

Title: Talks & Lectures | Joan Eardley & Catterline Panel Discussion

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Transcript

Leila Ritzko

Thanks Gráinne and welcome everybody. Thank you for joining us this evening. I'm Leila Ritzko. I'm a member of the curatorial team at the Galleries and I worked on organising our recently opened Joan Eardley and Catterline display. It's now showing in our Modern One building on Belford Road. This celebratory two-room display marks 100 years since the birth of Joan Eardley. It's drawn entirely from our very own collection and it focuses on works that the artist made during her time in Catterline. Now, Catterline is a small coastal village in the northeast of Scotland, just a few miles away from Stonehaven and south of Aberdeen.

When Eardley first visited the village in 1951, it consisted of little more than 30 cottages, some coastguard buildings, and a pier. She immediately fell under the spell of the place, returning time and again over the next few years until she began renting a cottage there in 1954. She then divided her time between Glasgow and Catterline and as the years passed, Eardley spent progressively more time living and working in Catterline and it was there that she made a huge number of drawings and oil paintings of which we're showing a selection in our current display.

So, the show will continue to run throughout the summer. So, if you haven't yet had the chance to see it, do book yourself a free ticket and come along. And to give you a sense of what you can expect to see, images of some of the works on the show will appear on screen this evening in a kind of looping show reel that will tick over beside us as we speak. So, for tonight's panel discussion, we're going to be talking about Eardley's relationship to place both in the context of Glasgow and in more remote locations including Catterline.

Just to let you know a little bit about the format, I'm going to direct questions to each member of our panel in turn so that we'll have a chance to hear from each of them about their thoughts on and personal connections with Eardley's work. And then we'll open up to questions from the audience in the final ten or fifteen minutes. So, you will have a chance to have your say and post your own questions, please do type those up and pop them in the chat function. So, allow me to introduce this evening's panel. I'm joined today by Professor Susannah Thompson who is an art historian, critic, and writer based in Glasgow. She's currently Head of Doctoral Studies and Professor of Contemporary Art and Criticism at the Glasgow School of Art. Her research focuses on twentieth century and contemporary art, Scottish art, and feminism.

We're also joined by Hannah Mooney who is an artist from County Donegal in Ireland. She graduated in 2017 from Glasgow School of Art. She has won several awards as a student and since graduating most recently at the *New Contemporaries* exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy where she was awarded the major Fleming-Wyfold Bursary. She's represented by the Scottish Gallery and Messums, London. She currently works in two distinct subjects, still life and landscape and her work is in several collections including Art and Healthcare UK, Fleming-Wyfold Collection, Hottinger Collection and the James Nichol McBroom archive. She now lives and works in County Mayo Ireland.

Finally, we also have with us Heroica Theatre Company which was originally founded as Square Peg Productions in 2005 by actor Alexandra Mathie and playwright Anna Carlisle. They are based in the Pennines, Yorkshire and have built a reputation in theatre championing the achievements of maverick women. The National Galleries of Scotland hosted the world premiere of their play *Joan Eardley: A Private View* which toured Scotland and the UK in 2017. They are currently finalising a new play on the life and work of early twentieth century Scottish artist and movement pioneer Margaret Morris. So, I'm going to hand over now to Anna who's going to say a few words of introduction before we hear an excerpt from Heroica Theatre Company's wonderful Joan Eardley play. So, Anna over to you.

Anna Carlisle

Thank you very much Leila and hello everybody. It gives me enormous pleasure to introduce actor and co-founder with me of Heroica Theatre Company, Alexandra Mathie. And she's going to read from our 2017 play script of *Joan Eardley: A Private View*. In this case, the Catterline scene, Alex:

