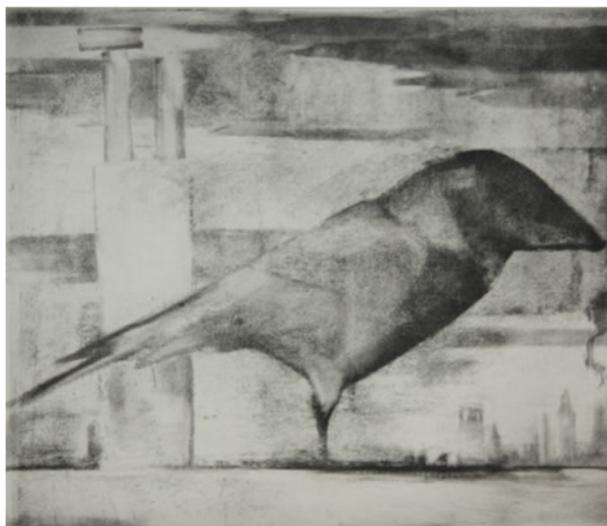

PRESS RELEASE

PETER FREETH RA

40 Years of Aquatints

10 September – 8 October 2021



Black Bird, etching, 58 x 65 cm

[View catalogue on line](#) - [View the video](#)

For a number of years, and without any technical collaboration or commercial publishing, Peter Freeth has been developing an original form of printmaking. His etchings, shown every summer for more than twenty years at the Royal Academy, have only rarely been seen in large numbers as a single coherent body of work. Art Space Gallery is delighted to bring together 40 or more works spanning 40 years of his practice as vivid proof of how overdue a major survey of his work is.

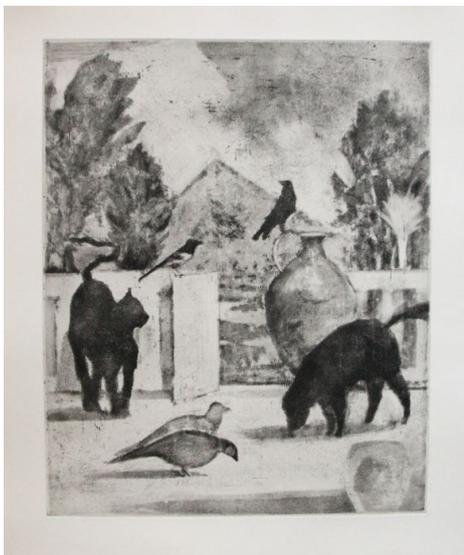
Peter Freeth's etchings take you into many places: among rough sleepers and hungry felines, refugees clambering over walls and walls dividing cities; to half remembered or reimagined scenes from Edmund Spenser's Sweet Thames or the biblical Waters of Babylon. There is depth and there is darkness. The imagery is essentially internal rather than directly from life and like in the best printmaking in the history of the art there is a readiness to portray the world with a critical eye that challenges social and political stereotypes and exposes human folly with wit and humour.

'Old men should be explorers'. Peter Freeth recalls T.S.Eliot, adding 'It's not given to many to be a Columbus or a Vasco da Gama. Explorers come in many sizes and shapes, and the artist's passion to get a certain diagonal or a certain light just right is in itself each time an adventure of discovery.'

But whatever interpretation we put on the images their technical ingenuity is manifest. The intense contrast of blacks and whites associated with the intaglio tradition is replaced with refined tones, subtle transitions and a delicate play of light. It is a radical and innovative approach that starts with a painted ink image, which has in itself all of the tones. This is subjected to a single bite in the acid – the whites, greys and blacks created in one go rather than the usual process of separate bites in multiple stages. In this way an image of muted tonal harmonies is achieved; a deliberately painterly approach that has its taproots in the Slade School in Fine Art where he trained as a painter and as a printmaker with Anthony Gross.

In the twists and turns of making a print and bringing it to completion there is a constant contest between idea and process; a contest that Freeth approaches by working simultaneously on different themes at the same time so that groups of subject matter co-exist, growing and changing together. And he will come across a work he has long ignored only to discover it has further to go than he had first imagined and rework it. His desire to keep finding new ways to renew and enrich an image with a combination of creative originality and supreme technical skill is palpable and if printmaking has too often been thought of as a poor relation to the more 'serious' medium of painting, the selection of work in this exhibition shows otherwise.

Peter Freeth studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, London from 1956 to 1960. In 1960 he won the Prix



Shop Talk on Parnassus, etching, 74 x 62 cm

de Rome in Engraving, taking him to Rome where he lived for three years, travelling extensively throughout Italy. He was a tutor in etching at the Royal Academy Schools from 1966 to 2007 and has exhibited widely in mixed exhibitions in the UK, the United States, Italy, Japan, India and Russia and was elected a Member of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers and Royal Academician in 1991 (ARA 1990) and is included in the collections of the Arts Council of Great Britain, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, British Museum, London, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Government Art Collection, Harvard University Collection.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a 38 page catalogue with 22 illustrations and essays by **Anne Desmet RA** and **Michael Sandle RA**

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm by appointment only.