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Zambia	Large, grey and unmistakable	29 Sept-06 Oct
North India	Desert Romance of Rajasthan	06-18 Nov

2026

India	Secrets of South India	16-31 Jan
Oman	Whispering Desert	Feb (date tbc)
Sri Lanka	Sun, Sapphire and Spice	05-18 Feb
Nambia	The Cheetah Republic	21 Feb-07 March
Spain	A Sojourn in Seville	10-14 March
Uzbekistan	Splendours of the Silk Route	16-29 April
Cornwall, UK	Boconnoc in Bloom	19-24 April
Azerbaijan	The Land of Fire	June (date tbc)
Zambia	Where Leopards Tread	June (date tbc)
South Africa	Africa Chill Out Safari Retreat	July (date tbc)
Wales, UK	Pembrokeshire Paintbox	July (date tbc)
Arctic	Polar Bears and Glaciers	July (date tbc)
Norfolk, UK	Windmill in the Reeds	14-18 Sept
Malawi	Big Game in Wide Open Spaces	Sept (date tbc)
Zambia	Large, grey and unmistakable	Sept/Oct (date tbc)
Tanzania	Safari and Spice Island in Zanzibar	Oct (date tbc)
Japan	Floating Landscapes	Nov (date tbc)
Galapagos	Darwin's Islands	05-18 Dec

Join Art Safari and tutors as part of your artistic journey

Mary-Anne Bartlett	Maxine Relton
Karen Pearson	Claudia Myatt
Julia Cassels	Brin Edwards
Shelly Perkins	John Threlfall
Tom Shepherd	Roger Dellar
Rachel Ivanyi	Vicki Norman
Alice Angus	Mark Boyd
Ian Sedge	Paul Green
Hilary Geelan	Darren Rees

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Virtual Botanicals with Karen Pearson
Technique Tuesdays with Claudia Myatt
Wildlife Wednesdays with Alice Angus and Mary-Anne Bartlett

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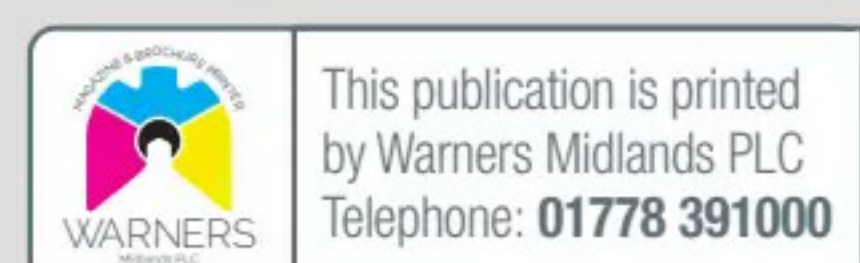


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Jane Stroud Editor

WELCOME from the editor

Want to comment on something you've read, or seen?

Email me at theartistletters@tapc.co.uk or visit our website at

www.painters-online.co.uk/forum

As we approach World Friendship day (Wednesday July 30), I have been giving some thought to the role friendship plays in the lives of today's artists. Creativity can be a solitary pastime and, of course, there are times when that isolation can be just what you want. But the support and comradeship of other like-minded people, sharing and identifying with friends, is necessary too in order to challenge us as artists and allow us to grow and flourish.

Charles Williams, president of the Royal Watercolour Society, has written for us this month about the forthcoming President's Exhibition at the Bankside Gallery in London, featuring his own work and that of David Ferry, president of the Society of Painter-Printmakers as part of the Bankside Gallery's 45th anniversary celebrations. The mutual respect these artists have for each other is evident and the support each can draw keeps their roles as presidents of long-standing societies current and energised. 'There is also the comradeship,' Charles writes: 'I count some of my oldest friends among artists I've met in exhibiting societies.' Similarly, Karl Terry, our featured professional artist interviewed by Sally Bulgin, draws strength from the four art societies he belongs to and through which he gains focus, pride in his work and, of course, friendship.

Entering the eighth month of his year-long diary documenting his first year as a full-time artist, Rodney Kingston tells us about the help he has gained by taking part in a government-funded 'Business for Creatives' bootcamp where he found the company of other artists, whether in person or via Zoom calls, affirming: 'Spending time with this group of creatives reminded me of the importance of community, even in solo pursuits,' he writes, and I would caveat that with 'especially' when working alone.

I hope that you find that sense of community within these pages, and indeed the wider community of Painters Online, which is here to provide teaching, support and friendship as you go on your artistic journey.

