

RAMSGATE RECORDER

Winter 2023/24

Modern-day Seaside Stories

FREE



IT'S ROASTING

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UP YOUR ALLEY

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COUNTING DOWN

'Tis the season to be festive - we go behind the Advent Doors

TEARS

TRACEY EMIN ARTIST RESIDENCY

EMMIE NUME
ANNA PAKOSZ
DARCY BRENNAN
BIANCA RAFFAELLA
HELEN TEEDE
LOLA STONG-BRETT
JORGE K CRUZ
GRACE ALEXANDRIA

PREVIEW: 17TH NOVEMBER 6PM - 8PM
 18TH NOV 2023 - 28TH JAN 2024

TKE STUDIOS
 99 VICTORIA ROAD, HARGATE, CT9 1RD

EVERYDAY ICONS

Writer
Russell Chater
Images
Courtesy of artist

Once the preserve of religion, icons today are everywhere. From churches to celebrity culture, we humans love someone to worship. For her latest work, artist Carson Parkin-Fairley has found justifiable inspiration in the people of Ramsgate

Who do you worship? Who is your icon? (Miss's Kate Bush, since you ask.) "I'm interested in where we place our worship now that we're less religious as a society," says Carson, who has always been fascinated. "When I was a child we moved a lot, so belongings have always held importance. I would make collections of my favourite things... tiny altars," she explains. Distributing flyers across a wide range of local businesses, Carson has sought nominations from the Ramsgate community for locals that they see as icons. She was delighted with the response, receiving over 60 suggestions of individuals, all "wonderful and worthy" that help make Ramsgate great. Four have been chosen, including local greenhouses for over 40 years, John Prentice. "I think this icon

will be lovely to do, but to be honest they'll all be special because everyone is so different," she says. In addition, Carson is working with three local groups: East Kent Mencap, a charity supporting young people with a learning disability; the Screaming Mays, a social group linked to Ramsgate cabaret Screaming Alley (and on the cover of this issue); and The Factory Music, a creative local youth work charity. Compiled from photographs, symbols and small objects that help tell their stories, all the icons will be displayed at Ramsgate's The Wooden Box Gallery from 23 to 26 November. Ramsgate Radio will also be doing a feature. "Thrilled" to have secured Arts Council England funding, Carson is also delighted to be able to "share the love and opportunity" with three local friends: model-maker Herry Box, textile-maker Ellen Russell and artist-maker Casper Hart, who will be assisting with the workshops. "I love stories and learning about people's lives," says Carson, citing octogenarian David who was born in the Blitz, and Ben, "an avid collector of Pokémon", as two further examples of inspiring people bringing their fabulous stories to the table. "It's been a joy watching the Screaming Mays' creativity blossom," says Carson. With many of the women having devoted their lives to being a



Arts in Ramsgate, both on the High Street, the group promotes volunteering and skill sharing within the community. This National Lottery-funded project is aimed at any adult who might benefit from dropping by: to keep busy and give purpose; socialise and make friends and explore their creativity. Projects range from making mosaics to creating eco-bricks that will be used for a community herb garden. "It's important to surround yourself with different people," Carson says, and it's clear that people are ultimately her source of creative inspiration.

I ask who Carson is particularly inspired by? She mentions artists such as Yayoi Kusama and Margate's Lindsey Mendick, along with Niki de Saint Phalle. "My mum took me to her sculpture park, the Tarot Garden, in Italy, and it changed me," she says. "It was the most joyful place I had ever been." Carson's mother and grandmother are also high on her inspiration list. Both are well known artists and writers, with Carson's flamboyant and self-proclaimed "hedonist" grandmother Molly Parkin in particular worth a Google. Carson holds dear the advice she has received from both over the years. "My granny told me never to be afraid of painting, that nothing was ever wrong and that you can go over anything... We've always been kindred spirits."



◀ The Screaming Marys and their icons ©Ellen Russell

Carson has also inherited the family's love of partying (her mum is involved in East London's private members Arts club 'Vout-O-Reenee's'). In Deal, Carson lived in a rented former primary school, which was very conducive to parties with fancy dress a prerequisite. Carson dressed as Kali the Hindu goddess for a "religious figures and mythical creatures" theme, and was washing off blue body paint for days!

All this suggests lots of confidence, but Carson tells me that she suffered "imposter syndrome" for many years, not feeling able to call herself an artist until she was in her thirties. However, she says she has definitely "found her groove" now, with a possible show in Folkestone and artist residency in Mexico next year mentioned amongst other opportunities. It's clear that art, travel and partying won't be stopping anytime soon. I look forward to following her journey, starting in Ramsgate with the imminent unveiling of the *Icons of Ramsgate* project and its celebration of the people here.

You can see *Icons of Ramsgate* by Carson Parkin-Fairley at The Wooden Box Gallery, 92 High Street, 23-26 November

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