

ARTIST'S NEW EXHIBITION

My colourful sculptures are inspired by old family photos and trips to the Middle East

THE unusual space Colechester artist Clare Iles has created for her latest exhibition feels

a bit like you're crouching down to look through an old camera.

And there's a very good reason for that, because Multicoloured sculptures, as the show is titled, is partly inspired by her great grandfather's old Thornton-Pickard camera.

"After my aun died," she begins, "my father and I went to the house to go through her things."

"As part of it we discovered these images of my great-grandfather when he was stationed in the Middle East during the First World War."

After writing them with the Imperial War Museum in London, Clare decided to take her great-grandfather's camera, which was stored with the pictures, along with her grandfather's tripod, back to the place her ancestor had visited during the war.

■ Colourful – one of Clare's sculptures

By NEIL D'ARCY-JONES
writing weekly for the Gazette



"We worked out he had been to Jerusalem, Egypt and the Lebanon border," she reveals, "but I started in east Jerusalem."

"This was 2010 and after a while I found myself in a tent talking with an old Palestinian man called Hassan."

"He was originally a shoemaker, but I was hoping he would recognise some of the places in these tiny old pictures and then take me there."

"A young Palestinian man had died a few days earlier and so the tent had become a memorial to him filled with wrapped up banners, bound, dry sticks and photographs."

"While I sat in the tent, I was thinking about how these materials and objects occupied the space and how they

AT GALLERY HAS A LONG BACKSTORY BEHIND IT



■ Family inspiration – sculptor Clare Iles

became symbols of our own individual stories?" Clare's work as a sculptor has also been influenced by another past trip.

"In 2001 I went on a journey to India," she says. "To find nomads and gypsies living and travelling around the country."

"I became interested in how colour is used to express the identity of different families and nomadic groups. The text

titles the nomads live with and the clothes they wear express a way of life passed down through generations."

Born in Leigh, Chry grew up in Frinton and has been based in Colechester since 2003.

"I lived in London for a while," she says, "before I went to college 1. In a way, it was odd I did not work as an underwriter's assistant as I loved it. I was 18 when I joined

and stayed there, on and off, until I was 25.

"At school I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I went to St Benedict's where I did quite a bit of music and then at the Colechester Sixth Form College I kind of lost my way, which is why I joined London."

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"I even worked in the gallery from time to time," she laughs. "I was surrounded by that world. He used to drag us around these old antique shops, which I remember nodding about. Now you can't get me out of those shops."

After evening classes, in London, Clare went to Cambridge Art School before taking a fine art degree at the Colechester School of Art at Colechester Institute.

After a brief stint in Norwich, Clare returned to the

Pictures: STEVE BRADING 008946.02

History recorded



■ Snapshots – Clare was inspired after finding photos taken by her great grandfather during his service in the First World War



town and got a job in a supermarket at night while working in her studio in the day.

"Eventually my old teacher asked whether I wanted to join the Colechester School of Art to teach part-time," she smiles. "And I've now been there nine years."

"That's been great because it has enabled me to continue my practice at the same time."

Following shows in Nottingham, Sheffield and Norwich, Clare says it's great to be showing in her home town.

"It's basically a celebration of all my work since my 2010 trip," she says. "Which is that extra bit special because it's at the Minories where the Colechester School of Art is."

■ Clare Iles: Multicoloured sculptures, Minories Art Gallery, High Street, Colechester. Until February 22, Monday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm. Free. 01263 712457. www.colechester.ac.uk/art/minories

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MY WEEKEND: Clare Iles



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
BY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

FAVOURITE BOOK: "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak.

FAVOURITE PIECE OF MUSIC: "Common People by Pulp."

FAVOURITE THING TO DO? "I love walking outside. I don't really have a favourite walk, just like being outside."

■ Show – Clare with her artworks

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