



BULB LOG 51.....18th December 2013



Tiny buds on this Saxifrage are already slowly expanding- I am sure that among the conditions that they are waiting for before they flower, along with warmth, is an extending day length. This week in the Northern hemisphere we will celebrate the shortest day and in around a months' time we will start to notice an increasing amount of daylight – it is then that you will start to see many of the early blooming plants responding.



A line of cement coated fish box troughs all landscaped using broken concrete block to provide a range of habitats for alpine plants. A small cover protects one plant from excessive top wet and literally just a few slug pellets per trough help prevent the cushions from being grazed by slugs in mild winter periods.



One of the talks that I give, 'Off The Wall' is based on my being an artist as well as a gardener - it describes how I view the world and how I see gardening as another medium for artists to explore. Sometimes, especially on a warm summer's day, my art spills out of the studio into the garden, as seen above where I am colouring sheets of deconstructed corrugated cardboard to be used in a series of collages. This talk was originally meant as a one off Christmas lecture but it seems to be popular and after a number of requests I have added it into my list of lectures. One of the messages I try and put over is how to 'see' things; I am for ever seeing interesting shapes, patterns and likenesses all over the place. When in one talk I describe *Meconopsis punicea* as looking like a burst red balloon on a stick I often get funny looks but I am serious.



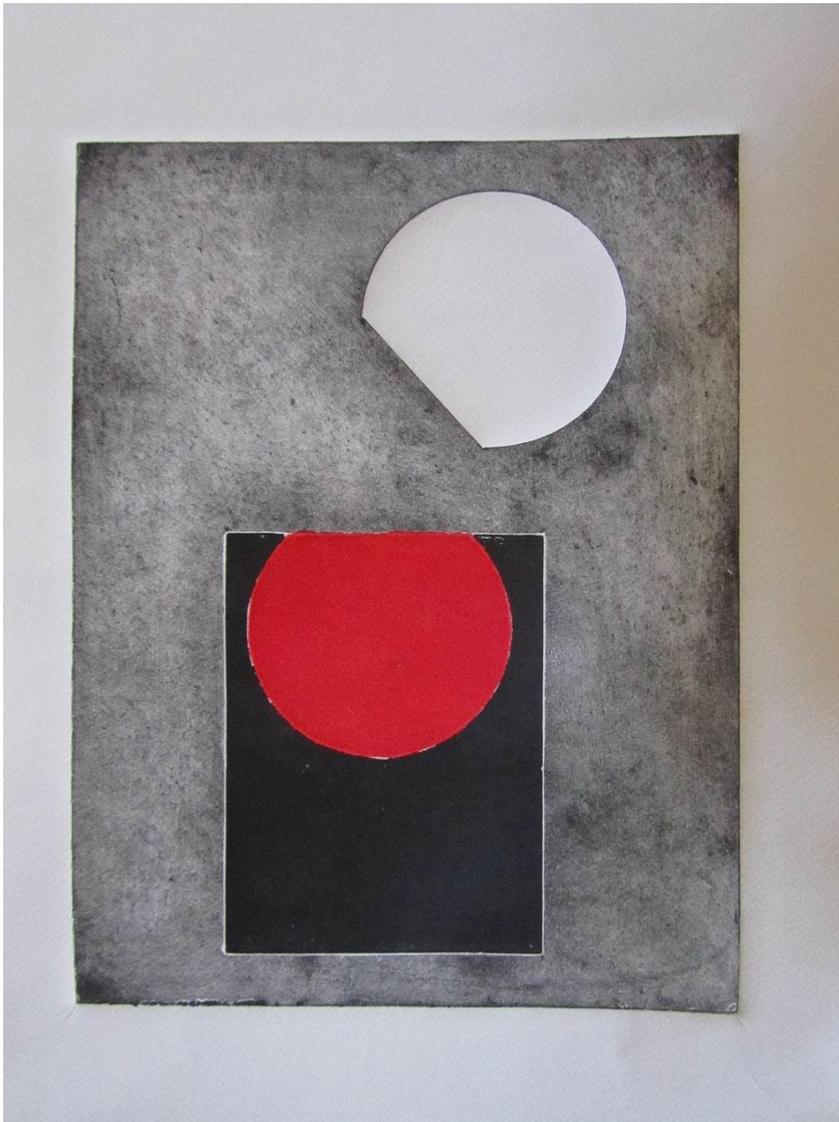
This week while we were walking the dogs I found a burst red balloon on a stick, compare it for yourself!!



