

The horse was a prominent figure in many of Penn's linocuts made in the 1960s: *1066, Eight Horses and Men* and *Maybe Next Time*. The imagery of the horse in *Maybe Next Time* adorned with flowers, sprigs and fronds, has been adopted as a theme in many of the pieces. It has been used as the basis for the coil-built *3 Experimental Horses* shown in the exhibition an illustration of Lindo's creative process, although the figures were not developed further. The couple also began experimenting with stoneware and show their unglazed experimental pieces *6 horses* and *Snorting Horse* alongside another experimental coil-built pot *White Horses*. Penn's flora and fauna also creep into the theme of a series of works each with the title *Conscious Dreaming* - a pair of ceramic plates, a ceramic platter, a painting and a screen print.

*'After working with and reflecting on her prints for an extended period, recreating and exploring through ceramics, drawing and painting I felt I could incorporate elements of them without interrupting the instinctual flow of my practice.'*

In many pieces forms taken from the ceramics by Frances Richards provide the support for this imagery. Bill was influenced by two of Richards' pots in particular, a flattened sphere (an 'oblate spheroid') and a cylindrical pot with a flanged base and neck. He spent time carefully observing these forms and calculating how to make moulds which then could be scaled up or down.

*'We studied the forms of a selection of Frances Richards pots, reproducing their lines but altering scale, and by recreating and joining sections of pots we created new forms with moulds made from segmental models based on Richards pots, repeating sections were cast then joined to form larger structures.'*

The more cylindrical forms can be seen in *Lions and Crocodiles* and *Great Big Loon* in which Bill makes a feature of the joins inside each pot which were made with paperclay. The segmented mould for the spherical forms of pots such as *Amaryllis Dream*, *Repeating Dream* and *Weeping Lion* is shown in the case of studio equipment with Bill's drawings and calculations alongside Frances Richards' pots. The couple agreed that project has opened up new ways of working that they will adopt into their practice, and they will continue to develop ideas after the exhibition.

*'Much of Christine Penn's work has themes of dreaming and dreams, and the connections between a dreamworld and the real world. Conscious dreaming occurs when the dreamer becomes aware that they are dreaming and is able to exert some control over the dream. Conscious dreaming has parallels to our creative process, when we are working it is somewhere between control and letting go.'*

**Conscious Dreaming** 24th June–24th September 2023  
 Ceramic Gallery, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth University,  
 Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3DE  
[www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com](http://www.ceramics-aberystwyth.com)



Chris Penn Maybe Next Time, Linocut, 1965



Maybe Next Time



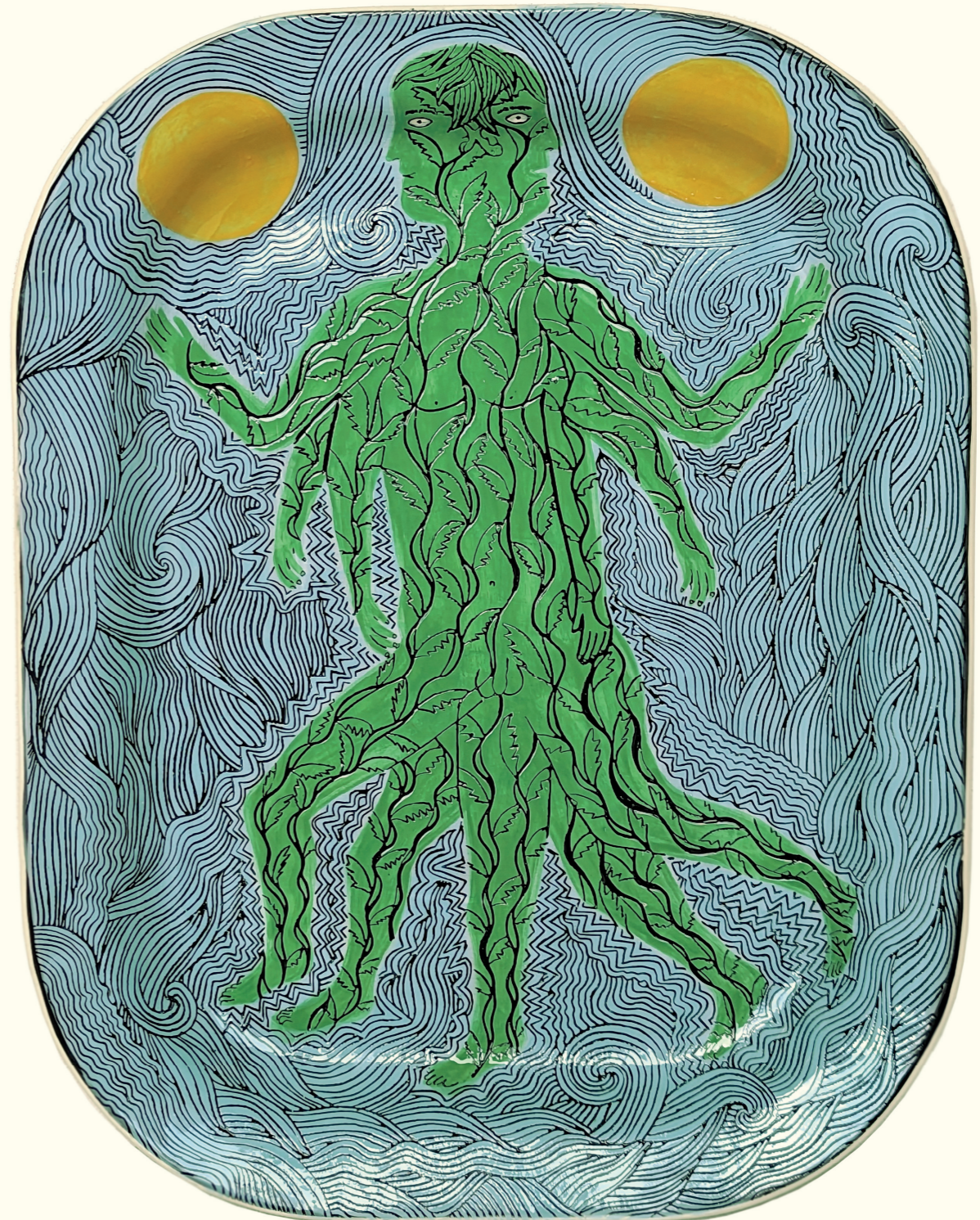
Top to bottom:  
*Horse with saffron swipes*  
 Frances Richards Ovoid pot  
*Sleep 3*  
 Selection of drawings, moulds and  
 tools used to make the ceramics  
 & 4 pots by Frances Richards  
 Front: *Drowning Man*

