

Oriel Gelf **Glynn Vivian Art Gallery** |

OFFSITE / ODDI AR Y SAFLE

press release

For immediate release

The Wakelin Award 2015

Alexander Duncan

5 September – 2 October 2015
Grand Theatre, Swansea

Preview Saturday 5 September, 2.30 – 4.30pm

The presentation of this year's **Wakelin Award** will take place on Saturday, 5 September at the Grand Theatre in Swansea. The annual award is given to a Welsh artist, whose work is purchased for the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery's Permanent Collection. Previous award winners include Robert Harding, David Tress, Pete Davis, Craig Wood, David Garner, Tim Davies, Dick Chappell, Brendan Stuart Burns, Anthony Shapland, Catrin Webster, Jonathan Anderson, Meri Wells, David Cushway, Helen Sear and Clare Woods.

The recipient for The Wakelin Award 2015 is **Alexander Duncan**.

Alexander Duncan was born in Swansea in 1985, studied at Swansea College of Art (UTSWD), and has recently finished an MA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London. Alexander Duncan works primarily with sculpture, sought objects, video and photography.

This year's selector is **Tim Davies**, Professor of Fine Art at Swansea College of Art (UTSWD). The work he has chosen for the Glynn Vivian Collection is entitled - **like swimming** - a sculptural work made in 2015, which takes the form of a stack of coloured foam floats usually used in swimming pools, but which, significantly, are made of concrete.

Selector, Tim Davies, says of the work: *"Alex has always been interested in where and how we place ourselves in the world, the position of the body in relationship to other objects and situations, which can only be sensed through the actual experience of the materiality of objects. This sculptural work, which resembles a float - a piece of foam bitten scratched and clung to - offers a reflective moment about our connection with water. It suggests how we like to be in control of our environment but, when touched or lifted, this work takes us to an unexpected edge between reality and illusion, provocatively questioning our own sense of such certainties. In a wider context, the accompanying film which Alex is generously gifting to the Gallery - **wavy gravy** - reflects hundreds of people crammed into an enclosed space - a 'tsunami experience' - slowly rising and falling with*

artificial waves. This work poignantly mixes a strong sense of foreboding with a bizarre otherworldly lightness, questioning the vulnerability of the human condition, and whether in fact we are in control of our future destiny. Alex has always focused on important contemporary issues, often closely relating to sustainability, and the recent significant and successful developments in his work suggested that this would be an important time to include his work in the Glynn Vivian collection”.

Alexander Duncan says, *“The sculptural works and the film on display were inspired by my interest, as described by Adam Carr, ‘in what is real and what is imitating the real? How we respond to something that is both, or rather, something that sits between these two diverging states?’ I am delighted that my work will be joining this major public collection in Swansea, my home town, and I am pleased to have been selected. The Wakelin Award offers recognition and is enabling for artists such as myself, and I would like to thank the organisers for their generosity. I am sure there are many other artists who will be supported by the Award in time to come”.*

The Award is administered by the Friends of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery and is generously supported by donations in memory of Richard and Rosemary Wakelin, who were themselves artists and active supporters of the arts in Swansea. Their son, **Dr Peter Wakelin**, said, *“It is important for both artists and museums that current works are added to the collections of the future. We are very grateful to the Friends of the Glynn Vivian for supporting this Award and helping to maintain the Gallery’s reputation as one of the best places to see Welsh art, even in this period when it’s closed during major refurbishment. People are always astonished when they find out how small the purchasing budgets are for public galleries in Wales, which need all the help they can get to represent current Welsh art in their collections.”*

Jenni Spencer-Davies, Curator, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery says *‘The Wakelin Award has enabled the Gallery to acquire many significant works for the collection over the last sixteen years. We are very pleased this year to acquire remarkable work by Alexander Duncan, especially as he is a Swansea artist. The Award is truly supportive of artists working today, and the Gallery is deeply appreciative of the continuing generosity of the Award’s supporters and the Friends of the Glynn Vivian, organisers of the Award. Our warmest thanks also to the artist Alexander Duncan and Tim Davies for making such an informed choice, and to the Grand Theatre for generously hosting the Award this year.’*

The Award will be presented at 3pm, Saturday 5 September at the Grand Theatre. Admission is free.

**In conversation: Alexander Duncan with Tim Davies
Thursday 1 October 5.30pm at the YMCA**

Notes to Editors:

1. Glynn Vivian Art Gallery is part of the City & County of Swansea, and this project is presented as part of the Glynn Vivian Offsite programme.
2. Grand Theatre is open Monday – Saturday, 9.30pm – 8pm
Singleton Street, Swansea, SA1 3QJ
The Wakelin Award 2015 is displayed in the second floor gallery
3. Glynn Vivian Art Gallery is currently closed to the public as preparations are underway for a major redevelopment project. This major project will create a new and exciting visitor experience and bring the attraction into the 21st century, whilst conserving the original character of the 1911 building and improving access for all.
4. For more information, high-res images and to arrange an interview with the Curator please contact Katy Freer on 01792 516900 or email katy.freer@swansea.gov.uk

Further information:

Richard and Rosemary Wakelin

Richard Wakelin (1921-1987) and Rosemary Culley (1919-1998) were both artists, based in Swansea from the late 1950s. They were born in Cardiff and met as students at the Welsh School of Architecture in 1939 before entering the services for the duration of the war. They married in 1947. Richard worked as an architect in private practice in Swansea and later with the City Council (where his role included care and alterations at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery). The family lived in Sketty, and Rosemary moved to Oystermouth in 1990. As artists they both worked in abstract styles, but they appreciated all forms of art and craft. They worked through several organisations to further the visual arts, notably the Swansea Art Society, the Association of Artists and Designers in Wales, the 74 Guild of Artist Craftsmen, the Welsh Group, and the Friends of the Glynn Vivian.

They were co-founders of the Swansea Arts Workshop in Swansea's Maritime Quarter, now the Mission Gallery. They were always particularly keen to help and encourage talented artists and craftspeople, especially those struggling for recognition, and to broaden the enjoyment of the arts in Swansea and Wales generally. Their three surviving children are Andrew, Sally and Peter Wakelin. Their eldest son Martin died in 2012 leaving his wife Christine Townley and his daughter Megan, who continue to take an interest in the award.

Alexander Duncan| Brief Biography

Alexander Duncan graduated with a BA (Hons) degree in **2007** at Swansea Metropolitan University, and was awarded his MA in **2015** at the Royal College of Art, London.

Selected Solo shows include **2012** *Raised Beach* Mostyn Llandudno, **2011** *Surge* Mission Gallery Swansea and **2010** *Eocene* 'Testbed' Oriol Davies Newtown.

Recent Group shows include in **2015** *the bright field* Tonbridge Kent; *Mediterranea* 17 Milan Italy; *window project* Gazelli Art House London; *London Open* Whitechapel Gallery London; *Open 19* Mostyn Llandudno; and *Latching Firm* Camden Art Centre London.

Awards include in **2015** RBS Bursary Award; **2014** Eaton Fund Award; Gilbert Bayes Scholarship; **2012** Josef Herman People's Choice Award, National Eisteddfod of Wales; **2011** Mission Gallery Studio Award, Swansea.

Visit www.glynnviviangallery.org for all Glynn Vivian Offsite information. All events are free, everyone welcome

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