



## Scotland on Sunday; Dream On

### VISUAL ARTS

#### W GORDON SMITH

**A trip to Mexico inspired by June Carey to produce a collection of strange but haunting figures which bring a touch of surrealism to the Glasgow Print Studio**

At Glasgow Print Studio **June Carey** reveals how a visit to Mexico early last year fuelled her imagination and kick-started The Dream Machine, a vivid and challenging solo show which is probably the most significant of her career.

Carey, born in Stirling, trained at Glasgow and Edinburgh. She has won awards and bursaries, and in the decade since qualifying at ECA her work has been represented in most major mixed exhibitions. Her presence, even in the biggest salons in the best of company, has been signalled instantly by one of her naked figures, whose gender is often uncertain, but there is no avoiding the congress of eyes – they stare you out, follow everywhere, challenge, provoke, usually full-frontal but sometimes with an arrogant sidelong glare. Very often these austere and superior beings wear ridiculous hats or headgear, bringing a welcome note of levity to what would otherwise seem a very haughty confrontation.

Now that they are set among the pimply cones of Mexican hills, under azure skies interrupted only by sickle moons and clouds which look like smoke-signals to the gods, alongside emblematic speared fish, and clutching – as often as not – a balalaika, guitar or mandolin, they are still mysterious, and even sinister when human head becomes savagely beaked and plumed like an eagle. More than once I was reminded, by shivery resonances, of Max Ernst's surrealist masterpiece *The Attirement of the Bride*. Like Ernst, Carey celebrates the erotic, signposts responsive flesh, suggests by association of imagery how the body might be strummed as an instrument of desire. And the blood-boiling surge of mariachi dance rhythms is never very far away.

All of this is accomplished with fastidious subtlety and skill from the prodigious resource of her imagination. She allows her sub-conscious to dictate to her and long ago took the courageous decision to follow its insistent lead without question – even when some of the images she summons threaten to unnerve her.

Her large compositions, in radiant pastel, leap the walls. They have texture, buzzing harmonies, and daredevil balance. The source of a splendid array of modestly priced etchings is two portfolios of exquisite original drawings, boxed as they deserve to be in in sumptuous black and gold. Before some prescient collector adds them to his hoard they should be acquired for a Scottish public collection. It would be a pity, too, if the exhibition ends its days in Glasgow; it would adorn any civic gallery in the country.