

# *The Spaces Between Us*

A digital exhibition by

Harriet Impey

# *The Spaces Between Us*

## **Introduction**

I little thought, when I chose the title for this exhibition, just how apposite it would be. In this time of social distancing, the spaces between us are literally painted on the streets and written the shop fronts, policed in public and manoeuvred in our homes. A whole level of unexpected meaning has been added, but the questions that prompted my choice of title and the themes that underpin my work still endure. As we explore the splendour of the natural world, how much of that beauty lies in the spaces between, in what is not, as much as what is? What happens in the space between us and nature? How does communication work across the divide? What layers of meaning are we missing?

This virtual exhibition is a partial replacement of the physical exhibition, the postponed date of which cannot yet be confirmed. Due to the constraints of the COVID 19 lockdown, many more works are still in progress, but this selection gives an idea of the breadth of my work in terms of themes and media, and allows a feel of my passionate love of nature and fascination with its secrets.

Please do contact me at [harriet@thetulipandthebutterfly.com](mailto:harriet@thetulipandthebutterfly.com) if you are interested in my work, or follow me on Instagram @TulipandButterfly.

## Bees

My passion for bees has rather taken over my life in the last year. I am captivated by the complexity of their lives and their anatomy, by their importance to us as pollinators and simply by their charm. Honeybees are the most well known bees, but even more exciting are the 355 other wild bee species in the Netherlands, which include my favourite bumblebees. They create intricate spaces in which to raise their young, have colour vision beyond the spectrum of what we are able to see and are able to communicate with each other in ways we are only beginning to understand. In a series of works relating to bees I pay homage to their fascinating lives.



1. *Wool carder bee (Anthidium manicatum)*  
Watercolour

21x30cm

€ 250



2. *Early bumblebee (Bombus pratorum)*

Watercolour

21x30cm

€ 250



3. *White tailed bumblebee (Bombus lucorum)*  
Watercolour

21x30cm

€ 250





4. *Common carder bee (Bombus pascuorum)*  
Watercolour

21x30cm

€ 250





5. Tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*)  
Watercolour

21x30cm

€ 250



5b. Garden bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*)  
Watercolour

21x30cm

€ 250





*Early bumblebee/ Weidehommel (Bombus pratorum)*  
Metaal- en zijdedraad op linnen

Early bumblebee

He flew to me in March,  
An early bumblebee in time and name;  
Hummed his secret song of wingbeat and pollen,  
Hovered for a moment, and was gone.

In silken thread I hold him still,  
With bars of gold to honour and contain him,  
He could slip through, and yet, and yet...  
He stays inside, as we do.

d 27 cm

€ 150



7 a-p *The Bees of the Invisible* Fused glass with liquid gold, pearwood

[Work in progress... more bees to follow]

This piece is inspired by the words of the poet Rilke, who wrote of his profession: '*We are the bees of the invisible. We wildly collect the honey of the invisible, to store it in the great hives of the invisible...*'

Each individual bee, like each idea, is beautiful in itself, but when brought together – in a hive, a poem or an artwork – they create something greater than the sum of their parts.

c.10x10cm

€100 each

## Messages

I have long been intrigued by the idea of *Totenpässe* – ancient messages, such as the 7<sup>th</sup> century Orphic tablets, written on gold and laid with the dead to grant or guide their passage into the underworld. I have been grappling with ideas and gold leaf for how to express this idea of communication between the two spheres of life and afterlife, and then, sitting on a fallen tree trunk in the dappled shade of a forest, a piece of bark came off in my hand. Its underside was incised in intricate beauty with the tiny tunnels of burrowing beetles. Beetles, those miniature masterpieces of construction, who inhabit all spheres, from death to the skies. Who better, I realised, to be bearers of messages from the afterlife? If only we could read their messages, what would they say?

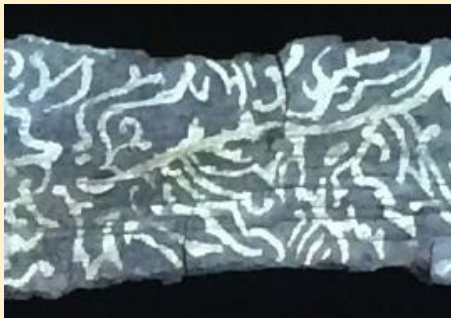
*Messages* is a series of pieces that explores this idea.



