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NEW EXHIBITION: Ben Coode-Adams at the Minorities gallery in Colchester, where his new show *Between Things* will be held

Art's new design

Latest show at Minorities sees pair challenging conventions of exhibitions

By Neil D'Arcy-Jones
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ARTIST and sculptor Ben Coode-Adams is used to Grand Designs.

After all he was on the popular Channel 4 programme when he and his wife, the renowned textile artist Freddie Robbins, converted a 16th-century barn into a home for their family and a workshop for their art.

Now both he and Freddie are back with another grand design, re-inventing the idea of an

art exhibition into a piece of art itself. That's what the couple and a number of other local artists are currently doing at the Minorities Art Gallery in Colchester as part of their *Between Things* show.

"I'd been going to a lot of art fairs," Ben says, "and thinking about the way you show pieces of work there. I got to like showing art in spaces that were not a white cube, that had some kind of interesting structure to them."

"There was also that idea of how you see art in your own home and possibly organising an exhibition a bit like that."

Certainly when you walk around the main space at the Minorities, Ben, along with the gallery's curator Kaavous Clayton, have created a show that is so much more than just the sum of its individual parts with its wooden panels, almost like whopping great big bits of driftwood, screening off different sections.

The approach certainly challenges the standard staging of such exhibitions, combining methods that might more commonly be found in museums or retail outlets, creating structures and divides to control the path of the viewer, and

devising new ways to present work and engage the audience with it.

It almost makes the space an art work in itself but one which still manages, rather cleverly, to compliment the individual pieces. As well as Ben's ethereal, dream-like watercolour paintings, that also includes amusing knitwear installations by Freddie, as well as the colourful 'Crazy Blankets' by art duo Paris Essex, designer Stafford Schmooll's reconfigured bicycle seats and

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arts

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Getting between the lines at show

Artists team up to challenge tradition

By Neil D'Arcy-Jones
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handlebars and re-constructed furniture sculptures for Clare Iles, among others.

In fact there's nine artists in all taking part with works by Celia Pym, Sharon Leahy-Clark and Will Cruickshank also on show.

Ben adds: "I've known all of the artists taking part in the show, apart from Clare, for quite some time now. Clare got involved when I was discussing the idea of the exhibition and Kaavous mentioned her work. I agreed with him they would make a delightful addition to the other pieces we were showing.

"In the end all of the pieces came into the space and Kaavous and I set about devising how we wanted to show them. That's pretty much what happened so in some respects there was a real organic process to how the final exhibition took shape."

Born in Little Baddow, but growing up in Feering, Ben studied fine art at Edinburgh University and Art in Architecture at the University of East London. For most of his career he has produced large-scale sculptures for housing associations, local authorities and private clients but it was only when he became ill with chronic fatigue syndrome that his drawings started to take off.

"I couldn't make sculptures," he smiles, "so I had to find something else to do. I had always drawn but when I became ill that's what I turned to. I didn't really think it would become a 'thing' until I was at an art fair and a gallery owner asked me to show some of them at an exhibition in New York. I suppose it was only when people started buying the work, I thought 'hey, perhaps it's worth carrying on with the paintings' so now I do both."

Exhibiting alongside Ben is a

Over the years most of my work has been from either found items or bits of furniture people have given me but these new works are slightly different because of the colour.

Clare Iles

Colchester artist who knows the Minories very well, since up until February she used to work there.

That's Clare Iles, who grew up in Frinton, but is now based at the Cuckoo Farm Studios to the north of the town. She studied for a BA in fine art at the Colchester School of Art before going to do an MA in the same subject at the Norwich School of Art. Since then she has exhibited at EASTinternational in 2002 and has undertaken Arts Council-funded research trips to Western India and Jerusalem.

Her work is made up of cut-up, painted and reconfigured items of furniture which come together to form abstract sculptural pattern-forms.

She says: "I've always been interested in the idea of deconstructing items such as furniture and turning them into something very different from the initial intention that was designed for them."

"Over the years most of my work has been from either found items or bits of furniture people have given me but these new works are slightly different because of the colour."

"These are very colourful mainly because someone gave me a whole load of cans of paint and I couldn't really turn them away. Of course in the end I didn't have enough paint so I went out and brought some more but initially it was pretty interesting experimenting with the different colours that I had no control of. These colours were given to me, much like the bits of furniture themselves so it was fascinating making the sculptures with those differing constraints."

■ Between Things
Minories Art Gallery,
High Street,
Colchester.
Until June 10.
10am to 5pm, Mondays to Saturdays.
Free.
01206 712437.
www.theminories.org.uk



NEW SCULPTURES: Clare Iles at the Minories Between Things show