

ALEX JAKOB-WHITWORTH

Digital Sketch Feb 2022

Alex Jakob-Whitworth

# Whale

application for micro-commission



## Alex is:

I am an interpretative artist who works in a variety of media and disciplines. Practice includes painting, installations, repurposed furniture, digital exchange, printmaking, singing, writing poetry, tiny things, graphical recording, dressing up in character (ask about Professor Euphania Meantime), workshops and courses. Two recent high points have been "Being Dorothy" a performance piece in which I "became" Dorothy Wordsworth and climbed Scafell Pike in costume, as had Dorothy Wordsworth two hundred years before the event. A film was made of the project, with the Wordsworth Trust.

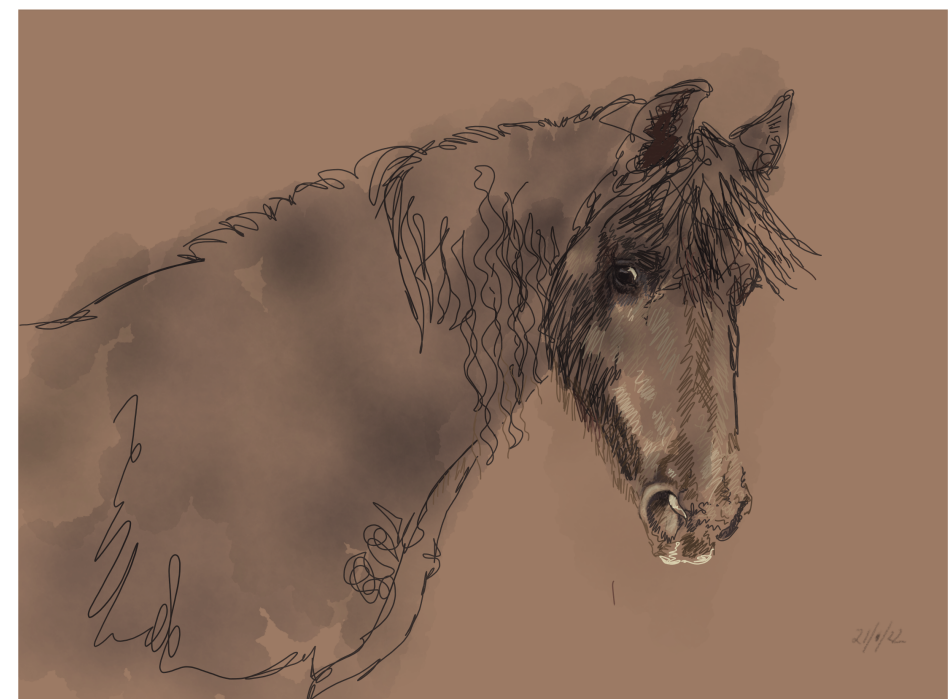
I also was the Artful Cumbria commissioned artist as part of the ArtfulWaysCumbria project in 2021, collating the wide scope of that project and making a reflective piece that was exhibited at Tullie House.

I often work with communities and this work has led me down fascinating paths that encompass working with a wide variety of partners - such as The Wordsworth Trust, Tullie House, The Alzheimer's Society, Healing Arts (NHS Charities Together) and the Beacon Museum, Whitehaven amongst others; these have inspired my own creative projects. I often collaborate with others, most recently, am doing so with John Mills, poet.

I have been a contemporary artist since 2002, with over 28 years' experience of bringing art and creative practice to sectors such as education, health and community. Challenges, conversations and the exchange of ideas feed my practice.



**Digital Paintings** - top - graphical recording uploaded to Twitter in real time during at Durhack (Durham University computer hackathon 2018 and 2019), bottom - digital painting of Samson project for daily postings on Instagram, Jan 2022



### is quite simple

I will become the Artist on Site, the “on call” artist that scientific organisations contact locally to record an incredible natural event. Instead of a War Artist, I’m the official “Ecology Artist” - whose job is to record, preserve, remediate and raise awareness of the life forms, resources and ecology of Earth.

**I will draw digitally, making images that I will upload onto Twitter and Instagram as I make them** - so people can “view in real time”, the experience. This will be making sketches, host recordings; being part of the observations and collection of data and information. I will digitally draw and paint, and talk to onlookers about my role.

I am “on call” at all times, and I have imagined, for “Whale”, that I have been “called” as the *official Ecology Artist* to record and respond to the beaching of the whale. My task is to digitally record as above the whale and the event, and also to gather reactions and reflections from the general public - acting as a conduit between the scientists (some of whom aren’t so keen on the artist being there - others support the idea) and onlookers. People always like to talk to an artist who is working outside in the public eye.