Best wishes

Jane Stroud Editor



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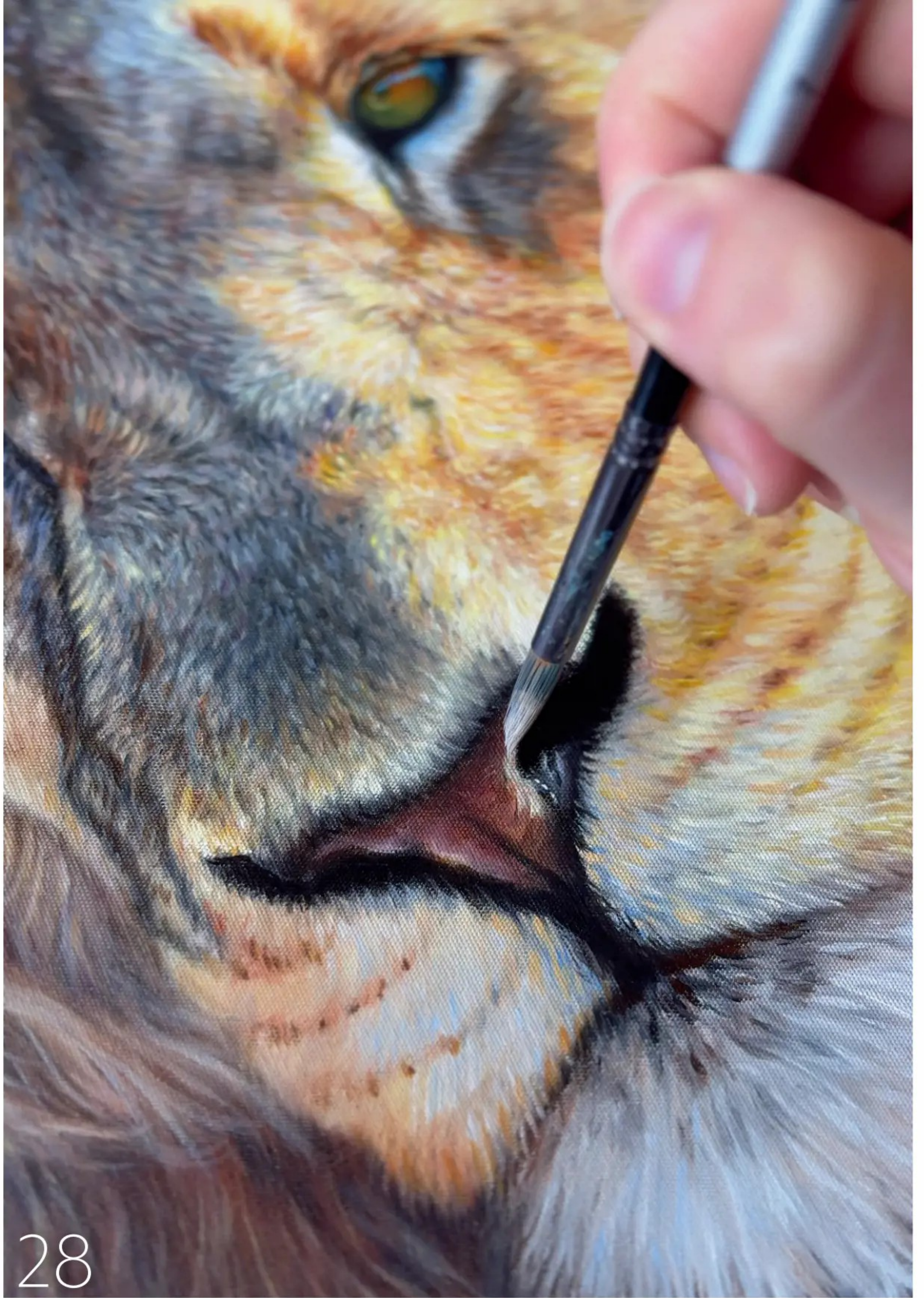
