

Alice Browne Studio Residency with Hospitalfield



Experimenting in the studio: Watercolour, ink, gouache and mono-print on paper, 70cm x 50cm

Blog Post: Alice Browne

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There is a pigeon that sings to me each morning through the fireplace next to my bed. When it rains, I hear the water dripping onto the stone hearth. My window looks out of the rampart-style stonework on the third floor towards the sea. I feel a long way from my ground floor flat in London.

Whilst in this tall house with many turrets, it is hard not to think about verticality as each morning I descend the giant staircase to the kitchen. There are many other ways to reach the same destination in this magnificent and architecturally odd building, but this is my preferred staircase, it being the grandest and offering a view of some of the historic works of the Hospitalfield collection that are hung on the landing. Sometimes I stop to admire the stone-carved parrots and tortoise that form part of the banister.

As Virgil led Dante through *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, so Dante accompanied me through the first half of my stay here. Each day after breakfast, I descended the circles of Hell, past the devil lodged in the centre of the earth, climbed Mount Purgatory and went up into the spheres of Heaven. *Paradiso*, as Dante frequently points out, is beyond the descriptive capabilities of his artistic language. Nevertheless, his attempts endow me with a sense of lightness as I travel with him (and his beloved, yet surprisingly cruel, Beatrice) towards the climax, beyond space and time to the true home of God. It's an awesome and bizarre poem that I'm privileged to have had the time to study while I've been at [Hospitalfield](#). Its themes and images I will return to in the coming months. As one who feels emptiness after completing a computer game, I almost want to rejoin Dante at the start of *The Divine Comedy* and begin again.

This is a truly great place to read: spacious, quiet, and without distractions of day-to-day chores. The incredible and supportive members of staff make life here easy for us. The studio is located across a courtyard from the main house, where I've experimented with mould making for plaster casting and created a series of works on paper and sketchbook drawings. I've also had a play in the print studio, doing some mono-printing to collage onto my drawings. At lunch and dinnertime with the other residents, we share stories and make plans for foraging walks and beach trips. With a car here I've had opportunity to visit the surrounding Angus Glens: dramatic glacial

valleys in which to once again explore a verticality that is lacking from my daily life.

Space and time to create ideas (and absorb old ones) are precious and I've found myself becoming anxious at the thought of leaving here. This house is like Gaston Bachelard's 'oneiric' dwelling, a dreamlike place that I hope I'll be able to mentally revisit at times when I need focus. I feel sure this was the intention of Patrick and Elizabeth Allan Fraser when creating this space for the artists of the future.

In the meantime, with a few days remaining, there is plenty more to do and many more nooks to explore. If we try, we can trick ourselves into hearing the rustling of the sea, rather than the A92 to Dundee.

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