*Message (for safe passage)*  
Bark, gold paint

100x15cm

€ 200



(Detail)



*Message (for silence)*

Bark, gold paint

35x15cm

€ 100



## Galls

Do you know how plant galls are formed? A tiny wasp lays an egg in, for example, the bud of an oak tree. When the grub hatches, it secretes hormones that alter the cell division of the tree, tricking it into creating an extraordinary edifice around the grub, in which it can safely grow. Each species has its own 'design', and they are as varied and beautiful as they are fascinating. How is this level of communication possible? How, and indeed why, does each species have its own blueprint of the type of house it wishes to inhabit?



10. *Knopper gall I* – Glazed ceramic  
approx. 7x7x7cm €150

11. *Knopper gall II* – Glazed ceramic  
approx. 5x5x7cm €150

12. *Knopper gall on acorns III* – Glazed ceramic  
approx. 5x10x5cm €150

## Fungi

It would not be an exaggeration to say that fungi, closer in fact to animals than plants in many ways, are the invisible threads that hold our world together. Down in the musty earth, mycorrhizal networks branch and divide, linking plants, digesting debris, sending messages between trees. These networks have been likened to information superhighways, or the ‘wood-wide web’, and we still have so much to learn about how these messages are communicated. *Mycorrhiza* touches on the infinite complexity of these mysterious networks.

Fungi also create fruiting bodies of incredible variety and beauty, which produce spores from their pores or gills. I find the patterns of the gills, and in particular the spaces between them, mesmerising.

*Pleurotus* explores the complexity and beauty of gill formation in the form of ceramic sculpture, while *Gills* is a pair of paintings that focus on paring back the patterns of the spaces between gills to their near-abstract essence.





*Pleurotus* - Geglazuurde keramiek

30x30cm

€ 300



*Gills I / Lamellen I*  
Acryl en gel op doek

30x30cm

€ 200





*Gills II / Lamellen II*  
Acryl en gel op doek

30x30cm

€ 200



*Mycorrhiza*

Cotton and silk thread on velvet with  
semi-precious stones

30x30cm

€ 150

## Fish

I have long been fascinated by fish, and in particular the perfection of the design of their scales, spaced with breathtaking precision and combining beauty with streamlined and watertight efficiency. For this series I am experimenting with the Japanese *gyotaku* print technique, in which the actual fish itself is inked, and then details are added later using watercolour. I have experimented with both ink and acrylic, and paper with different levels of porosity. I love the way this technique allows a strong sense of spatial structure to combine with a lightness of touch in terms of colour.





*18. Sea bream I*

Gyotaku print, ink and watercolour on Japanese paper

21x30cm

€ 150



*19. Sea bream II*

Gyotaku print, ink and watercolour on Japanese paper

21x30cm

€ 150



20. *Sea bream III*

Gyotaku print, ink en watercolour on Japanese paper

21x30cm

€ 150





21. *Sea bream IV*

Gyotaku print, ink and watercolour on Japanese paper

21x30cm

€ 150



22. *Red mullet I*

Gyotaku print, ink and watercolour on Japanese paper

21x30cm

€ 150



*23. Red mullet II*

Gyotaku print, ink and watercolour on Japanese paper

21x30cm

€ 150

## Jellyfish

The ethereal translucence and seeming fragility of jellyfish belie the efficiency and success of their design, which enables them to survive deep ocean water pressure that would crush a human. First appearing about 600 million years ago, they were the first 'swimmers' of the ocean, and their ability to withstand rises in acidity and sea temperature may enable them to be the last. I am fascinated by the way in which the spaces in their physical structure use water for support and propulsion, and have found that fused glass offers a way of expressing this texture.





*Moon jellyfish*

Fused glass

50x23cm

€350



*Compass jellyfish*

Fused glass

50x23cm

€350



## **Thin Spaces**

'Thin spaces' are places where something greater, spiritual, holy, feels somehow closer. Here, you feel, communication between spheres might be possible....

There is a bamboo forest surrounding Takeo shrine in Japan. As you ascend the hill, all you can hear is the wind in the leaves and the gentle tapping of the canes against each other as they reach up to the sky.



*Bamboos at Takeo Shrine*

Acrylic on gold leaf

21x30cm

€ 250

In a quiet corner of this ancient churchyard, the yew trees bow down to nearly touch the crumbling graves, and muffle the sound of the single bell as it rings out across the fields.

*Yew at St Margaret's* Acrylic on gold leaf

21x30cm

€ 250



If you would like to see more,  
visit my website [www.thetulipandthebutterfly.com](http://www.thetulipandthebutterfly.com)  
or Instagram @TulipandButterfly