Alexandra Mathie

You should just see it. Come. All the others did eventually. To Catterline, in your mind's eye. It's a clear, warm day. The sea whooshes gently at your back. In firm musical time. Up here, on the cliff path, turn in each of the four compass points. North to the 'Watchie' and the puffin warrens, south to the daisy-coloured lighthouse, east to the easy June sea, and west, a wee step away, the tiniest of fishing villages. It's a clear, warm day. Smell it. Smell it. The loose strife and the gorse, the cornflowers, and the more pungent seaweed. From here, the two rows of cottages look just like, like a granny in a wicker rocking chair. Her white sleeved arms outstretched in welcome. Lights twinkle in her eyes at dusk. And it's like she chuckles at me when I flop in at the end of a day up in the fields or by the jetty. Never ticking me off for working late by lamplight or kipping all night in my chair. Look seawards now. And you can see all the salmon nets tossed about on their poles and the gulls and guillemots hurtling to their homes under the cliff. The wee boats clinging to the rocks thrown up from their moorings in the last storm. Oh, the storms! Hard to imagine on a day like today but see them through your mind's eye. Wild enough to rocket the cottages almost into the sea. The doors blown in and rain slashed in by the bucket full. Chimneys left teetering and Old Father Todhead out on the bluff booming out his doleful mantras and calming us all down again [foghorn sounds]. How could I not take root here? Where it's such bloody hard graft just to survive. How could I not? But it's more than that even. It's a precious Catterline gift to this bleak meridian. The light. That so-called crucial artist's light that sends them off in droves to Cornwall and Collioure but light's elusiveness. Often, no light at all. Dull or dark for days and weeks and months. But you just have to wait, and watch. All sorts of little miracles will dazzle you. Look, look out to sea. Can you see something wonderful? A flash of lightning on the horizon. A shaft of sunlight on a far off shore. A scintillation of dolphins close in. A stirring of waterings from a projectile razor bill. A dance of fluttering wings around the homecoming scallop boat. Stay here for a while and you will.

Leila Riszko

Thanks so much Alexandra. I feel magicked to Catterline. I think it was an amazing way to set the scene for this evening. Thank you so much. So, I'm going to turn first of all to Anna to ask you more about *Joan Eardley: A Private View*. So first of all, I'm intrigued to know how the play came about. Why Joan Eardley. What is it about Eardley that drew you to her as a subject?

Anna Carlisle

Well Leila it took several years in the gestation it has to be said. We began our acquaintance with Joan Eardley at the 2007 retrospective at Scottish National Gallery and like everybody else we were completely blown away. Whilst we had a few productions on the lives of unsung heroines already under our belt as Square Peg Productions, it felt fairly clear to us that Joan Eardley was rather sung in her own adoptive country and therefore perhaps not relevant to us. But some years later I think it was about 2014 our late and very beloved Marilyn Imrie who was to become the director of *Joan Eardley: A Private View*. She approached with a request to write the play having already done some negotiating with NGS personnel about possible performances within their galleries and that clinched it really and we were off. We felt we'd made a bit of a *volt face* dramatic change of mind, but we did recognise by that stage that if Joan Eardley was honoured and known in Scotland, she remained almost unknown in England. Despite her birth and childhood in West Sussex and London and despite a good range of fabulous galleries in England having Eardleys tucked away in their permanent collections. And here was an opportunity for us to take a real hand in changing that situation.

So, we devised our production tour to take in as venues as many galleries across the UK as held Eardleys as possible. Sadly not all were able to come on board, Abbott Hall in Kendal was one which had just undergone flood restoration work but most did and that included places as far away as Reading and Coventry. And amongst these gorgeous galleries when we were finally able to perform were The Lillie and Gracefield, Cory Village Hall on the Isle of Arran, Hospitalfield in Arbroath, the Old Rope Works in Montrose, the Caledonian Club in London. Seventeen stunning venues in all. Amongst our greatest joys was getting to know the people. The personnel and the public who themselves seemed so thrilled to be part of what we were doing. But in answer to your question, what finally drew us, it was Joan's power, her totally unselfconscious energies. Her acceptance of what she was privately and personally. Her embracing of her own sexuality at a time when it could have marred her career in any number of ways but largely, I don't believe it did. In other respects, it was her very lack of self-belief and her journey into herself that we found so compelling.

And as Alex's reading will highlight, we were mesmerised by what we understood to be her lifelong search for the light. The light that she was desperate to glean from a grey Arran fell or a storm in the North Sea or a Glasgow child's eye. And we were touched by the cruel irony that when she just might have believed she'd finally found it at the end of her life she was blinded by the march of her illness and brutal last-ditch treatments. Ee didn't know when we launched the project about the projected 2017 early retrospective and that we would be able to premiere our production before majestic Eardley canvases. That was a bonus and many thanks to Gráinne Rice for that.

Leila Riszko

I wonder if you could tell us a bit about your methods for researching the play. I know that you undertook a lot of travel and you met a number of people who knew the artist. Can you tell us a bit about that?

