

BRIAN GRAHAM

Pro-Chancellor,

Brian Graham is a distinguished artist whose work is deeply influenced by his passion for landscape. After many years of painting his beloved Dorset, his work now encompasses a much wider terrain. He is inspired by archaeological sites, and many of his paintings capture a sense of links between past and present. Brian has exhibited widely in Britain and Europe, and his works are found in many important collections. He is a long-standing supporter of art at Bournemouth University.

Brian Graham hails from Dorset. On leaving Poole Grammar School he worked as a junior artist in a design and illustration studio. This experience taught him fundamental skills: how to respond to a brief, and how to think laterally. Financial necessity forced him to stay in the design and advertising world for many years but, as time allowed he developed his painting techniques and refined his ideas. After acting as a consultant at what is now the Arts Institute at Bournemouth, Brian Graham lectured there for a few years in the early 1990s. An inspirational teacher, he still maintains a close interest in his former students' work, and is a strong supporter and mentor of new artists.

Now living in Purbeck, Brian's studio looks out towards the hills, the sea and the distant Isle of Wight. This is where he makes all his work, painting mainly in acrylic but often in mixed media. His works range from intimate domestic-scale images to large, often colour-saturated canvases. They express a passion for many different forms of landscape and their relationship to prehistoric material cultures, and usually draw upon evidence uncovered by archaeologists. His paintings offer an imaginative exploration of the past, and its relationship to the present, in ways which strongly contrast with the often forensic and analytical approach of conventional archaeology.

Professor Clive Gamble, a world expert on the Palaeolithic, writes that 'Brian may not be an archaeologist by training, but his compositions chime with my experiences. Applying pigment provides many references to the accretion of time and his canvases are themselves active landscapes, never still, always changing'. Thanks to his friendship with Clive Gamble and other international archaeologists, Brian has privileged access to some of the most significant prehistoric sites. Particular sources of inspiration include Hengistbury Head here in Dorset, Boxgrove in Sussex, Star Carr in Yorkshire, and the spectacular limestone gorge of Atapuerca in Northern Spain. And for many years the Cranborne Chase farm owned by his friend, the archaeologist Martin Green, has provided him, in his own words, with 'succour and replenishment'.

In her recent monograph titled *Brian Graham: Flint and Flame*, the critic Charlotte Mullins concludes, 'It is his ability as a painter, as a handler of paint, that marks him out among his peers. It is Graham's unrelenting dedication to his subject matter, his innate understanding of the land on which he walks

every day, his imagination and his ability as a painter that enable him to create works that offer a lasting tribute to our ancestors' survival, and raise metaphysical questions about our own'.

Brian Graham's works are to be found in many private, public and corporate collections worldwide. Many leading universities hold examples, including the Universities of Cambridge and Southampton, University College London and Bournemouth University among them. The Natural History Museum in London, Dorset County Museum, and civic galleries at Huddersfield, Southampton and York all own examples of his creative output. In another national milestone, next January Brian is to co-present a lecture entitled 'Art and Artefact' at the Natural History Museum, with Professor Chris Stringer, the Museum's Head of Human Origins, and will talk about his portfolio work 'The Book of Boxgrove'.

Brian Graham's awards include First Prize in the 1992 Royal West of England Academy Annual Exhibition, and selection as the Inaugural Bournemouth International Festival Artist in 1994. In 1995 and 1996 he had solo exhibitions in London's prestigious Cork Street presented by Contemporary Art Magazine, and at Parnham House, by courtesy of John Makepeace. Hart Gallery London and Nottingham, his dealers for the past ten years, have presented many more shows, with numerous group exhibitions and art fairs, including London and Geneva.

Bournemouth University is deeply indebted to Brian Graham for his support over many years, and for the critical discernment which he brings to the choice of works for the University Art Loan Collection and its exhibitions. His close involvement with London's serious art world, and his personal reputation, have opened doors and made invaluable contacts for the University.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Brian Graham, and ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*.