

Scene: Reflections on the life of Edward Gordon Craig

An exhibition curated by printmaker Liz Bird with
invited Bristol artists



21 June to 1 October 2019

The co-curated nature of this exhibition was inspired by Clare Thornton (1970-2019). Clare was the first Artist-in-Residence at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection and her working practice of using archival materials to inform and inspire new creative work continues to influence and inspire us today.

Introduction

Edward Gordon Craig [EGC] (1872-1966) was the son of Ellen Terry and Edward William Godwin. Craig tried out various roles as an actor, including a provincial tour as Hamlet, but left England for good in 1904, dying in France in 1966. In 1904 he went to Berlin with the dancer Isadora Duncan, who was to have his child in 1906. By that time EGC had settled in Florence, producing the journal *The Mask* from 1908 with Dorothy Nevile Lees. Photographs of EGC in old age, taken by their son David Lees, can be seen in the National Portrait Gallery.

There are eleven prints by EGC in the Theatre Collection, as well as most of his publications, including a complete run of *The Mask*. These items cover most of his crafts: woodcuts, posters and portraits, etchings, and stage designs. The earliest is from 1898 and the last is the 1930 memorial of the 1926 production in Copenhagen of Ibsen's *The Pretenders*. *Hamlet* predominates: one early woodcut stage design and three proofs of woodcuts for his figures, initially designed for the 1912 Stanislavski production for the Moscow State Theatre.

The seven invited artists have drawn on this collection to reflect on Edward Gordon Craig: his prints, his publications, his stage designs, and his extraordinary life.

Edward Gordon Craig: His early years and acting career

From his birth EGC was marked as the son of a famous actor: Ellen Terry. From 1887 he acted in many productions in London and with touring companies but by 1898 he had decided to leave the acting profession and work as a designer, publisher, and metteur-en-scene. His work with the Purcell Society was to involve three productions, all of which were a financial failure, as was his first venture into publishing, The Page. Discouraged, Craig left London in 1904, and settled in Italy.

1. *D'Artagnan* by Edward Gordon Craig, 1898

Two tone woodcut print. Includes engraved 'A POSTER DESIGNED AND ENGRAVED BY GORDON CRAIG' annotated in pencil with signed monogram above the date EGC/8

During his first marriage Craig was living in Denham where he first met the Beggarstaff Brothers (James Pryde and William Nicholson) in 1893. This poster for d'Artagnan clearly shows their influence, although Craig claims that he had lost touch with them by 1898.

2. *Outrageous Fortune* by Diana Hilton, 2019

Chine colle etching gouache

I became fascinated by EGC's relationship with Hamlet. Irving Wardle wrote an article titled 'Hamlet and Gordon Craig' in 1967 and two particular sentences struck me:

'[the story of Hamlet]...partly corresponds to his own life. Craig, much indulged as a child, had grown up a young prince'

And

'Craig, Stanislavsky says, saw Hamlet as one of the best of men, like Christ'.

In the etching Outrageous Fortune, EGC as Hamlet stands centre

stage in a spotlight in front of one of his own scenic designs for that play.

3. Design for a scene in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, Edward Gordon Craig, 1902

Woodcut

EGC/11

EGC was involved in productions in London with Martin Shaw and the Purcell Society. Dido and Aeneas was staged at Hampstead Conservatoire of Music in 1901 and this image was first seen as a backcloth for that production. Acis and Galatea and The Masque of Love were produced at the Great Queen Street Theatre on 10 March 1902 by the Purcell Opera Society. Unfortunately 'Craig's ingenious, attractive and economical staging of Handel's opera as an out of the way theatre could not save the Purcell Opera Society from their creditors.' (source: Camden Arts Centre, EGC Centenary Exhibition catalogue, 1972).

4. Lewis Waller as d'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers*

Black and white photograph by Rotary Photo Company [nd]

MM/2/PE/AC/1804

The play was staged initially at the Globe Theatre before transferring to Her Majesty's in 1899. The role of D'Artagnan made Waller a box office star.