Anna Carlisle

I often get a chance to answer this question actually because you go beyond yourself in so many ways. You start with the books and the facts. You immerse yourself in all of that. You try to know everything you can from what people wrote about your heroine. In reviews, in this case, in catalogues, in biographies, everything. You listen to all the recordings and watch all the film footage. Everything you can get your hands on. And then I think you close the books and the door behind you, and you get out in the field. You go, in our case it's always a she, go where she went. See what she saw. Meet the people who survive who knew her. And you talk to anybody and everybody about what you're planning to do because you just never know.

There was a party at in Hebden Bridge where I could see that the person I was talking to who was a 24-year-old young man. I thought his eyes had glazed right over when I was talking about it. But actually, as a result I met we Alex and I met the Samson girls and Pat. Because that particular glazed-eyed young man happened to work at the mission in Glasgow which they regularly patronised and where they were well known. And the following week it was they took us on a walking tour of the Glasgow that they knew, and they became lifelong friends. So as I say you never do know. Talking to an unknown couple in the Cory Village Hall at the local art show led us to being introduced that very same afternoon to Margo Sandeman's son who was able to show us his mother's bothy and the Tabernacle that both she and Joan painted at in the late 40s and of course we went to stay in Catterline, talk to strangers in the pub, do that sort of thing so eventually somebody will shout across the room, 'hey, you ought to meet Stuart who's paints in the 'Watchie'. He'll introduce you to Kim Canale in Montrose' and it's cumulative and so we found by the time we'd finished, and we were in Catterline ourselves, we were seeing what Joan saw. We were waking each day to what she experienced and knew. We walked to shore, we entered her cornfields, we were bowled over by her sea, and I think only then, are you qualified to come home and write the play? With so much behind you that you know, then as a dramatist, I think you're free to fictionalize and fabulate a bit because you understand better, what was no doubt in your heroine's head and heart, and what she might have said and done from those perspectives. Only this person, not the textbook one, can become identifiable to audiences, I think. The character who touches hearts and moves people to unexpected depths. And then you put that character into the hands of the perfect actor. In this case, Alexandra Mathie. Ta-da.

Leila Riszko

You're so right there, kind of bringing it brings colour to everything to actually visit Catterline and meet the people who live there and the people that knew Eardley. I'm also interested especially in your research process for gesture and movement and the kind of choreography of painting. Can you tell us about that?

Anna Carlisle

Yes, I think to be quite honest, Leila, that was something we left 'til quite late and we were challenged on the at one of the NGS evening sessions by a painter. You know, how were we going to deal with this showing of the work and showing of Joan at work? And we realised we had an issue on our hands that we as wordsmiths in our various ways, writer, director, and the actors needed to resolve and that was sort of the search for true unstudied spontaneous inspiration and how are we going to get that? We needed to show the painter painting. See her at work. And that had to come from somebody's body and soul not from the words on the page or from props or sets. And Marilyn had very early made the very inspired decision that all the music and sound in the play was going to

be vocal. Come from the voice boxes of the actors. Nothing recorded. And it was that sort of production, so we became aware that we needed to do the same with the actual painting work. Amongst the research trips, we took if I can just tell this one last anecdote, Alexandra and I went to Plockton which is a regular Shangri-La for us. We have been friends for many years now with the painter Miriam Drysdale. And Miriam took Alex down to the shore of the loft with easels and boards and paints and dungarees and gave her a tuition session. And I watched from a little way off and I listened as Miriam who's seldom backward in coming forward anyway urging Alex to 'stand square on the ground. Go on root your feet close your eyes and open them only when you're prepared to accept it'll all have changed. Paint the changes, that's the interesting thing. Stop trying to record the scene, the scene's only an excuse for bashing on the colour. Go on bang it on. Swing from the shoulder not just the wrist. Bang on the shades, dark ones first then the lighter stuff. Go on external forces on the power. Let them drive the paint off your brushes.' And I put all of that into the scene of the play where Joan teaches Lil [Neilsen] to paint by the shore. But the important thing was that Alex carried that with her as a key. And only Alex could transform that into something else that was going to exhibit without props, the painting experience. Only she could unlock the sublime craft of Joan at work. Like Joan, she had to wait until that perfect moment and then unleash. Wait like that poised tiger we were mentioning in the 'paint the sea' scene. Wait for that perfect impulse and then launch. And it's very hard to describe but if anyone would wish to see something of that physicality, go no further than the Heroica Theatre Company website and view our short film of *Joan Eardley: A Private View*. I think what I'm saying is in brief you wait for the actor to find her Joan, her Joan at work in her element at her essence.

