obliterated by abstraction. Strangely, the inclusion of representational elements – image fragments of corrugated aluminium rooftops combined with the same plane as the bowl's decoration – takes us deeper into abstraction, as does the shifting shimmer of aluminium. The gold leaf pattern, fragmentation and large scale of **The Opaque** heighten the image's abstraction, but when the image catches the light, it seems to become solid and resembles a sculptural fragment from classical antiquity even though its source is a contemporary newspaper photograph.

When images look more abstract and less representational, or waver between the two realms, we find ourselves forgetting that images are images, and not what they are actually meant to represent. Skaer's method of combining images and focusing on portraying their more abstract elements leads us to concentrate on the optical effects as opposed to the concept of the thing it represents. In **Diagrams and Banners (Fire)** 2002, we find flames flickering through the barely visible body of a wounded girl. Fragmentation is another consistent method of abstraction that Skaer uses to distance the work from its original image. In **Solid Ground – Spine** and **Solid Ground – Rib**, we look to complete the whole horse, to resolve the geometrically fragmented image into a recognisable whole.

Throughout Skaer's practice, it is the tension between abstraction and figuration that elicits the concentrated experience of looking, and continuing to look, in order to recognise images, to understand what is being represented. The effect of this experience is one of losing awareness of where the work ends, being confronted by the world of the image.

This exhibition is accompanied by a new publication available from the bookshop priced £14.95.

The exhibition DVD is available from the bookshop priced £15.

Talks and Events Calendar

For a full programme of talks, events and workshops, pick up a leaflet. To subscribe to podcasts of the talks go to **www.fruitmarket.co.uk**

This guide is available in large print, on tape and by email.
Please ask at the bookshop for an alternative format guide or contact
P 0131 226 8181 **E** bookshop@fruitmarket.co.uk

The Fruitmarket Gallery is a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland No. 87888 and registered as a **Scottish Charity No. SC 005576**.
VAT No. 398 2504 21. Registered Office: 45 Market St, Edinburgh, EH1 1DF

Lucy Skaer

Exhibition **17 May – 9 July 2008**

Mon–Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 12–5pm
Always free

**Lucy Skaer was born in Cambridge in 1975, and trained in Environmental Art at the Glasgow School of Art. She lives and works in Glasgow.
Her work has been attracting increasing international recognition (she was one of 6 artists chosen to represent Scotland at the Venice Biennale of 2007), but this is her first major solo exhibition in Scotland, and offers the opportunity to trace the development of her practice since 2001.**

Skaer makes drawings, sculptures and films, and installations. She selects images from newspapers and books, the internet, and iconic works of art, and transforms them into new work which asks new questions about how we make sense of what we see.

The Fruitmarket **Gallery**

Market Street, Edinburgh
www.fruitmarket.co.uk

New commission supported by
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Scottish Arts Council

This exhibition brings together work made between 2001 and 2008. It includes very recent work and two new installations, **Room of Lines**, on the ground floor of the Gallery, and **Three Possible Edges**, situated above the stairs. The new installations are presented in the context of Skaer's practice since 2001, and develop her interest in the space of the image, and her desire to take drawing beyond its two dimensions, so that it becomes almost sculptural or architectural. But like so much of her work, the installations also expand upon concepts of death, historic objects and ideas, and most of all, the processes of looking, recognising and thinking about images and their meanings and values.

The first space of the exhibition brings together a group of works which present different kinds of mark-making and code systems. Ordinarily, symmetry aids the recognition of forms, but it blocks legibility in **Venn Diagram (Rorschach/Corn)**, 2001, with its ink blot. Patterns with variable densities flatten forms as in **Untitled (30 January 1972)**, 2003, and also blur their edges. The monumental drawing **The Great Wave (Expanded)**, 2007, Skaer's enlargement of Hokusai's iconic image, is composed of thousands of hand-drawn tiny spirals of varying densities: on a smaller scale, the same pattern and method is used in **Solid Ground – Sternum**, 2006 where an image of a head sits just behind the backround. In **Depth/River**, 2005, the central image, a family caught in rising water, has been removed. The water's texture and movement are retained in contrasting stripes of green and red. The work is held in the state of becoming an image.