5. Edward Gordon as a boy, by Window and Grove c.1878

Black and white photograph

MM/2/PE/DE/14

At this point EGC and his sister Edy had not taken on the name of Craig

6. Gordon Craig by Herbert Rose Barraud, 1890

Carbon print

MM/2/PE/DE/14

This photograph dates from EGC's time as an actor and can also be seen in the National Portrait Gallery (Ref: NPG AX/9362).

7. Ellen Terry as Philippa Chester in *The Wandering Heir*, by the Stereoscopic Company, 1874

Sepia carte de visite
MM/2/TH/LO/QU/2

*The author and dramatist Charles Reade encouraged Ellen Terry to return to the stage in 1874 when EGC was just two and his sister Edy five. Reade was the author of *The Wandering Heir*, which was staged at the Queen's Theatre, London.*

8. *Portrait of Henry Irving* by Edward Gordon Craig, [1899]

Three colour woodcut with black key
EGC/2

9. *Portrait of Ellen Terry* by Edward Gordon Craig, [1899]

Three colour woodcut, imprimateur single C in bottom left cut into the wood
EGC/1

*Items 8 and 9 are undated but also appear in *Henry Irving and Ellen Terry Portraits* by E Gordon Craig 19 plates some in colour published in Chicago by HS Stone, 1899 for Miss Terry Private Portrait. In this the Terry woodcut is only two tone, with black key.*

10. *Irving as Badger in The Streets of London*, Gordon Craig, [c.1900]

Black and white woodcut on rough paper
EGC/10

*EGC produced an illustrated magazine entitled *The Page*, as a sole enterprise from 1898-1901. This image appeared in *The Page* c.1900.*

11. *Thirteen Princesses under the Spell of Koschei the Immortal, plus Horse [from *The Firebird*]* by Caroline Case, 2019

Clay

See below, items 27-28.

Shakespeare Matters

Ellen Terry and Henry Irving were to become the most famous interpreters of Shakespeare around the world. Of all the plays, *Hamlet* was to feature most significantly in EGC's artistic life. While an actor he had played Hamlet; William Rothenstein created his portrait in the role. In 1912 Craig was invited to design the sets for the Moscow State Theatre production of *Hamlet* as directed by Stanislavski. The production was not a success, both men vowing never to work with each other again, but the simple woodcuts that Craig made to demonstrate actors moving against his screens, were to survive and ultimately appeared in the volume known as the *Cranach Hamlet*, produced by Count Harry Kessler for the Cranach Press in Weimar in 1930.

All of the invited artists have created work reflecting on Shakespeare. Four pieces were produced for the Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory productions of *Hamlet*, and two for that of *Lear*. As imagined by Diana Hilton, Craig did indeed play the role of Hamlet, and David Johnson has added to his piece inspired by the *Hamlet* set design, two other works relating to Craig's stage designs.

12. *Lear Storm Scene* by Edward Gordon Craig, 1923

Woodcut, with two dates annotated on print in pencil: 1920 (bottom left) and 1923 inscribed to the right around the EGC monogram. Annotated in pencil under mount: State 5 copy 14 only, 150 copies printed
EGC/7

13. *King Lear Act III Sc II*, by Liz Bird, 2012

Etching with aquatint

Produced for Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory in 2012, I was surprised to see echoes of EGC's print in my composition.

14. Set design for *Hamlet*, by Edward Gordon Craig, 1908

Woodcut. Printed on Japanese paper, signed with monogram and dated 1922. 'Scene' written in pencil on bottom right of image and 'State 2' on bottom left
EGC/4

EGC produced many set designs for Hamlet; a number were reproduced in the book Scene (London and Oxford: Humphrey Milford, 1923). Foreword by John Masefield. Paper cover with motif, monogram on spine, 18 plates dated 1907-1911. YXL C886.

15. *How it Might Have Been* by David Johnson, 2019

Sugar lift-aquatint

This piece has been inspired by EGC's theatre design concept of moveable screens, as in his designs for Hamlet.