Leila Riszko

Miriam sounds amazing at doing that tutoring there. Because you know when you see footage of Joan Eardley painting it is that attack. It is that it's quite surprising how vigorous she is, and you know it sounds like Miriam really capture the spirit of that and helped.

Anna Carlise

There's a Miriam Drysdale right behind me over there.

Leila Riszko

So just another question that I have for you Anna was something that I find particularly compelling about Heroica Theatre Company is the way that you stage productions in unusual settings rather than in traditional theatre spaces. So I wondered if you could talk a little bit about the thought process behind that.

Anna Carlisle

I think it was fairly straightforward. When we began in 2005 as Square Peg Productions we were more or less site-specific performing, it kept the costs down. Outdoors in the homes and gardens and often castles of our heroines and it drew a wide range of audiences and children, and it kept a certain mobility going that many people didn't feel constrained by a confined space, and we realised it was a recipe for success. It also brought authenticity for the piece because you married the heroine with her environment more or less. And gave her a sense of real time as well. We got massive support from the venues as they seem to love the opportunity to have their sites used as sets basically in these interesting and uncharacteristic ways. But 2012 *The Chelsea Belladonna* and the British summer was I think the worst on record for many, many years. It really dampened our

tour significantly and we decided to say goodbye to that so-called tradition of being outdoors in the summer.

It seemed fairly obvious to take Joan Eardley to art galleries but what lay behind the venues' enthusiasm for taking the show into their galleries was as I suggested before, their wish to open up their galleries to different and diverse audiences. To attract new visitors to their collections through the allure of the play and its characters. I guess we simply wish to make the venue as relevant to the heroine as we can and her art and her work. Our forthcoming production which you kindly mentioned, on the life and work of Margaret Morris, twentieth century dance exponent, life partner of painter JD Ferguson. That will we hope take place in dance studios and community activity centres because similarly, people already interested in movement and therapeutic activity already attend those sort of venues regularly. And it will give us space to do what's now traditional to us, to invite audiences to take part, to operate in the same ways, to try the same skills as the heroine herself in doing so not just watch her life but actively sharing her too.

Leila Riszko

Thank you. Well, I could carry on talking to you about this for much longer, but we'll come back later on when we do the audience questions and hopefully we can hear a little bit more from you then. But I'm going to turn now to Susannah, and I want to ask you Susannah if you can tell us a little bit about Joan Eardley in the context of other women artists practicing in Glasgow or indeed in Scotland in the 50s and 60s. I'm just wondering whether there were kind of certain commonalities in terms of their career paths. I'm also thinking about how personal circumstances may have impacted on their practice. I wonder if you could kind of comment on that.

Professor Susannah Thompson

First of all, I will respond to the first part of the question which is that she was working for a relatively brief period for an artist of her kind of renown. So, she was working between 1940 and 1963. There was an older generation of artists, figures like Mary Armour, Anne Redpath, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, and then a slightly younger generation of artists like Mardi Barry and Elizabeth Blackadder. But her immediate peers at Glasgow School of Art, and a kind of close circle of friends, who are figures like Bet Low, Margot Sandeman, obviously was a really significant painter and Cordelia Oliver who were all successful in their careers but over obviously a much longer period of time because they lived you know to a far greater age. Some of those women got married, some of them had children which obviously interrupted their career trajectory to some extent, or some of them. Others had concurrent careers as teachers or in the Cordelia Oliver's case as a critic and curator, but Eardley also had personal relationships which were also partly artistic partnerships with people like Audrey Walker who was a musician-turned-photographer, with Dorothy Steele who was a painter, a GSA graduate, who she met in her post diploma year. And later, towards the end of her life, Lil Neilson who she'd met at Hospitalfield when she taught there briefly.

But she never lived with a partner, so she didn't have that type of domestic setup. She clearly didn't have a husband. She didn't have children and she didn't live with any of her lovers on a permanent or fixed basis. She really wasn't interested in domestic affairs at all and quite enjoyed living a very simple life. So, she had the time and focus without these other distractions of that type of caring responsibility or those domestic things to attend to which freed her up to concentrate fairly single-mindedly on the development of her practice. But I think it's also important to note that she was from a very middle-class background. She had independent financial means. Her family had stocks and shares. So it was irrelevant really to Eardley. In fact, she really wasn't interested in whether she