Images: Christine Penn ©the Artist's Estate  
 Photos: ©Vicky Lindo and Bill Brookes  
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# CONSCIOUS DREAMING

## Vicky Lindo & Bill Brookes

An exhibition inspired by the works of  
**CHRISTINE PENN** (1943–2014) and **FRANCES EMMA RICHARDS** (1869–1931)





# CONSCIOUS DREAMING

Vicky Lindo (b.1980) met Bill Brookes (b.1980) when she was at college and Bill was studying for a degree in Fine Art. He abandoned his degree to join her at Herefordshire College of Art & Design where she studied illustrated textiles and he, woodwork. After they completed their studies in 2002, they returned to Devon; Vicky worked in various retail jobs, making textiles in her spare time and Bill worked as a clock-repairer and cabinet maker. A few years later, Vicky started working as a museum assistant at the Burton Museum Bideford where she fell in love with ceramics after the museum acquired a significant collection of English slipware collected by the artist Reginald J. Lloyd (1926–2020) in 2009.

The R. J. Lloyd collection comprises over 500 pots spanning more than 300 years of mainly historic North Devon slipware. Vicky made the most of the opportunity to examine the pots close-up while they were being catalogued. She was immediately captivated by the lively decoration and use of sgraffito\* lines carved into the clay to create lively nautical and agricultural imagery.

With Bill's help, she began to make small sgraffito pots on the kitchen table at home. These impressed her existing textile customers as well as galleries who were keen to show her work. By 2013 Bill and Vicky set up their own studio working full time as ceramicists. They designed their own shapes for larger scale works. Bill created the frames and moulds for slip casting, providing a canvas for Vicky to apply freehand decoration. They became known for their 'illustrated' cats and dogs, inspired by Victorian Staffordshire flatback figures.

In 2019 they were selected to participate in AWARD, the British Ceramics Biennale (BCB) competition held at Stoke-on-Trent. They developed a series of work entitled *The Dead Dad Book*. The pieces created for the series embody Vicky's personal narrative about the life and death of her estranged Jamaican father who was part of the Windrush generation, and her family's journey to find out what had happened to him. Michael (Mick) Anthony Lindo had died aged 46 in Wexford, Ireland, while living a hermit's life in the woods. He struggled with alcohol addiction and left the family when Vicky was sixteen years old. He had been dead for seven years before the family knew what had happened to him.

Vicky created imagery based on what the family had been told about his life in Ireland from local people who knew him. These included a decorated platter featuring Mick swimming in the Coolree reservoir and a harvest jug with a poem written by Vicky containing poignant memories of her father. *The Dead Dad Book* with its themes of migration, racism and identity won the prestigious AWARD prize at the BCB and was subsequently purchased by the V&A museum.