16. *Scene from Hamlet* by Edward Gordon Craig, 1927/1938

Woodcut. Printed on newspaper print; signed bottom right with monogram and bottom left: 'State 1 only 6 copies printed, copy no 3 handwritten proof on R 37 B over B
EGC/3

The Cranach Hamlet, Act III, Scene II, shows this print with added background, play scene, actors making up and putting on masks (Source: Dover Wilson Shakespeare.ms.uk, p.81).

17. *Sad Ophelia* by Diana Hilton, 2016

Etching

I made this for a Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory exhibition, when the company staged Hamlet in 2016 and this image brings to mind the masks that EGC wished actors to use in his productions.

18. *Bird Dancer* by Edward Gordon Craig, 1927/1938

Woodcut. With two dates: 1927 under the print to the left, and 1938 on the right after the signed monogram. Annotated in pencil on bottom left: State 1 only 12 copies made no 12 mid-page 1927 on

right 37
EGC/5

In the Cranach Hamlet Act II Scene II, the same figure appears in a woodcut plate of players entering, which suggests that this was one of the figures wearing a mask.

19. *Why Should a Dog, a Horse, a Rat Have Life?* by Louella Frankel Jones, 2012
Etching

This print was made for the exhibition which accompanied the 2012 Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory production of King Lear. I wanted to suggest a 'staged' setting rather than a naturalistic illustration of the scene, and actually took the figures from an image of the final scene of Rigoletto, another tragic father and daughter death scene.

20. *The Play Scene, Hamlet* by Edward Gordon Craig, [1927/1938]

Woodcut. *It has been dated twice: 1927 on the left, under the print, and 1938' on the right, under the monogram.*
EGC/6

The Cranach Hamlet contains the same woodcut but titled 'Court Scene' Act I Scene II, rather than 'The Play Scene'. Here Hamlet is in the foreground, his uncle Claudius and mother Gertrude on their thrones.

21. *The Play's the Thing* by Louella Frankel Jones, 2016
Etching

Made for the same Shakespeare at the Tobacco Factory exhibition, I chose to depict the scene of the 'play within the play' as a moment of high drama, but I included the ghost of Hamlet's father (he does not appear in this scene), hovering over the scene as a vengeful or merely watchful ghostly figure. I was interested to see that EGC

had chosen the same scene as a subject for an illustration.

22. *Hamlet, Act 1 Scene 1* by Liz Bird, 2016

Etching with aquatint

Originally produced for a production of Hamlet at the Tobacco Factory, I researched Hamlet files in the Theatre Collection, and this etching draws heavily on the 1913 production at Leipzig, where it is possible that the producers knew of EGC's work.

23. *Neither a Borrower or a Lender Be* by Ann Gover, 2016

Monoprint

Again inspired by EGC's fascination with Hamlet, this image represents Polonius and his advice to his son Laertes: 'neither a borrower or a lender be'.

24. *The Black Figures of Edward Gordon Craig* presented and with an introduction by L M Newman (Wellingborough: Christopher Skelton, 1989)

Print

YXL C866

Plate 18 (p.146) shows the reverse image of the woodcut Bird Dancer, with notes about the recut of this image at Genoa. Bird Dancer drew printmaker Caroline Case to Stravinsky's ballet The Firebird, and later items in the exhibition return to the themes of dancing and Soviet Russia.

25. *Index to the Story of My Days - Some Memoirs of Edward Gordon Craig: 1872-1907* by Edward Gordon Craig (London: Hulton Press, 1957)

Print

Open at the Portrait of Gordon Craig as Hamlet, by William Rothenstein, p.160.

26. *Hamlet and Gertrude, Act III Scene IV: The Closet Scene*, by Diana Hilton, 2019
Collage ink and acrylic

I have imagined Craig and his mother Ellen Terry, playing this scene together.