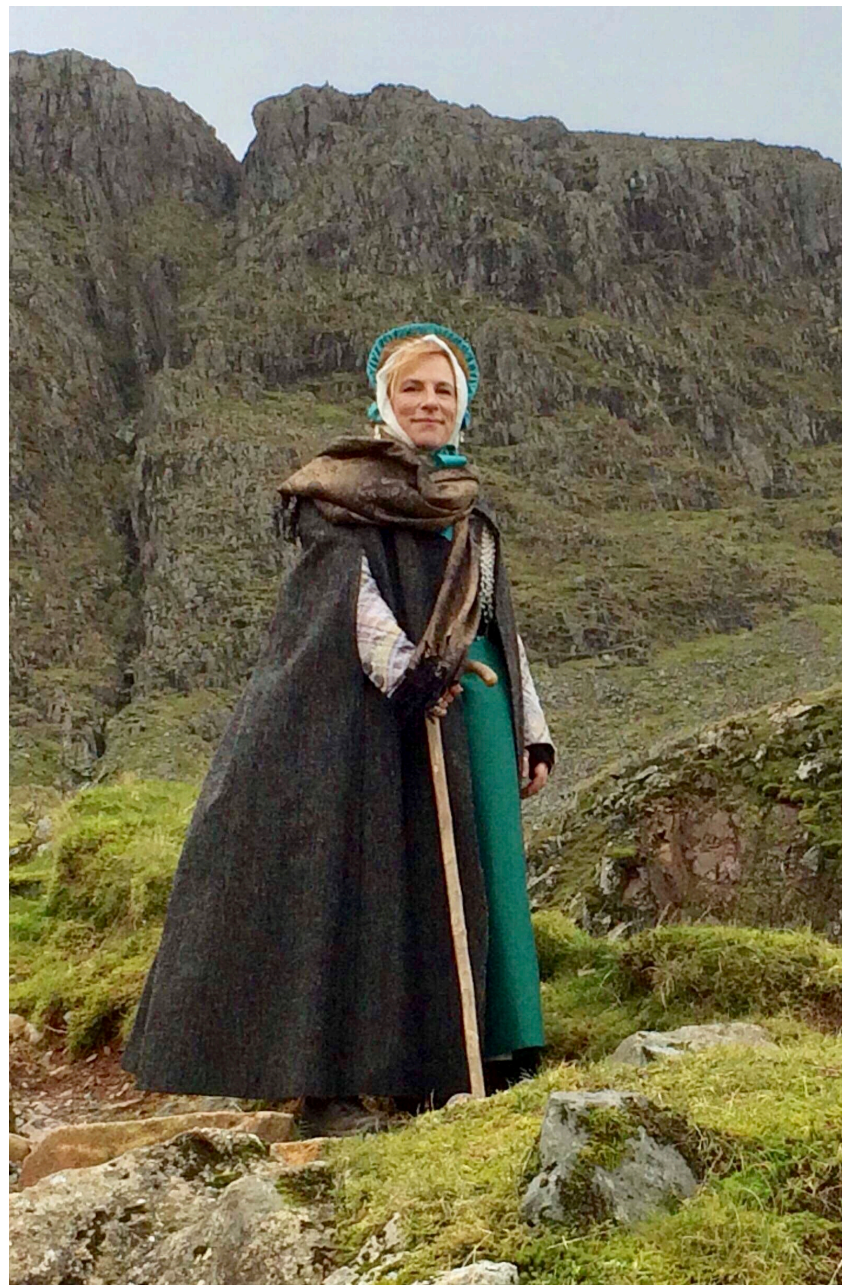
As my short bio shows, I am confident in doing this, and also in maintaining the role - but am flexible as well!

(Right - “Meeting Alchemy”, ArtfulWays Cumbria commission 2021 - installation with repurposed furniture)



Photograph by Rob Fraser 2021





Alex as Dorothy Wordsworth, half way up Scafell Pike, as part of the Being Dorothy, This Girl Did: project with the Wordsworth Trust in 2018

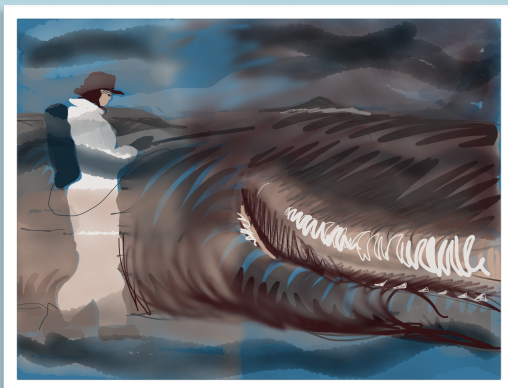


*"Stone as Bone on Sheer Slick Rock"*  
Watercolour painting, 2020



*"Rain Painting 2019-2"*, Merz Barn with Prism Arts

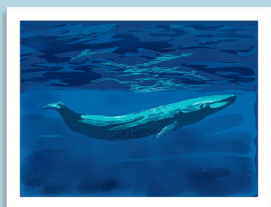




*"A Scientist Sprays"*

*Digital Painting*

Alex's work for the North Sea Whale Association can be seen at Tullie House and the Beacon Museum. The poem and pictures will be published in a pamphlet.

