

St Barbe Exhibitions 2018/2019

DAZZLE: Disguise and Disruption in War and Art

16 June - 22 September 2018

The use of Dazzle patterning on warships was introduced during the First World War, not with the intention of helping the ships to blend in with their surroundings, but to confuse U-Boat commanders as to the direction and speed in which a vessel was travelling. The inspiration behind Dazzle painting is usually credited to British marine artist Norman Wilkinson who led the Admiralty's Dazzle Section based at the Royal Academy in London. Wilkinson recruited a team of artists who designed patterns to be applied to warships, passenger ships and cargo ships. Dazzle's dramatic patterning owed something to pre-war avant-garde art movements such as Futurism and Vorticism, indeed Vorticist artist Edward Wadsworth became a part of the Dazzle team.

This exhibition, guest curated by art historian and author James Taylor, looks at the development of Dazzle patterning in Britain and will be based around paintings, prints and drawings made at the time by artists such as Wilkinson, Wadsworth, Fergusson and many more on loan from the Imperial War Museum, National Maritime Museum, regional and private collections. The exhibition will also feature models and plans used by the artists to prepare the patterns for painting on to the ships themselves.

We are delighted that the Wilkinson Estate is supporting the development of the exhibition and that Southampton City Art Gallery will mount an exhibition on Dazzle's influence on contemporary art and design to complement the St Barbe show. We will also be launching an art commission to bring Dazzle patterning into the heart of Lymington. We hope to work in partnership with University of Southampton to offer a study day on the subject featuring a range of authoritative speakers each bringing a fresh perspective to the Dazzle story.