27-28. *Banner: Firebird - Gift of Feather, and Firebird - Golden Apple* by Caroline Case, 2019
Woodcut

I was attracted to Edward Gordon Craig's Black Figures woodcuts and to his 3D figures made for stage scenes. I particularly liked the woodcut of the Bird Dancer costume (1938) and used this to relate to the story of the firebird. Stravinsky's ballet The Firebird, with costumes by Leon Bakst premiered in 1910 and possibly influenced Craig's design when it was revived on stage in London in 1934. Working with woodcut, I am inspired by landscape and by narrative, fairy tale, current events, personal and cultural stories.

29. *Coasting*, by David Johnson, 2019
Copperplate photo-etching aquatint.

Coasting is a moody land and sea scape evocative of dramatic use of form and light.

30. *Scene (London and Oxford: Humphrey Milford, 1923)*
Foreword by John Masefield

Print, paper cover with motif, monogram on spine, 18 plates dated 1907-1911.
YXL C886.

31. *Man of Mystery*, by David Johnson, 2019
Sugar lift-aquatint.

This is inspired by EGC's prints of actors.

Screen: Plates from the book *Scene*

Life in Europe

Having settled in Florence, Craig began an eclectic search for different theatrical forms: dance, mime, puppets (he had already produced marionettes in London) and, above all, the Commedia dell'Arte. Apart from his hugely influential publications, *The Mask* was perhaps EGC's most significant achievement. He was to live until 1966, dying in France in the same year that Dorothy Nevile Lees died in Florence.

The Mask and the contribution of Dorothy Nevile Lees can be seen in works by Liz Bird, while Louella Frankel Jones was inspired by Isadora Duncan and the dance. There is no Commedia dell'Arte without a 'Pulchinella', as seen in Ann Gover's drypoint. Masks also appear in works by Louella Frankel Jones and Ann Gover, who also looks at Indonesian dance, another subject widely covered by *The Mask*. EGC's reputation remained high in the Soviet Union, and Chris Hibbard reflects on this in his *Theatre for the Masses*.

32. *DNL* by Liz Bird, 2019

Photogravure etching from a drawing

Dorothy Nevile Lees (DNL). As she appears in a photograph from 1920.

Screen: Front covers of *The Mask*, 1908-09

33. *Woman Behind the Mask: Anthony Scarlett, Patrick Nevill, Conrad Tower, Fenella Ford, Lois Lincoln* by Liz Bird, 2019 (Harmondsworth: King Penguin Books, 1948).

Mounted behind tissue paper prints of masks

DNL worked on The Mask throughout its production; she financed it and wrote many of the articles using several pseudonyms. Five etchings from the cover masks have been printed on tissue paper with the image of DNL showing through behind, and labelled with

five of the pseudonyms that she used for The Mask.

34. *A Production 1926 Being Designed, Projected or Realised by Edward Gordon Craig for The Pretenders of Henrik Ibsen* (Oxford: OUP, 1930)

Print. Signed and numbered
YXL C896

35. *Theatre for the Masses*, by Chris Hibbard, 2019

Etching aquatint

One of my preoccupations as a painter/printmaker is picture making. My work is usually constructed by addition and subtraction, through collage and assemblage, which invariably results in a visual archaeology. I utilise pre-existing sources, often referencing art history, 20th/21st century history and literature.

In October 1934 the Convegno Volta - held in Rome for a week each year by the Accademia Reale - dealt with the theatre and assembled its most prominent representatives from all over the world, including dramatists, producers, designers and architects. Edward Gordon Craig attended this. The central problem discussed was the 'Theatre for the Masses'. In the following spring, Craig paid a five-week visit to Moscow at the official invitation of the Soviet theatre.

36. *Pulcinella* by Ann Gover, 2019

Drypoint

37. *Theatre for the Masses* by Chris Hibbard, 2019

Etching water colour collage

38. *Mask* by Louella Frankel Jones, 2019

Etching

The idea of the mask as a theatrical device, which both conceals and reveals, interested me. Once I had begun exploring this as a subject for a print, the idea began to take on a life of its own and I

became fascinated with infusing the mask representations in my etching with expressive characteristics, in part influenced by the stylised expressions used by actors in a Kabuki performance I attended on a recent visit to Japan.

