

*You are invited to a special event  
to accompany this exhibition.*

# Conscious Oil: An Evening of Narrative and Song

The evening will feature Diana Marquand, campaigner for social justice and sustainability. She will tell of the story behind the pictures. She will explain the meaning of Ecocide and a need for international laws which protect habitats and communities. She will explore the need for inner transition and how we can then work together to make a difference.

Diana will be supported by the Pales Peace Choir with songs from across the world about caring for the earth, peace and our common humanity. You can also hear of the steps Llandrindod Wells has begun to take toward conscious oil and a sustainable future.

**Saturday 15th October, 7.00pm – 9.30 pm**

**The Herb Garden Cafe, Llandrindod Wells**

Admission Free

# Conscious Oil: Myth and Mind in the Age of Petroleum



## An exhibition of pictures by Emily Johns

October 3<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> - The Herb Garden Cafe, Llandrindod Wells

## The Artist

Emily Johns is a visual artist working and living in the South East of England. Born in London, she now lives in St Leonards on Sea, in East Sussex. She is currently working on a series of images under the title Conscious Oil, co-managing the poetry publishers Hearing Eye, and co-editing Peace News, Britain's longest-running peace publication.

## Conscious Oil

Oil has a personality. It is an agent in human affairs. It has a biography. Conscious Oil re-imagines human history from the point of view of that oil-entity.

In Sussex, where Emily Johns lives, there are oil wells and nodding donkeys on the Downs in among the bluebell woods. Sussex has its place in oil history as much as Texas and Arabia. The black goo of the printmaker's ink spreads the oil thin enough to see its story.

The commercial use of crude oil and its derivatives has marked the surface of the earth as well as its climate and led to conflict and environmental degradation on a gigantic scale. The sense of oil as an ancient part of nature, a rich metaphor, and the subject of folklore (for example the Eternal Fires of Mesopotamia) has been almost completely overlaid. The work represents the multi-dimensionality of oil in its human, natural and archaic aspects. It investigates crude oil as a natural repository of the primordial past rather than a commodity to be exploited at all costs.

## The Pictures

### *Her embrocation*

For thousands of years crude oil has been used for skin complaints. In this picture the oil is in the apothecary's shop, and the tar baby in the bottle is like a genie. It suggests the potency of a substance, as yet undiscovered, which was so pure and gentle women used it to sooth their skin.

### *Eternal Fires*

The eternal fires have been burning in the caves of Kirkuk since the time of Nebuchadnezzar. In this picture, women who are suffering from infertility are spending the night in these caves. In the morning they will throw a handful of sand on the ground. If a flame appeared they will know that the demon that had occupied their womb has gone.

### *First Flower*

In the Natural History Museum is the earliest fossil flower. It is delicate and botanically modern. It blossomed at a time when allosaurs became extinct and oil was formed. In this picture the oil drill has reached into the source of oil. In places like the Niger Delta where Shell have sunk their oil wells, the lives of the indigenous people have ceased to flower. They too could face extinction.

### *The Prospector*

In this picture the prospector is looking for oil inside the body of the earth. He uses the similar sound equipment as doctors do when they are tracking the position and progress of a foetus. Oil prospecting began in Iraq, the place of eternal fires, soon after Henry Ford invented the internal combustion engine and the first oil well in Iraq was sunk there in 1927.

### *The Albatross*

In this picture the albatross is sitting on its nest. Oil is as huge as an albatross and otherworldly. There is something of "The Ancient Mariner" here: the casual killing of such a spirit. The island where the albatross make their nests is littered with plastic rubbish, cigarette lighters, toothbrushes which the baby chicks swallow whole. Their intestines become clogged up with this rubbish and they are unable to digest any wholesome food.

### *The Bears*

Oil is made of zooplankton, innumerable tiny animals that lived in the sea and died. Polar bears evolved 200,000 years ago, almost at the same time as anatomically modern humans. In this picture the last polar bear gazes at the shadow of himself as the ice melts around him.