Meconopsis



Plastic box



A large part of an artistic vision is keeping an open mind we don't just look but also see. The great Henri Matisse said- "To see is itself a creative operation requiring an effort".

Aside from the fabulous colour what is it that makes a Meconopsis so attractive to us?

The large disc shaped flower with a central focus has many similarities to the human face – and we are all drawn to that. The other picture above is one of the plastic boxes that I use all the time – this one had been lying outside over night with a pot in it which when removed left a transient impression in moisture. The disc of the pot is well defined but there is also a trace of moisture formed in the shadow of the pot that forms a rudimentary image of a head and shoulders. Within a few minutes this image had evaporated but not before it had inspired me to capture it as a photograph. This photograph could in itself be a work of art or I can further use the memory of that image to create a print.

Collograph print



Drain cover



Drawing, bitumen and plaster

Once your eyes are open nothing will ever be boring again, you will see images everywhere.

Above a simple drain cover has gathered some dirt and moisture creating yet another head and shoulders image – I have photographed this drain many times as each day, depending on the wetness it is different.

Although my art work is often described as abstract it is always based on images that I have observed plus the making process and materials are also very important to my work. Here is one of the series of collages that I am currently working on- it can be interpreted as a figure or flipped the 180 degrees it could suggest a palm tree by a pool in a lush green desert oasis.



Part of my intention in this collage series is that the compositions are in harmony viewed from any direction so that they do not have a dominant orientation.





Sometimes my art work is very representational when I more or less draw the objects in front of me but more often I see interesting shapes, patterns or colour combinations in a scene that grab my attention I then only use that part of the scene in my work.



Road surfaces, markings and patches are a source of endless fascination and inspiration for me and I have thousands of pictures recording them.

“Or if you simply throw a sponge soaked in different colours at a wall, it will leave a smudge where a beautiful landscape will appear. It is quite true that in this smudge will be seen varied inventions of whatever man wants to seek in it, meaning the heads of men various animals, battles, cliffs, sea, clouds and forests and other such things and it is like the sound of bells, in which you can hear them saying whatever you like”.

This sounds like it should be a quote by an Abstract Expressionist but it goes back further than that to one of the greatest artists and minds of all times - Leonardo da Vinci in his *Trattato Della Pictura*, 1651.



Since the discovery of how to fix the image seen through a lens – photography - in the 19th century artists have been freed to explore their imaginations and not be bound to accurately represent the world. The camera obscura and lenses have been used by artists since the 15th century.

For years I have observed and photographed a group of cement slabs laid to cover potholes in a back lane as the weight of the occasional traffic cracked them up.

Each has formed a unique pattern which you could utilise in art work, or you could use it as a guide to lay out a garden where each piece becomes a bed or use it as a planting design for annuals or bedding plants in a series of rectangular beds.

