A BITE OF THE CAMEL
Kurt Jackson at Rick Stein’s
Having Kurt Jackson’s paintings in the restaurant is exciting enough, but when I met him and discovered that he was painting the Camel from its source on Bodmin Moor to Stepper and Pentire Point it fired me up to match what he was painting with cooking. Flying over the moor on a clear day at high tide just over the monument at Bodmin and tracing sinuous silver all the way to Padstow and beyond, I think that there is my world. I swim in it virtually every day that I’m in Padstow; walk or ride along its banks; fish on it; used to play rugby beside it; endlessly filmed on it rain or shine; and once upon a time with my Jack Russell, Chalky, I’ve tried growing oysters in it and am constantly excited by finding cockles, clams, shrimps and soft shelled crabs. My Dad used to catch sand eels near the old railway bridge at Little Petherick with a sprat hook which he put into a satchel covered in scales, I remember the first time we found samphire, purslane, and lava, our best vegetables come from farms all along the river. And when I’m short of inspiration I look out of my office window in Padstow all across the blue water to the dunes and Brea Hill beyond and ideas naturally come to me.

Rick Stein, 2014

I love the Camel Valley, it is so different from the coast. The rugged and wild coastline of Stepper Point soon disappears into the gentle rolling hills. The further you venture into the valley from the hustle and bustle of Padstow, the more tranquil and peaceful it becomes. As you wind along the banks of the river, the golden beaches and turquoise waters are replaced with hidden creeks, green pastures and forests of trees. I love taking the bike, cycling to Wadebridge or onto Bodmin, it’s the most beautiful bike ride along the old railway line and river. But it’s the memories of days spent here that make it special; family picnics, bike rides, days spent on the beach, swimming, fishing, walking and more. These memories are priceless.

Jill Stein, 2014

First swallows over the source of the Camel, April 2009.
Mixed media  57 x 62 cm
Camel

I am sitting in the dunes at Rock – an apparent name contradiction in this sandy place; although there is a sign on the beach below me warning of the unstable cliffs and falling rocks. I'm trying to find some shelter from the cold westerlies that are funnelling in off the sea, up the estuary to find me and get personal. The stubby sea buckthorn and brambles give me some shelter and there is an elder bush leaning at forty-five degrees. I wriggle and settle into the thin layer of marram grass on the sand and once comfortable get my gear out; ready to paint. Below me the Camel is laid out under a low winter sun flowing gently past, receding with the ebbing tide to expose all the patterned and shiny flats and sand banks between me and Padstow on the opposite bank.

The sunlight catches the surface of the river where the wind ruffles its surface to form bright crystalline pools of light separated by cloud shadows. The beach is dotted with dozens of couples and dog walkers strolling and exercising; each accompanied by their own particular shadow attached to their feet. Dogs come in all shapes and sizes, all are excited, barking and racing around on the sand.

Near me is a small stunted wilding apple tree; I remember Caroline picking an only apple there – a vivid red fruit, polished and exotic – I painted it later – 'The Rock Apple'. I remember many moments in my childhood here – watching my father sail his small dingy out there, my mother sunbathing and reading in the dunes; myself as a boy always looking at the wildlife on the seashore – the rock-pools, the birds and butterflies and wild flowers. I remember being stung by a weaver fish here.

There were times with my brother and then girlfriends and then Caroline. Having followed the river down from Bodmin Moor through the valley, woodlands and farmland with all those different associations to here at the coast means that now the Camel's thirty miles exists as a stream of many different experiences and events – she has flowed through my life for a long time.

It seemed logical to marry this essence of the Camel in my art with someone equally passionate about the (culinary side of the) Camel – to collaborate with Rick and Jill Stein. Now the ‘terrain’ of the River Camel is to be celebrated with food, drink and art – all produced on this Cornish river, on this occasion in Padstow.

Kurt Jackson, 2014

Near the source of the Camel. Linnets in the treetops. May 2013.
Mixed media on paper 57 x 61 cm
St Piran’s Day wild daffodils and snowdrops from Colquhit Woods. March 2014.
Mixed media on board  21 x 21 cm

Mixed media on board  18 x 16 cm

Mixed media on board  20 x 26 cm
Gorse from the source of the Camel. February 2014.
Mixed media on board 22 x 21 cm.

