

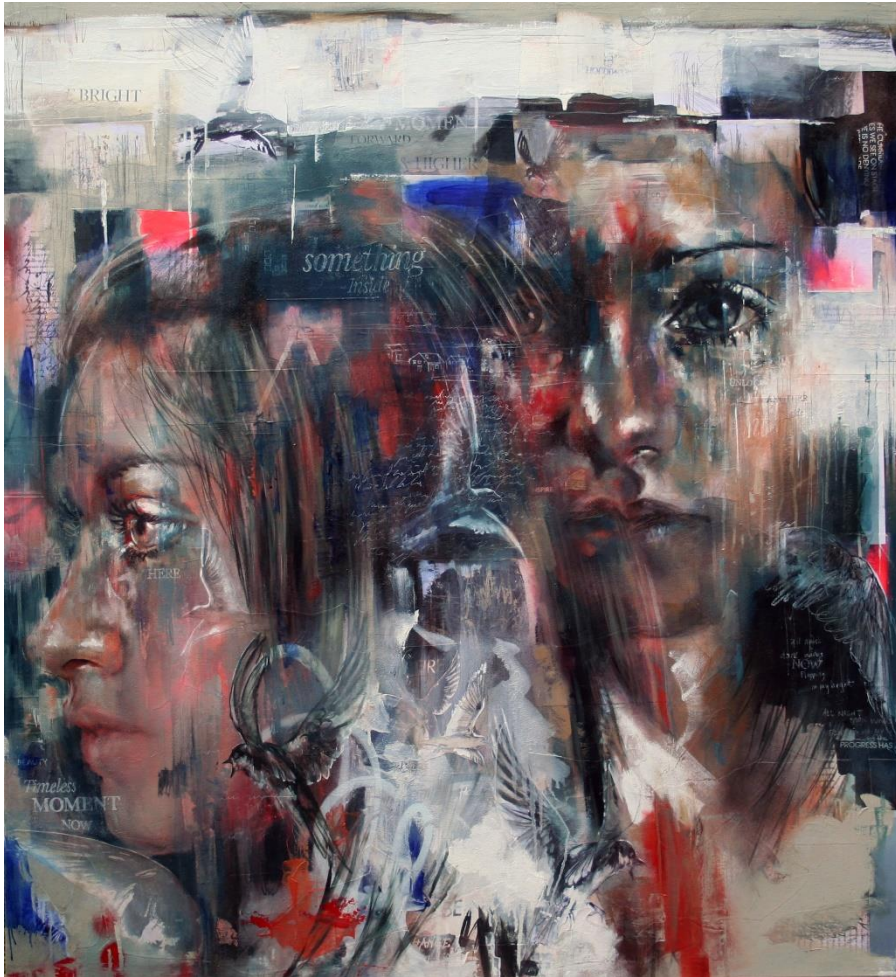
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“AMBITION BIRD”

A Solo Show

by

Toni Cogdell



All night dark wings
flopping in my heart.
Each an ambition bird.
- Anne Sexton

I write only because
There is a voice within me
That will not be still.
- Sylvia Plath

Often now I have to control my excitement, as if I were pushing through a screen; or as if something beat fiercely close to me.
-Virginia Woolf

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Toni's figurative portraits have captured the eyes of many, including British Musician, Goldie who connected so deeply with Toni's works that he added a piece of hers to his growing collection. She has received a number of awards, including the RWA 'Emerging Artist' award. The Royal West of England Academy (RWA) is one of only five Royal Academies of Art in the UK. Toni was also short listed for Channel Five TV's, 'The Big Art Challenge', and was a Finalist in 'Not the Turner Prize', The Daily Mail, 2003.

"As flickers of starlight in a constellation of living bodies, the figures in my paintings are solitary, but not alone. The inward moment they are captured in; their form fusing with paint marks, words, and textures, acts as a portal to spaces behind knowledge, a sensory sea of feeling, a self beneath our belief of the self. Us, simultaneously set in consciousness and clay.

I am on a pursuit to make contemporary portraits that dig beneath the skin to swim in our consciousness, to reveal our stories and the marks we make on ours and others' lifelines, the traces of ourselves we give, revisit and leave behind." – Toni Cogdell

This is Toni's solo show in Essex at Turner Art Perspective, a collection of over 20 new original works will be on show at the Chelmsford Gallery. Toni will be at the gallery on Saturday 30th September to meet collectors.

You're invited to meet Toni, join us for drinks and immerse yourself in her brilliant, new paintings.

The Exhibition by Toni Cogdell

The blueprint of an artist overlays my life. I live within the shimmer of its lines, glowing and expectant, always sensing its presence. I wear it, it follows me. A flutter in the darkness, something that won't still, something like Anne Sexton's Ambition Bird perhaps, from her poem of the same name. Visiting her at 3.15am I imagine it flapping and flitting between her ribs and lungs, a heart-space of longing; all fury, terror and joy willing itself to form. I recognise in this poem that deep-seated need, in spite of all sense and folly, to *create*, to make art.

Unpicking the chaos of our inner life to piece together something that might just resonate, with ourselves and others. The ambition bird is the creative path, feathered and armoured; it's the muse and the monster. I feel it in my own work and life and sense it in the work of other artists throughout time who made their offering to this unrelenting drive: we share this restless pursuit. We build a life around it.