39. *Commedia dell'Arte in Florence* by Edward Gordon Craig, [1908?]

Etching. Signed with monogram and undated. Printed on watermarked paper MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN
EGC/9

This is most likely from the EGC 1908 etchings of Florence advertised in The Mask. EGC also references another collection of etchings from 1910 in his prospectus for the Florence Theatre School. The watermark suggests that this was either printed in England or with paper EGC had brought with him. There do not seem to be any other copies of this print in public collections.

40. *Noh Mask* by Ann Gover, 2019

Collage

41. *Noh Chūjō mask*

Wood, hand painted
TC/O/M/4

Case Drawers—please ensure that a drawer is fully shut before opening the one below.

42. *The Mask, 1911 Vol 4 No 2, p.81*

Print

*The left hand page shows a colour print of the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the right hand page has a report on a dinner given for EGC in London.*

43. *The Mask, 1912 Vol 5, p.95*

Print

EGC used designs and drawings by his father Edward William

Godwin in The Mask, including Godwin's research into historic costume design. The left hand page shows a design for Miss Ellen Terry as Portia by E W Godwin and the right hand page has an article 'Marionettes by Edward Gordon Craig', by John Semar (one of EGC's many pseudonyms - he and DNL also reversed this as 'Rames'.

44. Catalogue for Edward Gordon Craig and The Art of Theatre. Exhibition held at Harvard University Theatre Collection in 2003

Print

MM/2/PE/DE/15

Pages 36-37 detail exhibited correspondence between DNL and EGC. The Houghton Library at Harvard acquired the DNL papers from her son David Lees.

45. Photograph of Dorothy Nevile Lees

Reproduced from Beth Carroll-Horrocks' article 'A Working Relationship: The Dorothy Nevile Lees Papers Relating to Edward Gordon Craig and *The Mask* at the Harvard Theatre Collection', *Theatre Survey*, 46:1 (May 2005), p.105.

46. Towards a New Theatre by Edward Gordon Craig (London: J M Dent & Sons, 1913)

Print with embossed cover image of Rome

YXL C886

47 and 49. Edward Gordon Craig: Designs for the Theatre by Janet Leeper (Harmondsworth: King Penguin Books, 1948)

Print, cover and frontispiece

YXL C886

The open copy (no. 49) belonged to Adrian Cairns (actor, broadcaster and drama teacher) and has been annotated by EGC and signed with his monogram.

48. Letter from Adrian Cairns to Edward Gordon Craig, returned to him with questions answered in manuscript, by EGC
Print with pencil annotations
AC/7

50. Monow Valley Arts Centre Exhibition Catalogue for Edward Gordon Craig 1872-1966 (2010)
Print
MM/2/PE/DE/15

The open page includes a photograph of EGC in the Soviet Union in 1935.

51. Isadora Duncan, 1908
Reproduction photograph
MM/2/DA/DC/72

EGC returned to London in 1908 to organise Isadora Duncan's first stage appearance in England

52. Henry Irving and Ellen Terry Portraits by E. Gordon Craig, 19 plates some in colour (Chicago: H S Stone, 1899)
Print. Open at title page
YXN3N C866

53. Indonesian Dancer by Ann Gover, 2019
Etching with hand colouring

I have been intrigued by Edward Gordon Craig's eclectic sources for his work. The theatre traditions of Japan, Indonesia and the Italian Commedia dell'Arte were an influence and have inspired the three etchings shown here.

45. Isadora Dancing by Louella Frankel Jones, 2019
Etching

This piece was inspired by EGC's reflections on the art of the dancer Isadora Duncan. On first seeing her dancing, he accused her of plagiarising his ideas as she danced in front of simple blue curtains - a radical departure from tradition. I have placed her triplicate image in front of screens, which are intended to suggest the modernist settings of his revolutionary designs.