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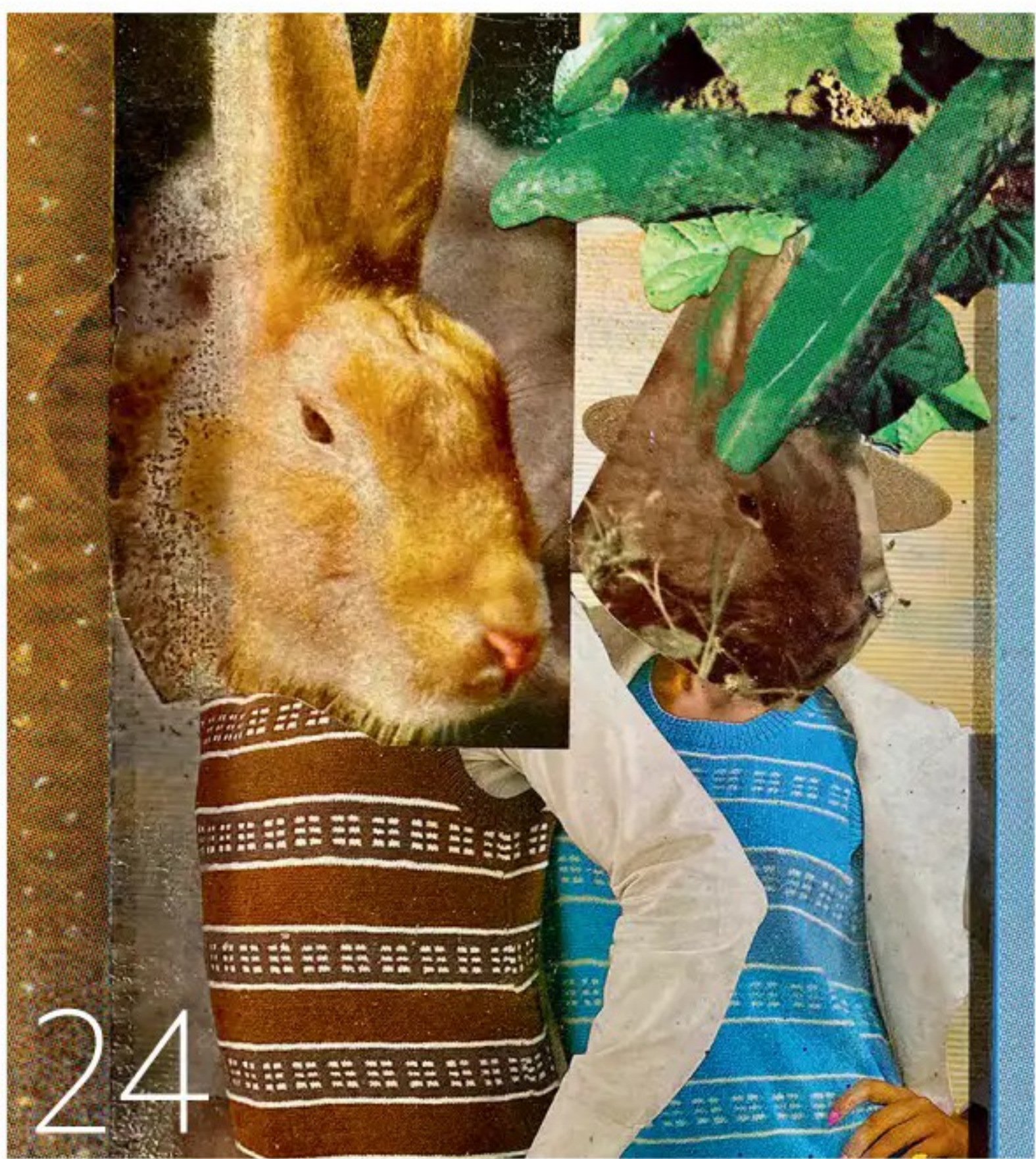