The line between making art and living life can often blur. Carrying shopping bags, headlines poured over, a phone call from a friend – the wings are always in motion, they turn from moment to moment. It is a strange thing to state: life informs my art and art teaches me how to live. And always, this force, this flood. The wanting of

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things out of reach, a need to make something from nothing, a creative hunger that's hard to separate from the human. Those ambition birds rising again, rushing toward the sun like Icarus, their unkempt yet eager wings with fortified feathers finding only comfort in the heat. They drive my direction through life and art, while the figures in my paintings take them on, wrestle with them, and through the tussle of paint, words and collage, begin to find their own story.

About the artist

Toni Cogdell was born in Bristol, England, in 1979. While exhibiting her work across the UK as well as selling internationally, she has honed her process and techniques combining acrylic, spray paint, collage and oil paint to give voice to her expression; a personal style seeking to connect with the world around her.

Painting intuitively, in the space between figuration and abstraction Toni finds a freedom which allows her to go deeper into the intangible substance of the psyche and human condition without restricting or enforcing definitive ideas. Pulling recognisable truths into the work while opening to the unknown, her paintings are looking for a balance, a coming together of moments, a kind of imperfect beauty.

Having graduated from Bath Spa University, 2002 with a BA Hons in Fine Art, Bristol based artist, Toni ultimately paints portraits of unsaid moments and unseen thoughts, poetry which resides in daily life and in transitory moments. Her figures stand in ambiguous settings emphasising an intent focus on the cerebral. Every piece is painted with a carefully balanced palette and distinctive, contemplative composition.

The Works by Toni Cogdell

This body of work wants to converse with the ambition bird. These paintings live in a reflective place considering the mystery and pull of the creative drive in our daily life and its ability to reshape us. I have been looking back to those creatives who made art their lifeline, stepping outside the restrictions of their time, allowing the ambition bird to lead without question even though it can feel like a nonsensical existence, accepting both its gifts and thorns, wondering what space it might perhaps be able to hold for others. They say "Keep going! Follow that bird." and maybe I don't feel so alone, and maybe it's the courage needed in these current times to keep making art. So I make paintings for them.

What is art, where does it come from? It's from that 2am night cry, that bird rattling against its cage, wanting more, wanting to transform, as if it might set itself alight in an eruption of spontaneous flame to become a phoenix. It's a

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call, a hunger. This bird as a phantom, metaphor and truth visits me like an affirmation, and somehow painting after painting emerges from the dusty clay shell of my studio.

The Ambition Bird

By Anne Sexton, 1972

So it has come to this
insomnia at 3:15 A.M.,
the clock tolling its engine

like a frog following
a sundial yet having an electric
seizure at the quarter hour.

The business of words keeps me awake.
I am drinking cocoa,
that warm brown mama.

I would like a simple life
yet all night I am laying
poems away in a long box.

It is my immortality box,
my lay-away plan,
my coffin.

All night dark wings
flopping in my heart.
Each an ambition bird.

The bird wants to be dropped
from a high place like Tallahatchie Bridge.

He wants to light a kitchen match
and immolate himself.

He wants to fly into the hand of Michelangelo
and come out painted on a ceiling.

He wants to pierce the hornet's nest
and come out with a long godhead.

He wants to take bread and wine
and bring forth a man happily floating in the Caribbean.

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He wants to be pressed out like a key
so he can unlock the Magi.

He wants to take leave among strangers
passing out bits of his heart like hors d'oeuvres.

He wants to die changing his clothes
and bolt for the sun like a diamond.

He wants, I want.
Dear God, wouldn't it be
good enough to just drink cocoa?

I must get a new bird
and a new immortality box.
There is folly enough inside this one.

Exhibition Information:

Date: Saturday 30th September 2023

Time: 15:00 – 19:00

Venue: Turner Art Perspective, 37a Little Boyton Hall, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 4LN

MEET TONI COGDELL IN PERSON | FREE ENTRY

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Find out more about the artwork on show and the artists on the Turner Art Perspective website at www.turnerartperspective.com

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Notes to editors:

About Turner Art Perspective:

Turner Art Perspective is a UK based art gallery in Essex, representing a growing portfolio of international artists which they exhibit at some of the world's leading art fairs. Established by art dealer and framer, Soo Turner, with 29 years' experience in the art business.

Turner Art Perspective Art Gallery represent established and emerging artists from around the world, who they exhibit in their UK galleries, host with pop-up shows in London, curate at exhibitions in Europe, and exhibit at fairs in the USA, Europe, and Asia.

Soo Turner likes to combine the marketing of mainstream artworks with the promotion of unknown artists and photographers early in their careers, such as the now celebrated Connor Brothers, Joe Webb and Dan Baldwin who they exhibit at some of the world's leading art fairs.

Projects & collaborations include Selfridges, London Design Festival, Icon Magazine, Grand Designs, Chaplin's of London, Edinburgh Festival, Made in Chelsea, and South Place Hotel.

Turner Art Perspective galleries are based in Chelmsford & Shenfield in Essex, UK. The Chelmsford Gallery is located in a converted barn on a 3,000-acre farm which is ideal to host exhibitions whilst enjoying the beautiful setting. The Shenfield gallery is a white-walled space located in a charming retail suburb.