

Poet and artist join forces

ARTIST Franki Austin and poet Alwyn Marriage joined forces on Monday to launch the Lewis Elton Gallery's contribution to Guildford Book Festival.

Poetry is a strong inspirational trigger for Austin. Marriage shares the artist's fascination with a transitional world of shadows and echoes, as she revealed in her poem *March Morning Mist*, which she recited

at the preview. Marriage's intensely felt description of soft veils of mist revealing and concealing the landscape conjures a similar world to the one that Austin skilfully evokes in her meditative oil paintings and glass etchings.

More than 25 works are on show at the the University of Surrey gallery until November 2 and the exhibition title *Footfalls* was chosen by the artist as the most apt description of the state of being she is seeking to convey.

That altered perspective is most vividly evoked in a pair of wall mounted glass panels, *Birds of Passage: Gulls*, which have been carefully positioned and lit so that, at first, the shadows appear to be more 'real' than the forms that cast them.

At a first glance, the birds appear to be flying across the wall and the etched shapes they shadow are scarcely visible. Look at the panels from another angle, however, and the etched birds leap into focus and the shadows fade away.

Birds in flight recur as a powerful visual motif to suggest transitional states but the shift between presence and absence is also imaginatively conveyed in Austin's abstract compositions painted in oils that trace subtle changes within a delicately patterned grid.

Beatrice Phillipotts