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September 2025 issue

THIS MONTH'S COVER



Martin Taylor *The Broken Ash and Queen Anne's Lace, Leys Lane, Great Houghton*, oil on canvas, 15½x19¾in (40x50cm). See pages 18 to 23.

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS



David Curtis
ROI, RSMA

has won many awards for his *en plein air* and figurative paintings in both oils and watercolours. He has had several books published on his work as well as DVD films, and exhibits his work extensively.



Haidee-Jo Summers
ROI, RSMA

has won many awards for her *plein-air* and *alla-prima* oil paintings. She is an elected member of the ROI, the author of *Plein Air Painting with Oils and Vibrant Oils* and also has a DVD with the same title.

THE ART WORLD

NEWS, INFORMATION AND ONLINE EVENTS IN THE ART WORLD

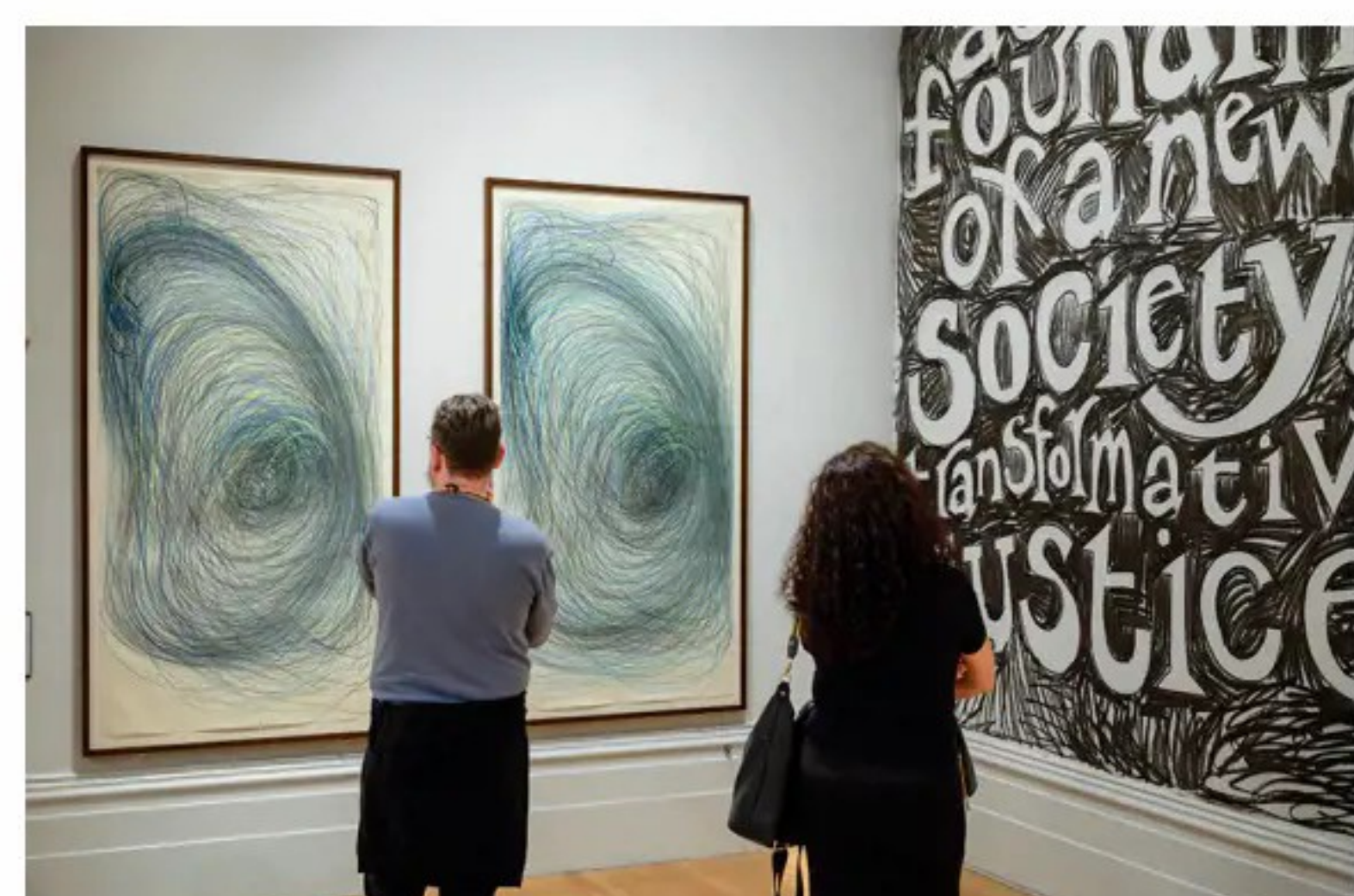
compiled by Jane Stroud



◀ Mohammed Sami *After the Storm*, Blenheim Art Foundation, Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, July 9 to October 6 2024. Photo: Tom Lindboe



▲ Rene Matic *As Opposed to the Truth*, installation view, CCA Berlin, 2024. Photo Diana Pfammatter/CCA Berlin



▲ Nnena Kalu *Conversations*, Walker Art Gallery, installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Photo: Pete Carr



▲ Zadie Xa with Benito Mayor Vallejo *Moonlit Confessions Across Deep Sea Echoes: Your Ancestors Are Whales, and Earth Remembers Everything*, 2025, installation view. Courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Danko Stjepanovic

TURNER PRIZE 2025

Visitors to Bradford this year will have an opportunity to see the work of four shortlisted **Turner Prize** artists as they go on show at **Cartwright Hall Art Gallery**, from September 27 to February 22, 2026 as part of the **Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture** celebrations. The artists include: **Nnena Kalu**, **Rene Matić**, **Mohammed Sami** and **Zadie Xa**, selected by members of the Turner Prize jury, chaired by Alex Farquharson, director of Tate Britain. The winner of the 2025 Turner Prize will be announced at an award ceremony in Bradford on December 9.

Nnena Kalu is nominated for her presentation as part of *Conversations* at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (middle right) and *Hanging Sculpture 1 to 10* at Manifesta 15 in Barcelona. Rooted in a process of repeated gestures, her cocoon-like sculptural installations and swirling drawings on paper are highly attuned to architectural space.

Rene Matić captures moments of joy in daily life and has been nominated for their solo exhibition *As Opposed to Truth* at CCA Berlin (top right), in which the artist expressed concerns about belonging and identity.

