



ARCADIA
BRIDGET MACDONALD

FRONT COVER **Tree and Magpie**, charcoal on paper, 81 × 122 cm

FACING **The Pitcher Bearers (Parthenon Frieze)**, charcoal on paper, 122 × 81 cm

BACK COVER **Bay and Olive**, oil on linen, 30 × 41 cm

BRIDGET MACDONALD
ARCADIA

6 SEPTEMBER—6 OCTOBER 2012

ART FIRST

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ARCADIA

Arcadia is a real place and a place of the imagination. The real Arcadia is a remote and mountainous region of the Peloponnese in Greece. In Greek mythology Arcadia is the home of Pan, the god of nature, woods and flocks but it is also the source of a complex literary and artistic concept which has come down to us through the centuries and still plays a significant part in the way we view our own countryside. I live in a part of England on the Herefordshire/Worcestershire borders, where farms, orchards, hopyards, rivers and hills reflect the ideal pastoral landscape. I was brought up in a farming family in another different but beautiful coastal landscape on the Isle of Wight. Certain landscapes touch my imagination, often because they show the traces of continuous human interaction over centuries and I need signs of habitation by animals or humans to give resonance.

In May 2011 I visited Arcadia for the first time. On the coast it was hot and orange blossom scented the air but in the mountains of Arcadia it was an earlier season of plum and apple blossom, walnut orchards were just

coming into leaf and there were small flocks of sheep and goats, even an old shepherd with a ragged flock. In October we returned for a road trip which took in Delphi, Olympia, and the temple to Apollo at Bassae in Arcadia. It was still warm enough to swim in the Gulf of Corinth but in Arcadia there were wild storms followed by a sharp frost. An old woman running a tiny roadside cafe in her front room gave us her own walnuts, raki and bread. On the television in the corner we could see rioting in Athens, smoke, cars overturned, politicians gesticulating. The troubles which were building up in May had reached boiling point by October and the agony continues—but there were few signs of strife in the countryside.

Another journey took us to Provence in February 2012: we explored the Camargue in brilliant sun, the mistral blowing strongly, everywhere freezing and glittering in the wind. Groups of black bulls and white horses in a flat landscape; the sense of the sea and the clarity of the light were marvellous—another version of Arcadia.



Two Seasons in Arcadia, charcoal and pastel on paper, 81 x 122 cm

At home again, the classically inspired landscaped grounds of nearby Croome Court suggested a drawing. Keats, who wrote of 'the beautiful mythology of Greece', puts in an appearance. He was transfixed by the Parthenon marbles, newly arrived in the British Museum. The opening passages of *Endymion*, based on the myth of the young shepherd who was loved by the moon goddess, were written in lodgings in Castle Road, Carisbrooke, a few doors down from where I once lived. The island landscape in Spring can be glimpsed through his imagined evocation of Ancient Greece.

The above gives some idea of the background to these works, my travels and thoughts while they were in the making. The places are significant but so is an inner landscape of connections, memories and associations.

Drawings predominate in this group of works. Drawing is for me primarily the challenge of evoking space, light, landscape, the living presence of animals and humans with the simplest of materials.

I like the excitement of working on a large scale but there is risk involved and success usually lies in knowing when to stop. There is limited potential for the reworking which is possible with painting in oils. Sometimes I have to tear and patch, in which cases the torn edges become part of the progress of the work. Sometimes I do this anyway in order to break up the surface or suggest the abrasions of time. Sometimes the drawing works on its own, just the range of tones and marks against the untouched white of the paper conveys enough.

Bridget Macdonald

MALVERN, JUNE 2012



The Arcadian Shepherd, charcoal on paper, 81 × 122 cm



Mycenae, graphite and charcoal on paper, 57 x 76 cm



Coast, graphite and charcoal on paper, 81 x 122 cm



Keats's Heifer (Parthenon Frieze), graphite and charcoal on paper, 81 x 122 cm



Keats on the Isle of Wight, charcoal on paper, 76 × 57 cm



Bull in a Flowering Meadow, charcoal on paper, 122 × 153 cm



The Temple Greenhouse at Croome, graphite and charcoal on paper, 81 × 122 cm



Tree and Daylight Moon, charcoal on paper, 81 x 122 cm



Camargue, charcoal on paper, 122 × 153 cm



Ewes, charcoal and pastel on paper, 94 × 122 cm



Epidaurus, graphite and charcoal on paper, 57 × 76 cm



Snowy Woods, graphite, charcoal and pastel on paper, 81 x 122 cm

BRIDGET MACDONALD

Bridget Macdonald trained in Fine Art in the mid 1980s at the School of Art and Design, Wolverhampton Polytechnic, and lives and works in Malvern, Worcestershire.

Her work is in the collections of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Worcester City Art Gallery, the new House of Lords building at Millbank, and in private and corporate collections in the UK, the USA, Italy, and France.

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