

SCALPED: Paul Emmanuel.

Curated by Sarah Gillett

35,000 years ago a man with a broken finger claimed his personal existence in history. He made the world's first print by placing his hand against a cave wall and blowing a fine dust from the red pigmented soil around its outline. "I am here" he announced, "I am here". He made his mark in a direct action inextricably linked with the land. The climate, geography and geology of the landscape defined his way of life completely. He took the wood, plants, water and stone he needed to hunt, eat and thrive. It is now considered by some anthropologists that the development of Homo Sapiens over our Neanderthal cousins turned on this point: whilst Neanderthals were strong, skilled hunters they were less social than Homo Sapiens, and were eventually driven to the most secluded and extreme edges of land mass before extinction. Homo Sapiens on the other hand lived in communities, bound together by 'culture' - art, jeweler and story-telling. No better at carving tools or hunting, yet early man assured his survival when he began to use the materials from his immediate environment for reasons other than obvious necessity; for souvenirs of important memories, for adornment, for pleasure. Culture developed as a way of understanding our place in the world in relation to others and to nature, and through this awakening the assertion of our own individual identity, our unique hand print, changed our lives forever.

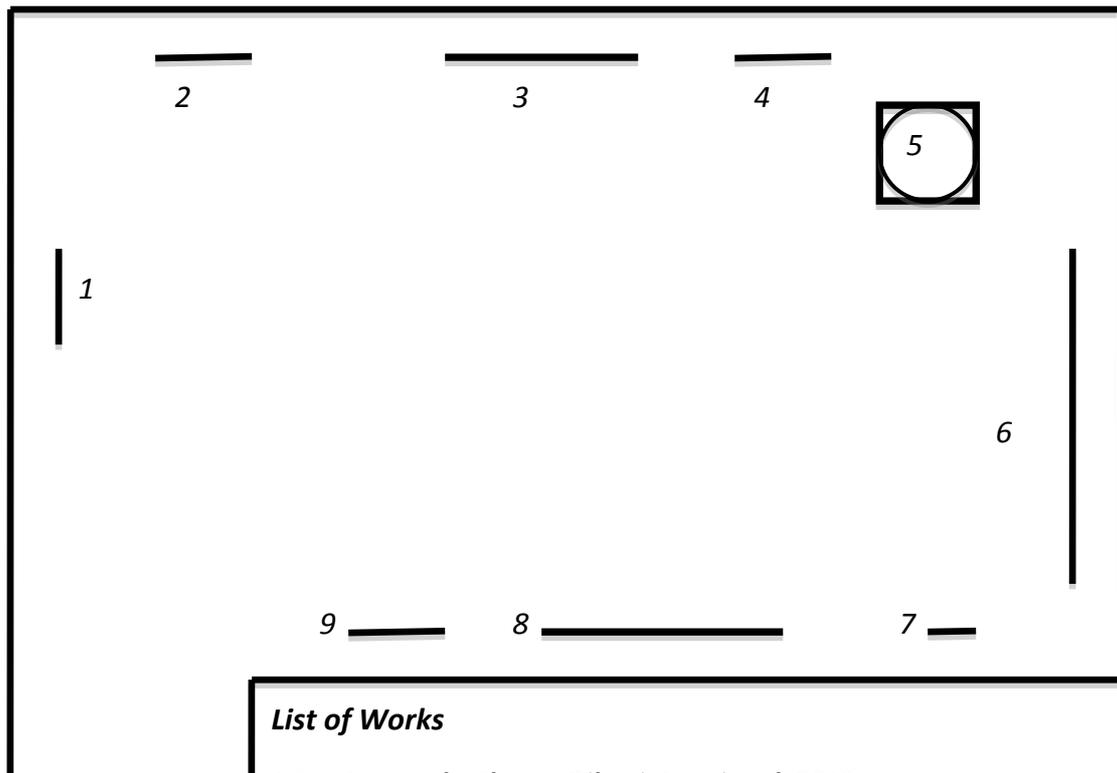
The nature of this cultural progression is fundamental to Paul Emmanuel's practice where creativity is influenced by diverse and differing cultural scenarios.