made it successfully in a commercial sense. So, she was determined to kind of carry on the career whether she was commercially successful or not. Whether she had recognition or not. She was really dedicated to her own development as a painter. But the financial independence allowed her to make decisions and kind of gave her the means basically to support herself and allowed her to make decisions and gave her the freedom to travel and again to commit herself in a very focused, very single-minded way to the development of her work. And the other thing to note, unlike a lot of her contemporaries, so not a commonality but a divergence is that a lot of women painters, a lot of women artists at that point felt that their immediate next step in a career would be to go into teaching. So, a lot of women who graduate from Glasgow School of Art sign up for Jordanhill teacher training college, which Eardley did very briefly before dropping out and deciding it definitely wasn't for her. So, other than a few instances of teaching, she really felt she wasn't cut out for teaching, didn't enjoy it, and so another potential career path that could have run in parallel was kind of knocked out of the question. So, I think that kind of just a brief summary.

Leila Rieszko

There's an awful lot of detail in there. Thank you so much. As you kind of touched upon Eardley enjoyed a great deal of success in her lifetime and I just wondered were her female peers received just as well or was she something of an exception in that regard? And how do you think her success impacted on how her contemporaries reacted to her?

Professor Susannah Thompson

Obviously, her career was cut short by a very early death at the age of 42 and this was just at the point at which she was getting much more recognition in Scotland but also beyond Scotland. One of her most successful exhibitions was just a few months before she died in 1963. And this was at a point where her work was beginning to be collected by really significant patrons and institutions. But even as a student so from 1940 to 1943 at Glasgow School of Art she was recognised as exceptional. An exceptional talent. So almost from year one of her education in Glasgow. Cordelia Oliver who was in the year below, said that all of the other students recognised Joan Eardley as a pace setter, someone to kind of watch. They were all quite impressed I think by her talent. But she was also marked out really early on by her tutors. So people like Hugh Adam Crawford and Douglas Percy Bliss the director were very supportive of Eardley's career and both Joan Eardley and Margot Sandeman didn't have to take the general course that all the other students had to take. So, all of the other students at Glasgow School of Art at that time had to kind of try their hand at different art forms, different media. Hugh Adam Crawford had decided that Sandeman and Eardley were so talented and so gifted at painting that he would allow them to exclusively focus on that. So, she was clearly recognised very early as someone with a fairly exceptional talent.

Now, let me think of the other part of your question. In terms of how her peers and contemporaries reacted to her success, first of all, I would say that in terms of her immediate peer group, they were very, very proud of her success. So, even in their '70s and '80s, Sandeman and Cordelia Oliver and Bet Low would speak very fondly with real admiration and pride about Eardley's success. So, I think there was a lot of support for her amongst the peer group. In terms of external validation, her work again was selected while she was still a student or had just finished a diploma in 1943 for the exhibition at the RSA, the Royal Scottish Academy. She also became the youngest woman to be nominated as an associate member of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1955 but apparently, she'd be nominated from 1950 and again I think in 1952 by William Gillies I think was the first person to nominate her for associate membership. She became a full academician in 1963 the year of her death. So there were these external organisations beyond the educational context, critics in the

Herald and the *Scotsman*, gallerists obviously from London taking an interest. A network of older, more established artists really trying to champion and advocate for her career. So I think she had a very close support network amongst people that she knew personally and then it kind of extended from there.

Leila Riszko

I'm going to ask you this next question, but I think you've pretty much answered it in what you've just said but in case you have anything to add I was just thinking specifically about the kind of Glasgow and GSA context. I'm thinking about the Glasgow art world at the time being quite male dominated and Eardley's exclusion from some of those more formal art groups. But in view of that context how did she find the space to connect with others and forge a network for the sharing of ideas and support. You talked a little bit about some of her key advocates there, but I wondered if you had anything more to share about that.

Professor Susannah Thompson

I think the first thing to say is in terms of going back to the idea of success and networks and peer support, she really was not comfortable at all with the formal structures of the art world. As I said, she wasn't particularly interested in commercial success or chasing success on those terms. And so, she also felt very uncomfortable in her dealings. Sometimes with London gallerists, she was shy about attending private views and parties and a lot of the letters that are in the archives at the National Galleries of Scotland will detail her discomfort at going to really kind of fancy art world events. What would she wear? There's an anecdote about going to a cocktail party for her own opening in 1963 and seeing Anne Redpath there, and Anne Redpath is holding court according to Eardley. She obviously felt quite outside of those ways of working and that kind of very conscious networking in order to kind of become more ambitious and achieve success.