Young Camel, early Spring near Gam Bridge. 2013.
Mixed media on board 24 x 20 cm.
Autumn sunshine, Nanstallon, November 2013.
Mixed media on board 24 x 23 cm

Mixed media on board 30 x 29 cm
Camel cyclists and beech leaves. October 2013.
Mixed media on paper 57 x 60 cm

Camel salmon. 2014.
Mixed media on canvas 91.5 x 91.5 cm
Mixed media on board 35 x 29 cm

Mixed media on board 37 x 29 cm

Camel beer. 2014.
Bronze and bottle tops 30 x 36 x 19 cm

Camel champagne. 2014.
Bronze and bottle tops 30 x 36 x 19 cm
Morning sunlight above the Camel. February 2014.
Mixed media on board 29 x 31 cm

Salmon fishing in the Camel, Grogley Hall. December 2013.
Mixed media on board 46 x 46 cm
Mixed media on paper 13 x 17 cm

Acrylic on board 15 x 17 cm

Mixed media on paper 58 x 60 cm
Pinkson, high water up the Camel. May 2013.
Mixed media on paper. 45 x 62 cm

Calm before the storm. Rock to Padstow, low water. February 2014.
Mixed media on board. 53 x 52 cm
Mullet from the river. August 2013.
Mixed media on board  33 x 40 cm

Mixed media on board  31 x 43 cm

Mixed media on board  20 x 22 cm

Mixed media on board  22 x 31 cm
Bronze age gold lunula from Harlyn Bay. Royal Cornwall Museum. December 2013. Mixed media on board 21 x 20 cm.

Camel Garfish. August 2013. Mixed media on board 21 x 30 cm.

Big lemon sole. July 2013. Mixed media on board 43 x 38 cm.
John Dory. February 2014.
Mixed media on board 16 x 21 cm

A brace of John Dory. 2013.
Bronze, unique, on oak and slate base 27 x 33 x 20 cm
Acrylic on board 18 x 21 cm

Line caught mackerel from Padstow. April 2013.  
Mixed media on board 38 x 42 cm
In the dunes on Rock. February 2014.
Mixed media on board 31 x 30 cm

Mixed media on board 36 x 46 cm
Acrylic on board 18 x 20 cm

The Camel from on top of Brea Hill. November 2012.
Acrylic on board 15 x 20 cm

Hawker’s Cove dog walker. March 2014.
Mixed media on board 21 x 23 cm

Mixed media on board 46 x 47 cm
Mixed media on paper 57 x 61 cm.

St Piran’s Day on Hawker’s Cove. Skylarks singing above me. March 2014.
Mixed media on paper 57 x 62 cm.
Daymer Bay dog. March 2014. Mixed media on board 61 x 61 cm

Camel Surfer. January 2014. Mixed media on wood panel 60 x 62 cm
Mixed media on board  12 x 19 cm

Camel elder. 2014.
Mixed media on linen  97 x 99 cm

The sun sinks behind me here on the mouth of the Camel. 2014.
Oil on linen.  97 x 99 cm

Mixed media on wood panel.  60 x 60 cm
Mixed media on paper 57 x 61 cm

On Pentireglaze. 2014.
Mixed media on canvas 122 x 122 cm
Stepper Point sun-downer. February 2014.
Oil on board 21 x 22 cm

Follow the river until you meet the sea. 2014.
Oil on canvas 91.5 x 91.5 cm
Big sea off Pentireglaze. February 2014.
Mixed media on board. 31 x 34 cm.

Oystercatchers fly through the surf. November 2013.
Mixed media on paper. 57 x 62 cm.
Kurt Jackson MA (Oxon) DLitt (Hon) RWA was born in 1961 in Blandford, Dorset. He graduated from St Peter’s College, Oxford with a degree in Zoology in 1983. While there, he spent most of his time painting and attending courses at Ruskin College of Art, Oxford. On gaining his degree he travelled extensively and independently, painting wherever he went. He travelled to the Arctic alone and hitched across Africa with his wife, Caroline. They moved to Cornwall in 1984 where they still live and work. They have three grown children, Seth, Zinzi and Chloe.

A dedication to and celebration of the environment is intrinsic to both his politics and his art and a holistic involvement with his subjects provides the springboard for his formal innovations. Jackson’s practice involves both plein air and studio work and embraces an extensive range of materials and techniques including mixed media, large canvases, print making and sculpture.

Over the past thirty years Jackson has had numerous art publications released to accompany his exhibitions. Two monographs on Jackson have been published by Lund Humphries depicting his career so far; A New Genre of Landscape Painting (2010) and Sketchbooks (2012). A collection of his poetry And was produced in 2011. Jackson regularly contributes to radio and television and presents environmentally informed art documentaries for the BBC. He was the subject for an award winning BBC documentary, ‘A Picture of Britain’.

He has been Artist in Residence on the Greenpeace ship Esperanza, at the Eden Project and at Glastonbury Festival since 1999. He has an Honorary Doctorate (DLitt) from Exeter University and is an Honorary Fellow of St Peter’s College, Oxford University. He is an ambassador for Survival International and frequently works with Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, WaterAid, Oxfam and Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

He is represented by the Redfern Gallery in Cork Street, London and is an academician at the Royal West of England Academy.

www.kurtjackson.com  facebook.com/KurtJacksonArt  @KurtJacksonArt