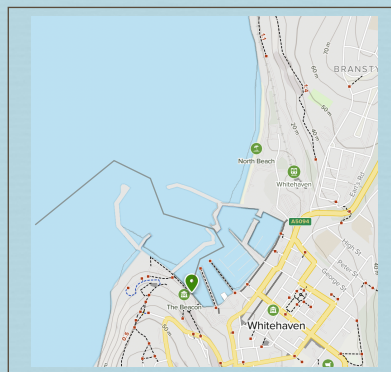


*"Beneath"*

*Digital Drawing*



## LOCATION



The whale appeared on the pier of Whitehaven docks on Friday, March 18th 2022 - it is believed she became separated from a pod of three, disturbed by sonar. The map shows the site of the beaching and where it is believed that "Sal\*" had travelled.

(\*Sal Madge was a woman collier who also has a pub named after her in Whitehaven)

ALEX JAKOB-WHITWORTH  
Reivers Barn, Milburn, Penrith,  
Cumbria CA101TN

## WHALE

Alex Jakob-Whitworth



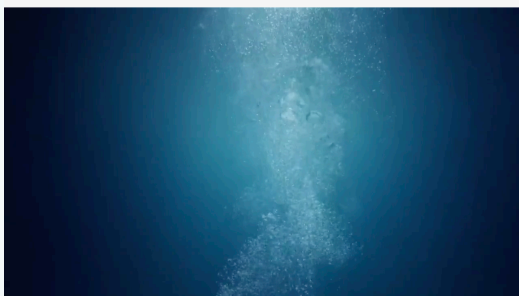
Artist response to the beaching of a whale at Whitehaven, Cumbria  
March 2022

*Alex Jakob-Whitworth - on call Ecology Artist*

*In association with the North Sea Whale Association*







*Sal's Space - she did come into ours, or are we in hers?*

### Why an Artist and Poet?

Alex says, "I received a phone call early on Friday morning March 18th - the day the whale was found - asking if I was available. The North Sea Whale Association needed an artist at short notice to document the beaching. Artists often collaborate with scientists as artists will 'see things differently' and can communicate the science in novel ways. Not many people know that I am always on call for this kind of work."

Various studies have found that collaborating with artists helps scientists to see their own work in a new light. These collaborations can spark insight and inspire scientific creativity. Alex works using art and poetry to communicate, comment and connect. "This is Art being useful."

## WHALE - AN ARTIST RESPONDS

Initially, the artist's role was to document the whale, and it's beaching, as a way of providing a connection between the townspeople who would inevitably gather, and the scientists who were trying to work. It has been found that people are happier engaging with an artist than to disturb scientists at their work. The artist can act as a conduit, allowing the scientists to work uninterrupted. That was the plan...



### FRIDAY:

The first day was spent making digital sketches of the whale, which were uploaded to Twitter and Instagram as they day unfolded. Time was spent talking to the scientists about their findings so far, and their opinions as to why the whale (Sal as she was named by locals) would have beached.

Alex was also available for people to speak to in the gathering crowd - garnering their thoughts on seeing this enormous creature on their pier.



*People gather round the whale, drawn by the magnificent creature*

### SATURDAY:

More people had arrived on the Saturday, and this is the day Alex set up her easel, to make a painting that would be a reflection of the town's response to 'Sal'. Many people thought it terribly sad, and a painting was a way to pay tribute to her. As she worked, she wore a GoPro to record the painting's progression. She also uploaded the stages to Twitter and to Instagram, so people could follow what she was doing.

She was also recording the whale from different angles and in different light.



*Scientists examine the corpse - people learn much about whales in this way.*

### SUNDAY:

On each of the days, onlookers were asked what they felt about 'Sal'. Alex collated these responses into the poem, "**Sal's Space**". The responses were uploaded to social media during the day, then collected at the end of each day to give voice to people's different ideas about Sal and her story.

A digital record was created, accessible at [www.beaconwhale.co.uk](http://www.beaconwhale.co.uk)

The North Sea Whale Association will store her work for their archives.



*The whale generated a wide variety of responses - such a giant, brought into our space.*