But she did as I said have this really close network of mainly women peers and supporters and also a lot of people at Glasgow School of Art as mentioned so Douglas Percy Bliss. She was recommended for exhibitions. They were instrumental in helping her get commissions from quite an early stage. But I think also apart from the RSA membership which was in her mid 30s again she was the youngest woman to achieve that rank of associate membership ever. She wasn't interested in the business of the art world particularly and the letters also tell us that she found the macho art world of Glasgow quite intimidating. She felt she didn't fit in. She had quite a posh English accent which it's been speculated might have been a reason that she felt sometimes uncomfortable in the presence of you know quite a hard drinking kind of art culture in Glasgow. And I think also that it's worth remembering that a lot of these formal networks were not open to women. They weren't encouraging of women as members. So, the Glasgow Art Club didn't admit women as members until two decades after Joan Eardley died. So just the fact of gender kind of excluded her from some of the networks and groups. And societies she might otherwise have been able to join.

I think that one of the advocates that I'm most interested in in terms of my own research is Cordelia Oliver. She as I said was in the year below at the art school and she'd started as a painter but became a critic and curator. And Oliver and people like Douglas Hall were really, really crucial people in trying to posthumously revive and kind of maintain Eardley's reputation. So, they were really key in terms of committees and organisations in staging exhibitions, writing catalogue essays. William Buchanan, another figure and Cordelia Oliver herself wrote the first two books on Joan Eardley. So, there's a real effort on the part of her circle to make sure that she didn't disappear from public view

and that that her reputation was maintained. They really did a lot of work to do that. So, they I would say were her main advocates. People that she knew personally and who really admired her.

Leila Riszko

Thanks Susannah. I think we've talked a lot about the kind of centre of the art world, but I think it'd be quite nice to shift a little bit now to talk about some more peripheral spaces perhaps. So, I'm going turn now to Hannah to ask you a couple of questions and I think it it's lovely that you've been able to join us today Hannah as a young practicing artist. I think it's really interesting to hear about Joan Eardley's influence and hear kind of responses to her work from later generations of artists. So, thank you for being with us. I'd just like to start by asking when did you become aware of Joan Eardley and what is it about her practice or perhaps even her way of living that resonates with you as an artist?

Hannah Mooney

So much resonates with me about Joan Eardley as an artist. I first became aware of her work quite late in my third year of uni and I had just been at home painting in Ireland and I was just kind of really getting to grips with oil painting and I used a palette knife for the first time and I did a really loose monochromatic landscape painting and it was the first time I've really enjoyed the process of making and painting. I put it off on a shelf in my studio space and a boy in my year came over and said 'oh that reminds me of Joan Eardley, you should look her up' and I looked her up and then I saw that there was an exhibition on at the National Galleries and I went and was really mesmerized and went the following weekend as well. A lot resonates with me. I think any artist would be inspired by the working conditions that she lived under. You know, she lived without electricity or running water and that really shows her focus as an artist and just how clear she was about her intentions and I suppose when you look at her body of work, it's so obvious that she's extremely prolific and she was creating throughout her life and every sketch is for another sketch or for another painting. And I suppose she seems very curious in her work and curious in her use of materials and I think as well she's inspiring because you know she's just responding directly to her changing environment in Catterline all the time. And she's not afraid of experimenting with materials as she goes and that shows in the paintings that she's stuck bits of grass on or there's a sea spray on the sea paintings as we know and yeah I'm sure if we looked any longer we'd find more things on the paintings but yeah she was very knowledgeable and I suppose Catterline just was the perfect place for her to grow as a person and a painter.

Leila Riszko

And I wonder if you could tell us a bit about your own practice, about your technique and process and about how that compares with or differs from Joan Eardley.

Hannah Mooney

I suppose I consider myself an intuitive painter. I've tried really hard to do illustrative works and but it's just not where my strengths lie. And I think I work best when I think about how the landscape feels and we're different in the sense that when I started painting I was so set in the belief that all of my work had to be done from life and I used to just bring in a bunch of flowers to the studios in GSA and I was always really scared that I couldn't make good paintings if they weren't directly responding to something that was happening around me but now my practice is really studio based. I go outside every day but this is a way of kind of processing what I've been doing in the studio and it's a way of like thinking differently about works and observing colours and sketching but I really enjoy

the privacy of my studio space right now and I feel like working every day is kind of just a way of building the technical skill for the times that I do go outside and the times when I do want to paint outside.

