

Susan Sands: Press Gang

By Caroline Juler

As the title of her new show at **Art Matters** affirms, Susan Sands likes to amuse. Painter, print-maker, teacher, keen traveller, tireless organiser and great encourager of others, this middle-aged but youthful artist is constantly changing. Containing 60 lithographs, collographs, monoprints and linocuts of new and older work, this is a sparkling collection in its own, quirky right. ‘Come on chaps’, the artist seems to say, ‘let’s have less moaning and more doing!’ The challenge is always refreshing even if the means are sometimes dated. In this exhibition elements of a romantic, wayward 1950s drawing style haunt some pieces (*Blue rinse*, *Sea urchin*, *Queen Elizabeth’s oak*), as do echoes of hard-edged, British abstraction (the *Splintering Wood* series). A keen attributionist could find signs of Braque, Matisse, Rothko, Picasso, Roger Hilton even. But that’s a pointless game. Choosing two of many favourites, the pair of red, black and white lithographs called *Fighting kites* will resonate with readers of *The Kite Runner*. In the past, Susan Sands has been an implacable opponent of reproduction prints (fashionably called *giclée*) and this exhibition with its subtle hints of women’s lib (*Poolside pause*, *Older than the rocks amongst...*) makes you think as well as chuckle.