Mohammed Sami was nominated for his solo exhibition *After the Storm* at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (above) in which he paints empty landscapes, interiors and items of furniture as metaphors for absent bodies and their memories. And finally, nominated for her presentation *Moonlit Confessions Across Deep Sea Echoes: Your Ancestors Are Whales, and Earth Remembers Everything* with Benito Mayor Vallejo at Sharjah Biennial 16 (right), **Zadie Xa's** work focuses on the sea as a spiritual realm to explore traditions and folklore. Tickets for the exhibition at Cartwright Hall will be available from the summer @BradfordMuseums #TurnerPrize2025 and @bradford_2025 #Bradford2025

OPPORTUNITIES & COMPETITIONS

Check out the latest competitions to enter and make a note of important deadlines

Sending-in days

Guildford House Open

Details: Submissions are now invited for Guildford House Open 2025 – an opportunity for artists working in two and three dimensions to exhibit in a prestigious group show, with a top prize of £1,000 and a solo exhibition at the gallery in summer 2026. The competition is open to all UK-based artists aged 18 and over and entries are invited in any subject, medium and style.

Exhibition: A group exhibition of selected works will go on show at the Guildford House Gallery and the top prize winner will have a solo exhibition at the gallery in the summer 2026.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on Wednesday October 1.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/guildfordhouseopen-25

The John Ruskin Prize 2026

Details: Entries are now invited to the eighth John Ruskin Prize – a multidisciplinary art prize open to all artists, designers and makers, of all nationalities, aged 18 and over. This year's theme is, 'Patience in Looking, Truth in Making'. Four winners will receive prizes totalling £9,500.

Exhibition: Selected works will go on show at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London from January 29 to February 8, 2026.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on December 2.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/johnruskinprize-25

Landscape Open 2025

Details: The Salisbury Museum is calling for entries for the Landscape Open at Salisbury – a new annual opportunity for artists working within the *genre* of landscape painting. Works are invited across a range of media, including painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, moving image, textile, print and mixed media.

Exhibition: Selected work will go on show at the Salisbury Museum in Wiltshire, from October 18 to January 25, 2026.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on August 13.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/landscapeopen

The RP Drawing Prize

Details: The Royal Society of Portrait Painters (RP) is launching a new opportunity for artists – The RP Drawing Prize: Revealing the Human. Celebrating the power and versatility of drawing, the prize is open to artists, designers and makers working in any style or medium that can be considered drawing. The competition is open to artists worldwide, aged 18 and over at any stage in their career.

Exhibition: One-hundred-and-twenty works will be selected to form part of a landmark exhibition at the University of Hull Art Gallery, running from October 2 to November 30. One outstanding artist will also receive the RP Drawing Prize of £5,000.

When: Closes for entries on 5pm on Wednesday August 20.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/rpdrawingprize

The Royal Society of Marine Artists

Details: The Royal Society of Marine Artists seeks submissions of art inspired by the sea and marine environment, including harbours and shorelines, traditional craft and contemporary shipping, creeks, beaches, wildlife and anything that involves tidal water. The exhibition offers several prizes and awards, worth over £5,000.

Exhibition: Selected work will go on show at the Mall Galleries in London from September 18 to 27.

When: Closes for entries at 12 noon on Friday July 25.

Contact: mallgalleries.org.uk/opencalls

The Society of Wildlife Artists

Details: Artists are invited to submit work for exhibition alongside members of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the SWLA 62nd annual exhibition: *The Natural Eye 2025*. All forms of two- and

three-dimensional artwork based on representing the world's wildlife are welcome.

Exhibition: *The Natural Eye 25* can be seen at the Mall Galleries, London from October 16 to 25.

When: Closes for entries at 12 noon on Friday August 22.

Contact: mallgalleries.org.uk/opencalls

The Soho Open

Details: The Soho Housing Association in partnership with Parker Harris announces the launch of The Soho Open – a new exhibition opportunity for artists, makers, designers and creatives based in the UK.

Exhibition: Selected works will go on show at Great Pulteney Street Gallery in Soho, from November 5 to 23.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on Tuesday September 23.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/thesohoopent5

Wells Art Contemporary 2025

Details: Wells Art Contemporary (WAC) is an international opportunity for innovative visual artists working in all *genres*. Artists can choose whether they wish to exhibit in the gallery or create a site-specific installation.

Exhibition: Selected works will go on show at Wells Cathedral, from October 8 to November 1.

When: Closes for entries for site-specific installations at 5pm on July 1; closes for entries for exhibiting in the gallery at 5pm on July 8.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/wells-art-contemporary2025

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A day in the life of KARL TERRY RSMA AROI

The Artist contributor, Karl Terry talks to Sally Bulgin about his life and career as a professional artist that he runs alongside his roofing business



Karl Terry

has enjoyed a successful career as a professional artist since 2008, exhibiting his work widely, including in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, The Discerning Eye and with the New English Art Club (NEAC). He is a prolific and passionate *plein-air* painter, who enjoys capturing landscapes and cityscapes throughout the UK and overseas in all weathers and has honed his craft by painting alongside some of the UK's and USA's finest landscape artists. Unusually, Karl continues to run his heritage roofing company alongside his painting career, which gives him the advantage of an alternative steady income, and the freedom to paint whatever inspires him.

Although you still run your roofing company, you combine this with a highly professional approach to your painting practice. Can you describe a typical day?

