



Dydo and Haire: *Ten thousand currents*

The Walkway, King Street, Maidstone

19 February – 28 August 2009; open Monday – Friday 8.30 am – 5 pm

Private view Friday 20 February 2009 5 – 7 pm; concert 7 pm (RSVP)

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Ten thousand currents is an installation consisting of three massive paintings by Susan Haire and a seven-part musical composition by Stephen Dydo. These works together explore in a contemporary idiom a special connection between music and painting which has been handed down to us from classical Chinese tradition. The private view will be followed by a concert to accompany the exhibition which will include the ancient melodies on which the installation is based.

This collaboration for the magnificent new Walkway Gallery, with its imposing length of wall of 30 meters, presents an appealing challenge with some unique opportunities. Dydo and Haire have not only made large-scale paintings and a soundscape the length of the gallery, but have developed a progression that visitors follow as they walk from one end to the other. The continuum of paintings is like a gigantic Chinese hand scroll, unfolding its narrative.

The music for *Ten thousand currents* uses material from a number of sources, including recorded instruments, computer-synthesized sounds, and synthesized voices. But the melodic core of the music comes from two melodies composed by Chinese court musicians about 1500 years ago. Depending on the listener's position, the melodic variations may be heard as a low, slow-moving chant, a swooping soprano glissando, crystalline lines suspended high above the other sounds, or an electric guitar solo. The unfolding of the music in time is complemented by the spatial disposition of its seven parts, whose changes can be heard as the visitor walks from painting to painting and from speaker to speaker.

Concerning the paintings, Haire writes: "*Let the streams flow set free* goes from a state of chaos to the sense of equilibrium that one can feel when floating under water and it is very much a watery painting. *Never the sky always silence* is not linear; it stretches out representing a sense of eternity and as opposed to the watery quality of *Let the streams flow* it has an atmosphere of airiness. I painted *Progression* as a link between these two contrasting paintings. The yellow is even more understated than *Never the sky*, but I set myself to go from blue to yellow, planning an even gradation; the explosive leap from dark to

light was unanticipated and an animated response to the unpredictable nature of throwing paint.”

The title *Ten thousand currents* comes from the Mustard Seed Garden Manual, a 17th century Chinese treatise on painting from which Dydo and Haire have been drawing inspiration since they began work on their installation *riverrun* at the Hammond Museum in New York. They have been collaborating on exhibitions of music and painting since 2006.

The sound for the exhibition has been developed in partnership with KEF, Maidstone, specialists in loudspeaker engineering and design with an international reputation for audio excellence. Founded on the banks of the River Medway, near Maidstone in 1961 by Raymond Cooke (MBE), KEF was originally set up in a Nissan Hut on the premises of Kent Engineering & Foundry - from where the name KEF is derived. Still situated on the same site, KEF is still developing world-beating products. In one of the very few sectors where the UK still leads the world, KEF has one of the best international reputations for audio excellence.