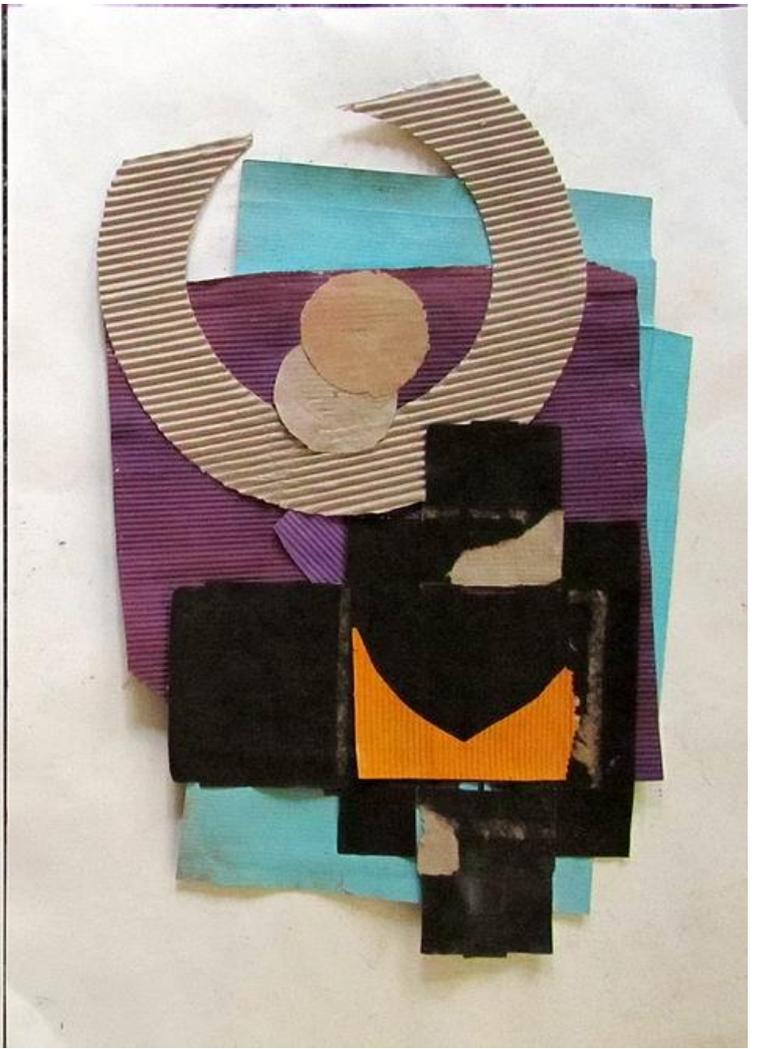
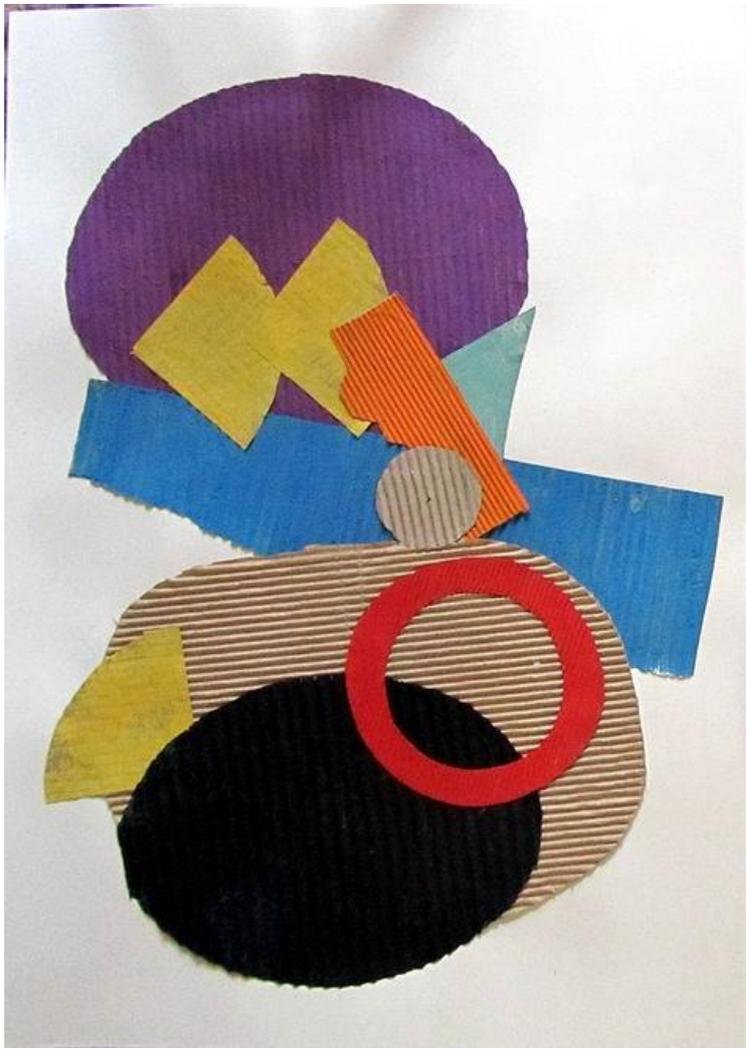
It was while thinking about the design and planting of island beds, that have to look good when viewed from any direction, that I got the idea that I should do a series of collages that were also non directional.



One work, four images – simply flipping these collages through 90 degrees can change what you see in them. Ideally I would like to exhibit them as a series and have them rotated throughout the duration of the exhibition so that by the end they had been shown in all four orientations.



A few more collages from this series.



Head and shoulders, drain covers, flowers, or just a series of coloured shapes and textures.



Back to the plants for the last group of pictures this week with a nice flat-faced form of **Narcissus romieuxii**.



Narcissus seedling



A really fine attractive hybrid Narcissus that I am struggling to increase. It is one of those annoying plants that just when you think you have cracked its cultivation and built up a small stock it slips back again.



More promises to come - *Iris histrio* shoots.....