One thing to mention is that mainly I work on a quite a small scale. It was when I started working outside that was a quick way to do small sketches and now I've gotten used to this idea of just getting my ideas about colour and marks and composition down on very small scale quickly and since I graduated it's been a really busy time and I've just been really fortunate in the sense that I've had lots of things to work towards but it means a lot of paintings are leaving the studio quite quickly and then this year, I kind of decided to take a different approach and have less shows to work towards but the right shows that suit me and I've had a chance to be around my paintings for longer and actually develop the work rather than just creating new paintings and also just enjoy my life in the countryside. So, having a good balance.

Leila Riszko

Giving you that time to kind of reflect on your previous work and to create new work. But I'm also curious to know what your thoughts are on the idea of women's access to creative spaces today. So when you and I had a conversation the other day in preparation for this you mentioned Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. And I thought perhaps you could say something about your own experience of working in remote locations away from those artistic centres that we were talking about with Susannah. So how did you come to work in this way and how has this approach affected your practice, do you think?

Hannah Mooney

Before I begin to talk about my own practice the one thing that I was thinking about when we were speaking earlier about Joan working remotely away from Glasgow is that I feel like it's such an important thing for artists that they are away from places where they have so many influences. When I was studying Glasgow School of Art I was always in awe of what my peers were doing and like what they were teaching themselves and also like everyone is so motivated and it's really difficult to just actually know if you're doing the right thing and it's beneficial for a few years because it means that you become more directed. I think it made me think 'oh I really want to learn how to oil paint because this is really difficult' and that's when I started going home to Ireland all the time to paint and I suppose as well Joan Eardley you know she did choose to be separate from Glasgow and away from trends and she made work that was kind of independent of that and maybe that's why her work is still celebrated today and it's still popular because it's exploring timeless themes, you know, universal themes, so that I think that's why it's so exciting.

After I graduated that was a really exciting time for me. The dream was for me to maybe like try and become a life drawing teacher or you know go down some kind of line like that. I didn't really know but after I graduated then I had lots of shows to work towards and I got my first studio and it was fun having the challenge of being self-employed and then having people want to come to my studio space and like see what I was doing and developing my own routine. And the fact that I was kind of just working because I wanted to meant that I became like quite precious about how much time I spent in the studio. But basically I was really fortunate as well because I had a great network of friends and creative friends that I had made at Glasgow School of Art which is really important because that was really energizing for me. But I do think that if it hadn't been for the creative network of friends that I had in Glasgow then I would definitely I would have just like I would have just been back in Ireland years ago full time and then over the pandemic I saw it as like a sign and an

opportunity to say I've got like no choice and it was definitely yeah it was the best decision I've made yet. I think that living in a remote location is so important as well. It's about having domestic responsibilities as Susannah mentioned earlier. That's so true. Just having somewhere where you have a very simple life and I think that's probably become very apparent in the last year that we actually don't need very much.

Leila Riszko

I think you know we could continue this discussion a bit more Hannah but in the interest of time I think we should start turning towards some of these questions coming in from the audience because they're really keen to ask a few things. So my first question here from David Cockayne. Thank you. He asks: 'The drawings seem to address large space issues almost more intensely than some of the paintings. What are the thoughts of the panel? Also, how aware was she of the work of Peter Lanyon?' Actually who wants to take that? Is that a question for Susannah perhaps?

Professor Susannah Thompson

I think I'm going to hand that question over to Hannah because I'm not an artist. I'm an art historian so I think the drawing question would be a good one for Hannah to try.

Hannah Mooney

I suppose whenever I look at Joan Eardley's drawings I think that they're well of course as well I think like the colour that she uses and the like the mood and the it's like she's not holding back is she and she's so direct with her mark making and maybe as well the kind of speed that these drawings were made at influence how she approached her paintings and that intuitive way of working and not thinking about you know not thinking about what she's actually doing but thinking about what in front of her. I don't know Peter Lanyon's work that well but I think I can visualise it in my head but I don't know whether I can put words together.

Professor Susannah Thompson

I can answer that one. Which is to say that I don't know whether she was aware of Peter Lanyon's work but I do know that in spite of all this time in remote locations and in the countryside and away from artistic centres she also loved being an artistic centres. She loved going to the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow. She loved going to concerts. In London she used to stay with her aunt Cybil Morrison and attend big exhibitions. So she was very aware and she used to write about books she'd read, theatre productions she'd been to, concerts and art exhibitions she had attended. So she was very in touch with what was happening. She subscribed to journals. She was aware of who her contemporaries were and what was happening in the art world. She was very in touch with it even though she didn't necessarily participate in a formal sense.