In 2019 The School of Art Museum and Galleries was awarded an Arts Council of Wales grant for Programme Support. Part of this grant was allocated to invite artists to make work in response to the museum collection. Vicky and Bill Lindo spent many hours over two visits in 2020 and 2022 exploring the collection. They were particularly drawn to the relatively unknown work of the early pioneer studio potter Frances Emma Richards (1869–1931) and the printmaker Christine (Chris) Penn (1943–2014), and the way that their intriguing personal narratives emerge in their work. Vicky writes:

*'In Conscious Dreaming we address inspiration and the process of generating ideas through the bold graphic prints of Christine Penn and ceramics of Frances Emma Richards held in the permanent collection of the University of Aberystwyth.*

*Penn's dreamlike prints are full of surreal narrative, something we were drawn to immediately, her style coming directly from her hand. While Richards' ceramics are somewhat opposite, calming meditations juxtaposed to the wild energy of Penn. Her restrained and considered colours and patterns are subtly applied to minimal yet complex pots.'*



Conscious Dreaming Platter



1066 Plate



Chris Penn  
Eight Horses & Men, Linocut, 1967

\* Sgraffito is a process in which lines are cut into the surface of a pot that has been covered with slip (liquid clay) revealing a contrasting colour underneath, it mirrors the processes of relief printmaking



Chris's and Frances' Cats

**Frances Richards** (1869–1931) was one of the earliest pioneer studio potters. She studied pottery under Richard Lunn at the Royal College of Art sometime between 1901 and 1911. By 1928 she was accomplished enough to have a solo exhibition at the Three Shields Gallery in London - a remarkable achievement at this time for a woman potter with little technical knowledge or financial means. Her trials and errors are apparent in her work, from developing her own experimental glazes to firing pots in a self-built kiln in her back garden in Highgate, London. There is very little information about her, but it is known she exhibited in 1911 in the Englishwoman Exhibition of Arts and Handicrafts at the Maddox Street Gallery, London and, from 1916 she exhibited regularly at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society the New Gallery, London.

**Christine (Chris) Penn** (1943–2014) was born at Battle in Sussex in 1943. She studied at Hastings College of Art (1958–61) and Central School of Art (1961–64) where she was taught relief printmaking techniques by Gertrude Hermes who was to become a close friend. She learned trade engraving at the Sir John Cass School in London's East End, and the Slade School of Art (1977–78). She participated in many group exhibitions and had several solo exhibitions of her work in London and in Stockholm. Her work *Sussex Ironmaster* (1965) is reproduced in Walter Chamberlain's essential *Manual of Wood Engraving* (Thames and Hudson, London 1978). Her prints are represented in many public collections, however, the School of Art Aberystwyth, holds the largest public collection. These were purchased from and donated by the artist from the year 2000. She was in regular correspondence with Prof. Robert Meyrick with whom she discussed her approaches to printmaking, the creative process and her thoughts on being an artist:

*'By great good fortune, printmaker Chris Penn came upon an advert for the School of Art Museum and Galleries that I had placed in Art Review in 2000. She phoned me to offer her most recent line engraving for our collection. Chris was an artist previously unknown to me. We talked for an hour or so on that first occasion and many more times subsequently. We regularly corresponded by letter until her death in 2014. We shared our enthusiasms for prints and printmaking processes as well as for certain artists, principal among them her friend and mentor, printmaker-sculptor Gertrude Hermes. She sent me sketches of ideas for new prints and we discussed their progress.*

*Chris was a most creative, versatile and resourceful printmaker whose works are infused with her personality and life experiences. Her subjects are often concerned with pregnancy, motherhood and, in the guise of King Harold ambushed by a rain of arrows in her reimagining of the Battle of Hastings, her one-time husband whom she often depicted on horseback because he was a regular down at the bookmakers.'*

In all her imagery, whatever process she uses, the human figure is central and often featured in Penn's interpretation of religious or historical scenes which she transforms to convey her personal themes, beliefs and emotions. It was this aspect and her idiosyncratic imagery that first attracted Vicky Lindo's attention. She recalls that she spent a long time looking at the prints, closely replicating them as paintings (*1066* and *Drowning Man*), a process of observation that enabled her to absorb the nature of the lines and the details of the motifs in the original prints. The same technique led her to focus on the interlinking dot and lozenge motif in the majolica decoration on Frances Richards's small lidded pot. In one she uses the motif to overlay the figure in Chris Penn's original 1965 print in her painting *Drowning Men*.

However, she has chosen not to fuse the two ideas together in one ceramic work, instead the dot and lozenge pattern is used on *Chris and Frances' Cats*, combined with a mushroom detail from Penn's linocuts *Nine Men* (1965) and *Dream Tea* (1971). The mushroom motif then appears as a recurring motif on other pots as does the arrow motif from Penn's *1066* print; the crocodile figure detail from the print *Nine Men* features as a separate character in two of the final works. Vicky writes about how Penn's imagery began to align with her own internal, personal themes:

*'The narrative and energy of her [Penn's] work really resonated with me and the way I work. Like me she loved to revisit themes and I have applied some of her recurring motifs to my own work.*

*By expressing myself with her mark making and motifs I bent my own instincts towards what she might do. I wanted to push beyond interpreting her, to be able to fluently express something of her work as an essential part of my own.'*

>Chris Penn  
*Drowning Man*, Linocut, 1965

>>*Drowning Man* Tile