A quote by EGC that influenced me related to Isadora Duncan's use of costume: 'She put on bits of stuff which, when hung up on a peg, looked like torn rags...When she put them on they became transformed. She transformed them into marvels of beauty...'

Another inspirational quote relates to the thing so difficult to convey in two-dimensional media: 'But what of that infinite and beautiful think dwelling in space called Movement?'

Artist Biographies

Liz Bird (email: e.bird@bristol.ac.uk)

I retired from the University of Bristol in 2004 and trained as a printmaker. I am a member of Spike Print Studio and regularly exhibit as an invited artist and in open exhibitions. My recent work has been making artist books; in 2018 I completed A Breton Bestiary, thirteen etched plates with accompanying texts, based on Medieval bestiaries and carved wooden beams in Breton churches.

Working on this exhibition, with its academic research in archives, has brought back memories: of referencing, recording and reading my handwriting.

Caroline Case (carolinecase@icloud.com)

I am a printmaker, working mainly with relief prints in woodcut. I also combine printmaking with writing, letterpress or clay work when working on a particular series. I am a member of Spike Print Studio, Bristol. I had a previous career in art therapy and child psychotherapy. I am a member of Hybrid, a group of artists and art therapists who work together.

Louella Frankel Jones (email: louellafjones@yahoo.co.uk)

I studied painting and stage design at the Slade School of Art and also studied for a teaching diploma at Hornsey College of Art, before working in secondary education until 2003, when I was able to resume painting and began to make etchings for the first time. Whilst at school, college and as a teacher I directed, designed and acted in a number of productions and also worked for a time as a performance artist.

Ann Gover (email: Ann@anngover.co.uk)

I studied at the Art Students League In New York. I am a painter, etcher and enameller and have had exhibitions in London, Bath, Bristol and Italy. I have exhibited my enamels worldwide with the British Society of Enamellers, and shown work with the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol and at this year's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.

Chris Hibbard (email: family_hibbard@yahoo.co.uk)

I studied for a Diploma in Art and Design at Bath Academy of Art (1968-1972) and also taught in Special Education. I then took a Post-graduate Teaching Certificate at Cardiff College of Art (1972-73) and continued to teach in Special Education from 1974 to 2001. I ceased painting in 1975 and started again after I finished teaching. Since 2006 I have exhibited annually in various open exhibitions in the West Country and London.

Diana Hilton (email: dianafavell@gmail.com)

My early career was as a stage manager; as Diana Favell I spent fifteen years working in theatres in the regions, London and at the Bristol Old Vic. I started printmaking following a two year Arts Foundation course and have been etching for twenty-five years. This exhibition therefore merges my two worlds. I still work as a stage manager, mainly in corporate theatre.

David C Johnson (email: davidcjohnson@demon.co.uk)

Over the past five years I have been exploring the landscape and seascape of England, Scotland, Texas and New York State. These have been the inspiration for my colourful impressions of scenes remembered, which are completed in oils and acrylics in my studio at Hamilton House in Bristol.

I have also continued my interest in creating images from life, where the model is set in a domestic scene. I have produced art on a human scale that will live happily in the home and provide constant pleasure to the eye. My aim is to share the excitement and buzz of artistic creation with viewers and lovers of visual art.

I have had two shows at the Grant Bradley Gallery, my work selected and hung at the Royal West of England Academy and at small galleries in the south-west (www.davidcjohnsonart.com) My journey in the past decade from international businessman to visual artist and creative writer has been an unusual and rewarding one. I am also an internationally known poet and spoken word performer (www.davidcjohnsonpoet.com)

While this is not a selling exhibition, many of the works are for sale. For more information, please contact the artists directly.

Acknowledgements:

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*Cover image: Edward Gordon Craig: Self Portrait.
Woodcut engraving. Source: The Black figures of Edward Gordon
Craig (Wellingborough: Christopher Skelton, 1989) YXL C866
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