

Working Drawings

THE EAST ANGLIAN RURAL BUILDING TRADE PROJECT

Working Drawings is an exhibition of work that is the result of a three-year project I set up to raise the profile and increase public awareness of traditional building skills in use in our rural communities. I wanted to reverse the modern trend in schools to focus solely on academic success and to change the attitude that manual skills are for those who can't cut it academically.

I see myself as a layman, my role as an artist to record my experiences of these craftsmen working in our rural communities. My drawings are a celebration of their skills and trades. They are a response to the energy and physicality of the work and the dedication and pride displayed by these extraordinary craftsmen. The scale of the works breaks boundaries, challenges preconceptions of drawings and allows the viewer to experience both the energy used in making the drawing and the energy in the subject of the drawing itself.

Using our bodies as well as our minds is a fundamental human need, and many believe that the craft of building and creating work with our hands has a vital part to play in our emotional and physical health.

These trades are represented in the spirit of artists work recording everyday life in the rural communities such as Jean-François Millet, Vincent Van Gogh and Stanley Spencer.

"As an artist and mother I believe in the instinctive need each of us has to be creative. I also believe we must take responsibility for our surroundings and encourage the next generation to do the same"

Malca Schotten

"As we tackle the urgent problem of skills for sustainable communities, nothing could be more important than the skills to maintain, repair and build upon the enduring structures that already form some of Britain's best-loved and sustained places. Yet skills for conservation and regeneration and for building crafts in general, are in drastic decline. Moreover, the crucial skills and practices that are necessary to adapt buildings successfully to local conditions – the very practices that resulted in such exquisitely beautiful and sustainable buildings are in drastic decline. Increasingly they are seen as incompatible with modern technology and a global economy."

Michael Mehaffy – Director of Education
The Princes Foundation for the Built Environment

The East Anglia Rural Building Trade Project

www.malcaschotten.net

Newsletter 1 · December 2002

The East Anglia Rural Building Trade Project highlights and promotes the traditional building skills that are currently practiced throughout the region

The project

Building is a fundamental part of life, we all need somewhere to live, somewhere that will give us shelter, happiness and security. We may wish to restore a victorian house to it's original condition, convert a barn, build a mud hut in Africa or, if you fancy, a mud hut in Norfolk! It could be the dream of building a traditional style Oak frame building in Suffolk, a glass house in Hampstead, or an Eco house in Essex. Building touches all our lives in one way or another. There are many traditional building skills that are still being practiced today purely because they are still relevant to the way we choose to live, nowhere more than in the rural community. These skills are required for such tasks as renovating historic agricultural buildings and maintaining thatched cottages.

There is tremendous value in learning about these skills from the past for their relevance to our rural communities today. As an artist I believe in the instinctive need each of us has to be creative. I also believe that we must take responsibility for our surroundings and encourage the next generation to do the same.

The East Anglia Rural Building Trade Project (EARBTP) is about bringing attention to traditional building skills that are currently being practiced throughout the region, with the aim of showing the value and demand in sustaining such skills, and investing in them as part of the education system. The project will tell the story of these skills as they are currently practiced, who some of the practitioners are, their history and the origins of their trade hopefully resulting in a change in attitude towards the building trade.



Early drawings at the studio September 2002

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The East Anglian Rural Building Trade Project

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Newsletter 2 · Spring 2005

The East Anglia Rural Building Trade Project highlights and promotes the traditional building skills that are currently practiced throughout the region

Introduction

It has been a long two years since the last newsletter; initially dominated by the search for a sponsor and the filling in of grant application forms, followed by a busy year visiting craftsmen and working in my studio to complete the body of work in time for the first exhibition in March 2005.

2003 was the year I planned to start the main body of work in my studio; however it turned out to be a quiet year for drawing. I began the year hot on the trail for funding that would pay for the production of a new body of work for the project; paper, pastels, charcoal, pigment, lots of fixative, and a photographer. The search for funding began with Arts & Business (A&B), a government funded organization to encourage arts and businesses to work together. After attending an A&B seminar I drew up a business proposal to send to a selection of building and construction industry related companies. I knew I only had nine months to find a sponsor, and with such an ambitious project this was a bit of a tall order (in general one needs about two years to plan and set up a sponsorship deal). I soon found that I was running out of time. The timely arrival of the new Arts Council 'Awards for the Arts' enabled me to make the decision to end my search for a private sponsor. After a frustrating year of clean hands, writing and, phone calls I received a grant from the Arts Council in December 2003. Now the work could begin!

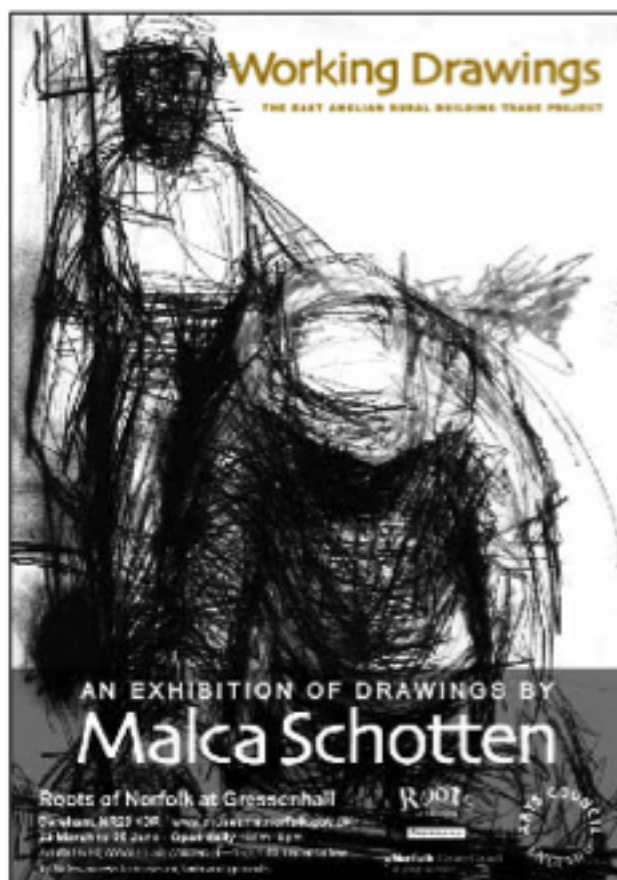
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Project Update

Since the first newsletter in 2002, I have included three more trades in the project making a total of seven. These trades represent a broad culture of skilled craftsmen. There are many more skills I would like to have included but pressure of time has made this impossible. Some of the trades I felt would have completed the range of local traditional crafts are stonemasons, tile makers and brick makers. I am sure, however, that as I investigated further more would have been added to the list.

In 2004 I staged a minor exhibition at Waxham barn, it was great to see the images displayed in such a fine traditional building, see page 4 for a picture and more details. >



The poster for the Gressenhall Exhibition starting on the 23 March