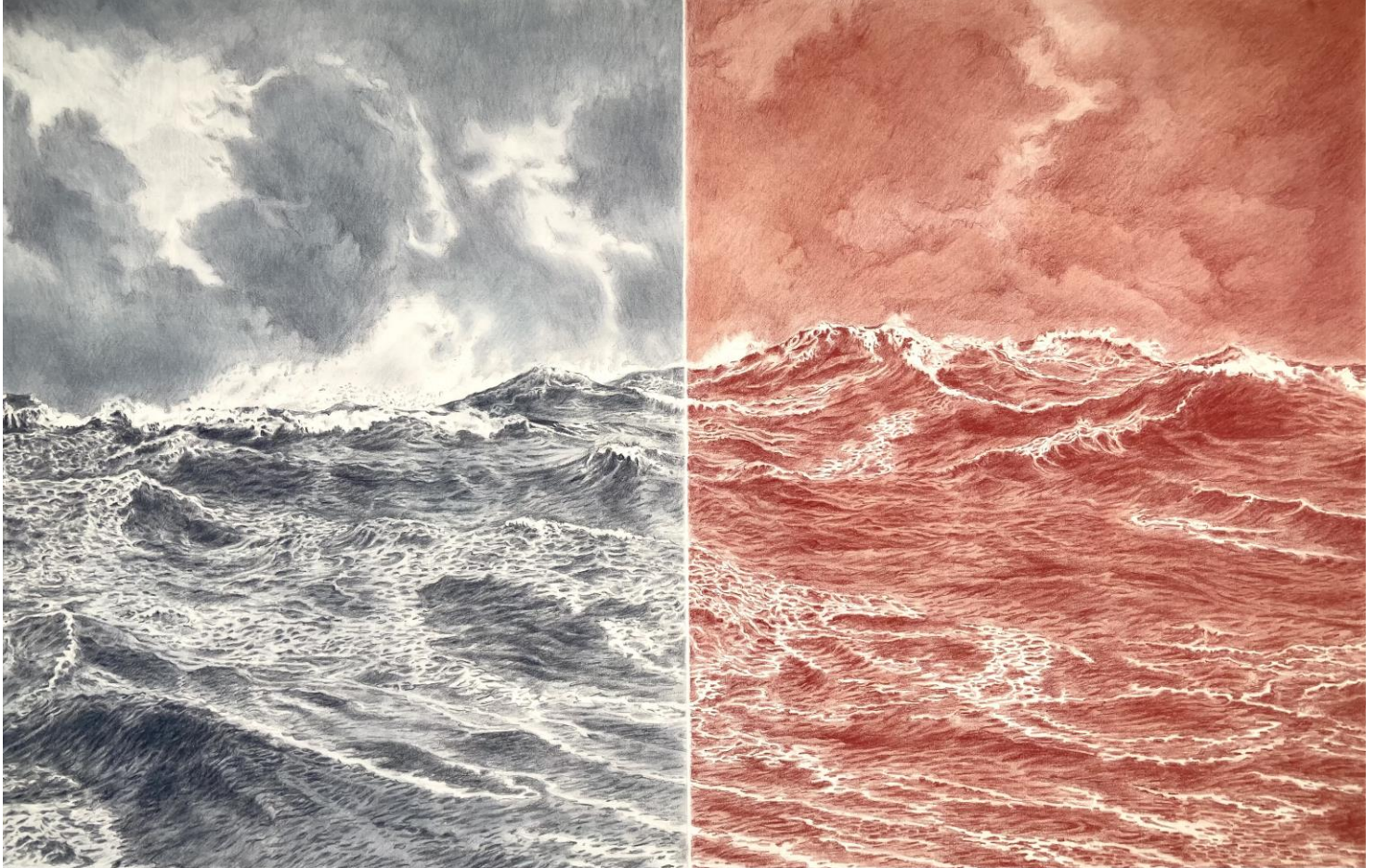
This drawing explores the theme of love and death using a variety of cultural images and allusions. The painting in the centre is Wolverhampton Art Gallery's 'Apotheosis of Penelope Boothby' by the Swiss artist Henri Fuseli. Penelope died as a small child and her distraught parents commissioned a number of memorials to her memory, including this painting. It is flanked on its left by 'The Young Bull' with its tender animal grouping. This is by Paulus Potter, a seventeenth century Dutch artist whose prodigious talent led to great fame, but who died tragically young. The third image on the wall relates to the celebrated cheese. Its creator, Leon Bel, gave it its name after seeing a truck that picked up dead bodies in the First World War mordantly nicknamed 'La Wachkyrie' (Valkyrie). A fondness for puns led Bel to call his cheese 'La Vache qui Rit' (The Laughing Cow). Overlooking the scene is another cow.



