

















The Meadow

A head signifies cognisance, consciousness and first vitality; it's the first part of the body to enter the world. Within the head is vital parts- the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and the brain. This organ of nervous tissue is suspended in fluid, floating, ensheathed by multiple membranes. The external protective, membrane is the dura matter, then in the middle is the transparent arachnoid membrane, named as such for its delicate spider web-like projections of protective tissue, cells and connections. The most interior layer of membrane around the brain is the pia matter, also termed the 'tender mother' membrane.

The 'mother' is an often-used metaphor for the world. Billy and I live next to a meadow, together, we often cross it. The meadow pushes us out- the opposite orient of home and returns us to it, moving through in different emotional states, imagining, and noticing, walking in glimpsed feeling.

During the summer's heatwave, it caught fire. The meadows centre turned torrid, jet black and planetary, rolling into unharmed grass, distinctive, and changed against the green. It didn't take long until plants asserted growth, in a stirring of rejuvenation. The blackened grass, rapidly flecked with new colour and shape. Standing inside it, I felt an exchange between Billy, myself, and the meadows atmosphere. We were spirited witnesses to the fire-the once buoyant embers and smoke, and the diligent roots, invisible underground-the manifest and the unseen felt. The meadow a resilient mother, a constellation, a nervous system of organised receivers, pollinators, processors, and responders.

‘Floaters’ are visual symptoms which appear in one’s vision. Emerging like snowflakes, thread-like objects, dots, rings, petals, insects, and amorphous clouds, or flashes. Floaters occur when strands and specks drift in the eyes vitreous humour and cause shadows. These shadows are perceived as suspended, appearing active and elusive, shifting across the visual field. In ancient Greek and Roman times, they were termed *muscae volitantes*, translating to “flying flies” and compared to lentils and swooping birds. Throughout history, humans have tried to understand these phantom specks, and have even interpreted them as supernatural and spiritual, and as optical messages from divine realms.

The idea that the eye could emit light was an enduring theory in early history. Empedocles compared the eye to a lantern; and therefore, vision the result of the eyes ‘light’ touching objects and grasping them with its beams. Ancient philosophers understood everything as made of the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water; and that the eye, an incredible flaming beacon, was ignited by Aphrodite. To ancient people, this theory made sense. It was a reasonable explanation for the intense illuminated solar form that persists and reverberates when eyelids are closed, after looking into the sun, or the flashes and flares under skin, when eyelids are pressed with fingertips.

It also explained the occurrence of reflective optical orbs in the heads of wolves and lambs in the dark. We now understand this as 'tapetum', a mirror like layer beneath the retina, creating the eye-shine and night vision in animals. I can understand the thinking- and as a child, I liked the red discharging eyes that developed in the flash photos of me at birthday parties, and at Halloween. This red eye effect occurring in humans is caused by light reflecting the blood in the back of the eye. This effect transformed me into a cat, hero, or mystic. The heads in Billy's paintings, are perhaps fuzzy lambs with ablaze retinas... or cats or hero's or mystics, or witnesses; us, interacting with the corporal world. Fore-grounded, flashed, and focussed.

The reflective surface of the eyeball has stimulated gem-like descriptions. Comparable to the eye, it was thought that within a gemstone; compounded, absorbed, and intensified, was a light. Eye agate describes the distinctive formations of concentric rings, akin to iris and pupil, found within agate stone. Cats Eye Chrysoberyl, Bulls Eye, Hawks Eye and Tigers Eye are gemstones named after the eyes of animals.

Gemstones are used as talisman, for balance and for healing. They are connected to qualities, archetypes, and spirits. They are selected through connection to particular associations and externalise an innate and personal resonance. On holiday, Billy bought a purple piriform Amethyst. The stone containing stratum of white ocellus markings, and on the side less smooth, a love heart. I bought a carnelian, attracted to its redness and perfect sensual roundedness.

Today, passing through the meadow, I was stopped by a fallen leaf. It was glowing and crimson, and so glossy it was nearly viscous. Out from its midrib flared gold and orange. I photographed it to share with Billy. I typed, 'fire leaf' and pressed send.

Sheepish

2025

Acrylic and polyester collage on canvas

180 x 120 cm

The Meadow

2025

Acrylic, expanding foam and canvas collage
on gessoed polyester

180 x 120 cm

English Seaweed

2025

Acrylic and canvas collage on gessoed polyester

180 x 120 cm

Pluto Complex

2025

Acrylic, puff paint and canvas collage
on gessoed polyester

180 x 120 cm



Billy Crosby : The Meadow

15 October– 22 November, 2025

Opening: Saturday 11 October 2025, 4– 7 pm

Curated by Shane Bradford

UNION

Union Gallery

94 Teesdale Street, Bethnal Green, London, E2 6PU

uniongallery.com | [@union.gallery](https://www.instagram.com/union.gallery)

curator@uniongallery.com