'Yes, I do still run a heritage roofing company, but I nevertheless consider myself to be a full-time professional artist. I know from talking to many of my peers that I produce more paintings than most of them who only have one job! For years I have tried to keep the two separate, and I guess in a way it was because I didn't want to be labelled as a 'roofer' who paints.

'I've always loved painting and drawing but alas didn't follow my calling. In recent years I have embraced the situation more and have realised that I am quite lucky to have a steady income that allows me to paint whatever I wish rather than second-guessing what people might like.

'As I run my own business and employ staff, I do get to make my own diary. I don't really have a typical day, and it changes through the seasons. I'm primarily a *plein-air* painter so feel I get a better balance between spring and autumn when we have longer daylight hours. During this time, I rise early and try to paint most days either before I go to work or after I finish. I always carry a pochade box and a sketchbook in my vehicle and set out every day with the intention to paint or sketch something – although it doesn't always work out!'

How do you divide your time between managing your company, your studio work, working *en plein air* and the admin involved in being a professional artist?

'My life is very busy and full! I sometimes do not know how I manage but I do. I guess what I do is snatch moments whenever I can to paint before, after and between appointments. I rarely do physical work



◀ **A Bend in the River, oil on board, 12×16in (30.5×40.5cm)**



anymore, and if I did, I don't think I would have the energy to paint. As any serious painter will know, to paint well takes an awful lot of concentration and dedication and contrary to what many think it's exhausting, not relaxing.

'I think having my day job and grabbing these moments has shaped my painting style and approach. As time has been limited, I've developed a shorthand and work quickly, which is very helpful when trying to keep up with nature. I also never tire of painting or run out of enthusiasm. I don't do very much studio work as I prefer to be outside, but I occasionally do larger studio pieces based on my outdoor studies, particularly in the winter. Admin is always done in the evening and often with the help of my patient wife.'

Where is your studio and how do you organise its contents to suit your working practices?

'I'm lucky to have an old village gaol as my studio in the village where I live. It's a quirky, small space consisting of three rooms; two of them originally cells and the third the gaolers' quarters. One even still has its original 19th-century door! I store my paintings and have a table for preparing panels and framing in one room, and the other two hold my drying racks, old leather

armchair, two antique studio easels and my collection of artists' antiques and curiosities.

'Whilst I do paint in the studio I often just sit and reflect on what I've done and use it as a bit of a 'man cave'. The studio also has two very large windows facing the road where I display paintings and it doubles up as a gallery during open studios. Our local Wittersham residents often stop to look and have a chat!'

How important is your membership of professional art societies to your career and success?

'I'm very proud to be a member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists (RSMA), an associate of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters (ROI), a member of The Wapping Group and a member of the Rye Society of Artists. Belonging to all of them has helped me in different ways. Membership of the RSMA and the ROI have been major achievements that I'm proud of in my career and have helped raise my profile. They have also focused my mind to try to produce the very best paintings I can to deserve my place!

'The Wapping Group is like an extended family. It's one of the oldest outdoor painting groups in England (established in 1946) and has 25 members at any one time. I've always been proud to be a member and

▲ Autumn Light, Rye Harbour, oil on board, 12×16in (30.5×40.5cm)

since I joined in 2011, I have had support and encouragement from all the other painting members. It also gives me an excuse to take Wednesdays off during our painting season which runs from April until October.

'Lastly the Rye Society of Artists is close to home and is a professional society of artists which I enjoy belonging to and has helped raise my profile locally. All four societies have annual shows to which I submit work every year and through being a member of each I have made lots of artist friends.'

What is your relationship with private galleries in terms of solo and/or joint exhibitions and sales of your work?

'I have exhibited in lots of galleries over the past 20 years both in the UK and abroad. Currently I'm only showing with three, with whom I have had solo and joint shows. I'm with the Panter & Hall Gallery in London, the Rye Art Gallery and Dacre Art in Scotland. As well as this I have work in each of the societies' annual shows and accept the occasional commission. I have also been artist in residence at the Gallivant Hotel, Camber Sands for the past five years, so I have no shortage of places to put my work.'



▲ **Old Chestnut, oil on board, 16×20in (40.5×51cm)**

Do you have a direct relationship with the public via a website and social media?

'I do have both a website and a social-media presence with Instagram and Facebook. I haven't sold many paintings directly from any of these, but they are good for letting people know what I'm doing. Of the three, Instagram is the one I use most and the one that creates the most interest and feedback. I also enjoy connecting with fellow artists throughout the world.'

Do you teach painting and if so, how does this affect your own working practices?

'I do occasionally give workshops and demos to art societies. I usually really enjoy it and get good feedback. I like to chat and recall stories and, as Ken Howard OBE RA once said to me, 'It's quite easy talking about yourself'. I also find that when I do demos, I learn a fair bit from others as

well and it's good to help analyse your own work. If I didn't have my day job, it's something I'd do more of.'