Most of Skaer's work resists immediate recognition. Made at night in the Departments of African, American and Oceanic, Ancient Near East, Greek and Roman and Medieval Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the film **Flash in the Metropolitan**, 2006 (a collaboration by Nashashibi/Skaer) presents the briefest of glimpses of historic artefacts under glass, in darkness. The series of split-second meetings with objects flashed by a strobe light suggests a conversation between artefacts, clandestine exchanges in the dark, safe from human observation. **Flash in the Metropolitan** underscores the social life of objects, in terms of their histories, as powerful objects with ritual functions, and as representatives of radically different human cultures from thousands of years ago. The flashes of light contrast this historical time with repeated instants, counting time like a metronome.

The concept of time, and the relation between different scales of time appear throughout Skaer's work, sometimes explored in the transition from life to death. The installation **Room of Lines** addresses the dimensions of death's presence through historic *danse macabre* or Dance of Death imagery, in which skeletal corpses dance with people from all walks of life to convey the inevitability of death. The outlined shapes of three dancing cadaver images from a *danse macabre* manuscript form the bases for a series of identical wedges which have been fitted together to make a series of 180-degree and 90-degree plaster shapes. Although the visible joins of the wedges help the viewer to understand the construction of the plaster forms, and offer a glimpse of the images' profiles, each skeletal image is invisible, enclosed inside the forms. When we approach the sculptures as figures spinning around an axis, we can imagine the multiple skeletal images dancing around the room, disappearing and re-emerging through floor and wall. The Georgian table and the prints taken from the tabletop cross the same line between object and image as the sculptures. Together, table, prints and sculptures project the idea that once something is represented, once something living or functional moves into the image-realm, it signals the removal of life. As a whole, the installation evokes Death's presence and absence, its visibility, arrival and departure.

The presence and absence of forms dominates the second newly commissioned installation, **Three Possible Edges**, consisting of three large-scale drawings displayed on a triangular structure specifically designed for the work. These images of a battleship, police horses and a whale skeleton have been enlarged back to lifesize and re-presented in painted and drawn patterned sections with variable densities, which produce the effect of recognising the forms, losing them and recognising them again. A new development here is that the basic spiral patterns which make the image have been screen printed on to the paper before being worked on further by hand. The screen-printed sections further disrupt our reading of the images, through the fragmentation resulting from the gaps in the screens. At the same time, these drawings intensify the immersive experience familiar from earlier black drawings which results from our attempts to decipher what we are looking at, as we stand surrounded, almost engulfed by our shifting interpretations.

By contrast, the installation **Leonora**, 2006, incorporates four different works in four different media. The black drawing **(Death)**, like the first element in **Three Possible Edges**, is a 1:1 scaled representation of a whale skeleton embedded within a field of tiny black spiral pattern. When **(Death)** is encountered together with the other elements — the table inlaid with mother-of-pearl hands **(The Tyrant)**, the film of the surrealist artist Leonora Carrington's hands **(The Joker)**, and the sculpture **(The Wheel)**, a silhouette of an image of two photographs of civil unrest turned through 180 degrees – the links between the works seem arbitrary. Skaer sees the installation as an imaginary room, inhabited and animated by Carrington. The presence of the older artist sites the irrationality of the installation within a particular art historical context.

Contradictions abound in Skaer's work. Like **(Wheel)**, the sculptures in **Solid Ground – from Liquid to Solid in 85 years**, 2006, are two-dimensional images of 85-year-old Rorschach blots transformed: solidification into three-dimensional forms grants them a tangibility, but also obscures the original image which becomes a vessel-like artefact. Conversely, the historic artefact captured by the camera's flash in the drawing **Flash in the Metropolitan**, 2004 becomes subsumed, even