The title of the show, *Scalped*, is taken from a crime/western comic book series to reference a broader, socio-cultural context of cultures-within-cultures evident in Emmanuel's practise. It focuses on the inhabitants of a fictional Indian Reservation in modern-day South Dakota as they grapple with organized crime, rampant poverty and alcoholism, local politics and the preservation of their cultural identity. This land-culture-story resonates with Emmanuel's artistic concerns and misgivings. For a number of years now Emmanuel has lived on a small farm in South Wales before this, his practice explored the relationship between body, material and place in various contexts. Emmanuel is a contemporary artist for whom international travel has informed and infiltrated his practice at home. By choosing opportunities in unfamiliar lands from Taiwan to China and the USA, Emmanuel allowed the politics, psychologies and dynamics of cultures-within-cultures to play a subjective part in his work.

For Emmanuel, where and when he makes work determines what the work becomes; from his Fleece Paintings to his lens-based pieces, the separation between the artwork and its context is apparent only once the artwork is shown in a gallery setting, an environment which Emmanuel perverts and magnifies in this Farm Shop installation. Each new series produced by Emmanuel demonstrates the artist's dedication to that most weighted and ubiquitous substance; paint. For in the history of art, paint provides the means for individual representation to be told in a most compelling hand. From the cave paintings onwards, artists have wrestled with the transmutable quality of paint. It is a most manipulative and immediate material that still has a primeval power to persuade where words are inadequate. From Aboriginal dot paintings to Tintoretto, from Klein to Richter pigment has been mixed, applied and used in never-ending variations. Emmanuel takes a performative approach to pigment to splurge, squeeze and squish paint from tubes and cans; he splatters and drips household emulsion in delicate body paintings; he dribbles and sucks paint from his mouth; he dyes and combs wool in oil paint and hair gel and takes sheep-marker's annual identification ritual to an extreme, toxic end. The decision to use one material over another is instinctive, occasioned by the proximity between artist studio and landscape and by the intuition of thought and body.

The very real 'stuffness' of the materials, the sheep wool, the hair, the paint, is a conversation between Emmanuel and the land itself. Totems of seeming insignificance bringing the outside into the gallery, literally mapping the landscape. The gallery is not a shrine; the work is not reverential or nostalgic for a fictional or ideological place. The work explodes the theory of the artist as the creator, for here Emmanuel stands only equal to his materials and surroundings. It is through this process that ultimately, each work becomes a mirrored triptych self-portrait of the artist, the land and the paint itself, each contributing their own distinct DNA in a series of combinations recording a particular time and place.

Sarah Gillett 2012



List of Works

- 1 Nantgwardre Fleece, Oil paint, Hair gel. 2012**
- 2 Tonfildre Fleece, Oil paint, Hair gel. 2012**
- 3 Tree Cheese Ash Sapling, Cheese, Sheep-marker. 2012**
- 4 Callwen Fleece, Oil paint, Hair gel. 2012**
- 5 Giant Size Wonder Wipes Ash, Plastic bucket, Sheep-marker. 2012**
- 6 Yellow Mare's Tail Mare's Tail, Sheep-marker. 2012**
- 7 Untitled Interspecies Oil paint, Slug, Semen. 2012**
- 8 Head Horse Primer, Horse Mane. 2012**
- 9 Swn Yr Afon Fleece, Oil paint, Hair gel. 2012**

Artists talk: 15.00 Sunday 7th October 2012. Paul Emmanuel will be discussing the ideas and influences behind *Scalped* and the *Farm Shop* project. All welcome. Free event.

Future Archive: As part of GMP's editions project, Paul Emmanuel will be creating an editioned print at the Printheus workshops. Details to follow on GMP website and facebook.

Scalped is part of Paul Emmanuel's on-going work as part of a Creative Wales Award from the Arts Council of Wales. GMP has received support from Cardiff Council as part of Cardiff Contemporary 2012



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