Who has had the greatest influence on your own practice, and how do you stay motivated?

'It's difficult to say who has had the most influence on my own practice as I have been helped along the way by so many. I've been very fortunate and privileged to become friends and to paint with most of my heroes. My first major influence was my old art teacher, Chris Daynes. Without him I would not be an oil painter. I met him by chance in early 2000 and enrolled on one of his oil painting courses, which was cancelled. He very kindly let me go to his studio to show me the basics for a few months. One Christmas he lent me a book on the East Anglian artist Edward Seago. On the inside cover there was a photograph of him walking over the dunes with a French easel.

TERRY'S TOP FIVE TIPS FOR ASPIRING PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

1. Don't be in a rush to turn your hobby into a profession. Hone your craft and establish relationships with galleries and so on before you make the move. Making a living from painting is no easy task.
2. Paint what you love and be true to yourself. If you paint what you think others will like, they probably won't!
3. Have some savings or some form of passive income.
4. Be prepared to put in the hours, work very hard and learn to live with rejection.
5. Have a supportive partner!

I went out straight away and bought two, one for Chris and one for me. We've been painting together outside ever since.

'I also became great friends with Ken Howard OBE, RA and Fred Cuming RA (who was my neighbour) both of whom helped me tremendously. I was one of the founding members of British Plein Air Painters (BPAP) and am friends with all the members and we regularly have painting trips together and learn from each other. During Lockdown I took an online colour theory course with my friend Skip Whitcomb who is a legend in the USA and last year I took a workshop with another British/American artist friend Jill Carver. That was interesting as I was the only guy among 17 women!

Whilst painting is great fun, there always seems so much to learn, and painting with others seems to be the best way. Making so many like-minded friends has been the huge bonus to this journey and was completely unexpected. Most recently I have learnt a lot from my regular painting friend Tom Marsh who is the master of simplicity; he's always telling me to stop. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't!

Do you enter open competitions?

'I don't often enter competitions as I don't really consider myself to be that competitive. I also don't tend to do my best work when there is the added pressure of having to perform. The first award I won was having two paintings accepted into the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 2008. They were both bought by Ken Howard which is how I first met him. I have been juried into the largest *plein-air* festival in America – *Plein Air Easton* – three times, the third being this coming July. It's a wonderful event with 58 artists invited, mostly American. Last time I won a small prize, but

'BEST ADVICE I'VE HAD FROM OTHER PAINTERS'

1. Paint what you see not what you know.
2. I like Skip Whitcomb's advice: 'The simpler the statement the stronger the message'.
3. I often think of Velasquez's quotation: 'Look for the colour in grey and the grey in colour.' It's so apt for painting landscapes in northern Europe!
4. Ken Howard's best word of advice: 'Paint what moves first.' The following day I was painting him, and he saw me. He packed up his gear winked at me and said: 'Remember the advice I gave you yesterday?'. Luckily, I'd got most of him in!
5. Be careful with signatures especially if putting work into society shows. Generally, the members don't like big flashy ones. I once painted with Peter Brown in India. He said, 'that's a lovely painting mate'. Then I signed it, and he came back and said, 'Now you've ruined it!'.



▲ **Hawthorn Blossom, Harry's Field**, oil on board, 12×16in (30.5×40.5cm)

the real prize was just being there.

'I occasionally enter the online American *Plein Air Salon* and have won several of their *plein-air* awards but don't really think any of them have had much influence on my career. The biggest reward is the activity of painting itself, and the friends I've made on the way.'

Finally, how do you price your work?

'My prices are the same in all the galleries and I generally put them up once a year to keep up with inflation and framing costs. They range from about £650 for a 6×6in to several £1,000 for larger ones. The average size tends to be 12×16in, which sell for around £1,200.'

TA



● For more information about Karl's career, awards, forthcoming exhibitions and to view more images of his work, visit karlterry.co.uk or find him on Instagram at [instagram/terrykarl](https://www.instagram.com/terrykarl)



Sheep and the Setting Sun, oil on board, 8×16in (20×40.5cm)

SHAPE, COLOUR, ACTION!

Caroline Saunders talks to *The Artist* prize winner, **Valérie Pirlot** about her fresh and spontaneous *alla prima* style, letting light take centre stage

Valérie Pirlot

worked as a graphic designer for several years before her passion for oils gradually took over and one day she decided to quit the design job to be a full-time artist. In recent years, she has been inspired to paint live events such as weddings, parties, fairs, circus shows and music festivals. For the past few years, Valérie has been invited to the Glastonbury Festival to capture the spirit of the event with paint. Valérie is a member of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters and the Bath Society of Artists. See more of her work at valeriepirlot.com



Awarded *The Artist* prize at the annual Royal Institute of Oil Painters' (ROI) exhibition, self-taught Belgian artist, Valérie Pirlot works predominately in the great outdoors. Depicting the essence of a subject in a few brushstrokes, she makes every single one count. She generally produces a series of ten to 30 paintings until her inspiration takes her elsewhere. 'I cherish my freedom as an artist and I love not knowing what will inspire me tomorrow.' Valérie gets a vast amount of joy from capturing the beauty of her surroundings with freshness and passion. She tackles a wide variety of subjects but her focus is simply the light and how it affects shapes and colours.