Stafford Road Cows – 2020 ↑
Pencil crayon
135cm x 100cm



Scrapyard near Stourton – 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
60cm x 80cm



Ocean 1 – 2021 (Not on display) ↑
Pencil crayon
70cm x 95cm



Though I Sang in my Chains Like the Sea – 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
55cm x 70cm



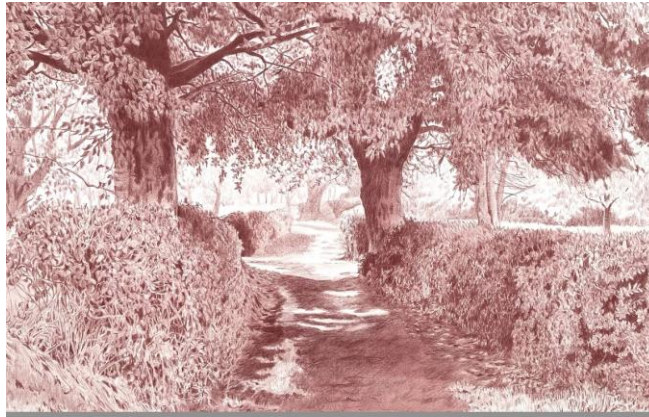
Computers/Sea – 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
55cm x 70cm



Rubbish/Sea – 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
45cm x 65cm



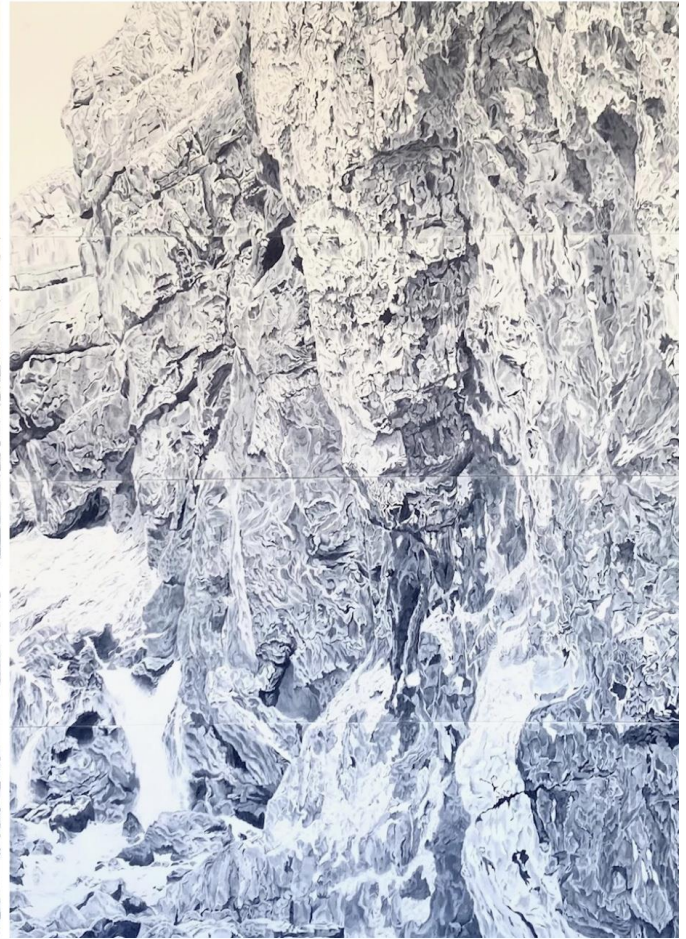
Ocean 2 – 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
140cm x 220cm



Path/Explosion – 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
85cm x 65cm



Riot- 2021 ↑
Pencil crayon
65cm x 90cm



In Praise of Limestone – 2023 ↑
Pencil crayon
160cm x 230cm

In this drawing mark making is explored at a large scale using the rugged limestone inland cliffs of Gordale Scar in Yorkshire as its subject. This is the image that features in James Ward's iconic early nineteenth century painting in Tate Britain and the scale of that work is emulated in this drawing. The crevices and caves in the cliff are rendered in detail and the image resonates with the sea pictures since limestone is created from the accumulated marine sediments deposited on sea floors over eons. The title of this drawing comes from a poem by W H Aden.



Intolerable – 2023 ↑
Pencil crayon
75cm x 150cm



Seagulls – 2023 ↑
Pencil crayon
86cm x 146cm



Ring Road Geese – 2023 ↑

Pencil crayon

86cm x 146cm

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isaacsed91@gmail.com

edisaacs.com