Leila Riszko

Absolutely. Moving on to another question here which is from Claire Waymark. She says I had the privilege to work at NGS during the 2017 retrospective and helped support the performances at Mod Two. They were fabulous, moving, and memorable and it's great to be here today. Thank you. That's a really nice comment. Not a question but thank you for that Claire for that contribution.

Karen Reeve would love to view some footage of Joan at work. Gracefield had a short clip which just made me want more. Is there any other footage out there that the public can access?

Professor Susannah Thompson

I definitely think there might be footage on your website. I think there's some, I think there's some video clips on your website on National Galleries of Scotland and I think the National Library of Scotland have a film of Eardley's in their archive as well. So, there is, there is footage out there that you can that you can, you know, that you can see but that was amazing footage at Gracefield, I agree.

Anna Carlisle

I'm sorry. Does that include the film *Three Scottish Painters*? Because I think *Three Scottish Painters*, if you can go through the other two painters first, I think you have to wait for Joan, that is very beautiful. If that's the one to which you're referring.

Leila Riszko

Thank you. so, another quick question here from Sheena McDonald. How long is this exhibition on for? Oh, interesting question, Sheena. I don't think that we have a confirmed end date as yet but the show is going to run throughout the summer. So, there is still time over the next few months for you to pop along and see it. So, please do come along. Do you have any further questions Gráinne? Okay so one final question submitted. So Joan's paintings have inspired me to visit Catterline. Does the panel have any personal recommendations for what you should see or do when visiting Catterline? I wonder if Anna or Alexandra you have answers to that question.

Anna Carlisle

I think we'll probably all be unanimous in recommending the Creel Inn for its warmth of welcome, its food and its range of whiskies. I think as Alexandra was pointing out earlier, you can walk along to the 'Watchie' at the right time of the year, I think it's probably now a little late but you can go beyond the 'Watchie' to the cliffs and watch the puffins hurtling into their burrows. In the other direction to the lighthouse, when we were there, I think there were only one or two places of accommodation but it may have changed by now. There was self-catering in the pub but I think that might still be just about it. So, you don't expect a great deal but it's just it was wonderful.

Leila Riszko

Thank you for those recommendations. Just one last question I have here. If Joan was alive today, what do you think would have inspired her and how do you think her work would have developed? What a question to end on. Does anybody want to take that?

Hannah Mooney

I think she'd still be at Catterline.

Leila Riszko

I think she found Catterline so endlessly inspiring that she may well still be there trying to capture the light perhaps. Okay well I think we better draw to a close on the questions. So yeah just before we sign off I'd like to thank all of our speakers once again for a really fascinating and lively chat. So thank you Susannah Thompson, Hannah Mooney, Anna Carlisle and Alexandra Mathie. And thanks also to our audience as well for tuning in and sending in all your questions. I'm just going to hand over now once again to Anna to say a few final words before Alexandra plays us out with another reading from *Joan Eardley: A Private View*.

Anna Carlisle

Thank you Leila. The whole thing's been a privilege. Thank you all very much. And it's our privilege to have been invited to end this evening's event with a reading from that central scene from *Joan Eardley: A Private View*, Joan Painting. Once again read for us by Alexandra Mathie.

Alexandra Mathie

I need to paint on my own today. I can only paint when I'm in a decently settled state. In a settled place. To paint a cornfield, you need to be in it. Nose to the stalks. To stay there, hour after hour, and smell it. Feel it. Take in all its textures with so much more than just your eyes. Emerge at the end of the day, no one aware where you've been, just your secret. You and the cornfield. Then, next day, and only then might you be qualified to paint it. When you can call it friend. When it has become part of you. To paint the sea, you need to get one thing straight. There's no relationship. You're not its friend. You may stand before it as long as you like but only ever as a minion, only acknowledging its untameability. Its power, its pride are all its own. Think of it like the tiger in an Indian jungle. It prowls. Aloof. Godlike. In its sights, we are its prey or its play thing. Out of its sights, and we are nothing to it. Nothing. As if through a lens, we may watch, breath baited, wait to catch it at its best. One minute, it may simply pad out its harmless, rhythmical patterns of existence. Or the next, it may spring. Commit a savagery, an act of unspeakable cruelty. You don't know. You can't trust it. So you respect it. You stand back. Gawping before it. Faithful. Patient. But alert. Ready to catch its flashes of fury. Catch them. Swift as the photographer's shutter.

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