As soon as Valérie discovered painting *en plein air*, she was hooked. Working in front of the subject remains her favourite way to paint. 'All the senses are stimulated, you have to rush to capture the light before it changes, and the colours are always richer seen with your own eyes. In a weird way, being restricted with time or facing harsh conditions (rain, wind, crowd, and

'Life goes fast, and we are only catching glimpses of it. This is what I try to depict with paint: an emotion, an impression, a moment, a feeling of light that will be gone in just a few minutes.'

so on) often pushes me to jump outside of my comfort zone and be bolder with my choices, which ultimately achieves better results.

'Life goes fast, and we are only catching glimpses of it. This is what I try to depict with paint: an emotion, an impression, a moment, a feeling of light that will be gone in just a few minutes.' Whenever Valérie witnesses something that moves her, she gets the instant urge to express it in paint. She only feels at peace when the painting is done, somehow reassured that the fleeting moment is now captured on canvas.

Firm foundations

Art and creativity run in Valérie's family.

Both her grandmothers were fantastic musicians (piano and violin). Her great grandfather was a keen *plein-air* painter; her mother a writer and photographer; her brother a graphic designer; her sister's interests include photography and interior design; and her father is passionate about music. 'As far as I can remember I have always had the urge to express myself artistically and my family has been very supportive of it.'

Until the age of 20 Valérie's real passion was playing the piano. She then discovered oil painting and fell in love with the medium. It also coincided with a student trip to Paris where she studied the Impressionists at the Musée d'Orsay. JMW

Turner, Edward Seago and Joaquín Sorolla were among her first sources of inspiration. Now her inspiration also comes from contemporary artists, many of whom she is lucky enough to call friends.

‘I learned by painting a lot, often and making lots of mistakes. Every painting is a way to become a better painter. I always look forward to the next one. A DVD I strongly recommend is *Edward Seago Oil Landscape Techniques* with Suffolk artist Miles Fairhurst, who made a lifelong study of Seago’s palette. It greatly helped me to build a good solid palette of my own. My paintings looked more harmonious straight away. To this day I’m using roughly the same palette. I choose a warm or cool version of the primaries, depending on the result I want to achieve. The earthy colours enable me to add warmth and de-saturate my mixes.’

Living in Bath has played an important role in her development as an artist. ‘I was born and grew up in Belgium. When I was 21, I visited Bath as a tourist and completely fell in love with the city and wished I had a reason to stay there. By some great turn of fate, on the same night I conveniently found my reason to stay, as I met my husband in a pub. He was on stage playing drums in a gig. Twenty years later and we are still living in Bath, married with two children and still feeling inspired by this beautiful city.’

Valérie often paints interiors from pictures she has taken in beautiful private homes

► **My Garden, oil on board, 11×14in (28×35.5cm)**

‘This is my humble and beloved little garden in Bath. It’s no Versailles but I love it nonetheless. This was painted during a demo I did for a local art club. I picked this image to show that beauty and subjects can be found everywhere, and sometimes in the most mundane scenes. When I showed the audience the picture reference for this one, I don’t think many people found it worthy of being a painting subject. And yet, this scene has everything I could wish for in a subject: on a purely abstract level, it has light versus dark, cool versus warm, strong lines, shapes, and structures contrasting with the natural curves of the foliage. On a more obvious, meaningful level, it captures a daily domestic scene that touches me because it’s everyday life. The laundry is drying in the sun, the cherry blossom is in bloom, the grass needs cutting, and soon someone will open that door to ask: “What’s for dinner Mum?” The dark foreground, treated in a very rough simple manner is there to enhance the focal point in the sun, which is treated with thicker, sharper, more saturated brushwork.’



▲ **Blue Walls, The Francis Hotel, Bath, oil on board, 10×8in (25.5×20cm)**

‘What attracted me to this subject was the lovely balance of cool and warm tones. The cool light flooding through the window was treated with cool mixes of blues and greens, which contrasted well with the warm glow of the chandeliers. There are also enough dark elements to contrast with those areas of light. I like imperfections in a painting and often use brushes too big for the job so the marks are bold and maybe a bit wobbly, to avoid being too detailed or tight.’



IN CONVERSATION



ABOVE **Sydney Gardens, Bath, End of Summer, oil on board, 9×12in (23×30.5cm)**

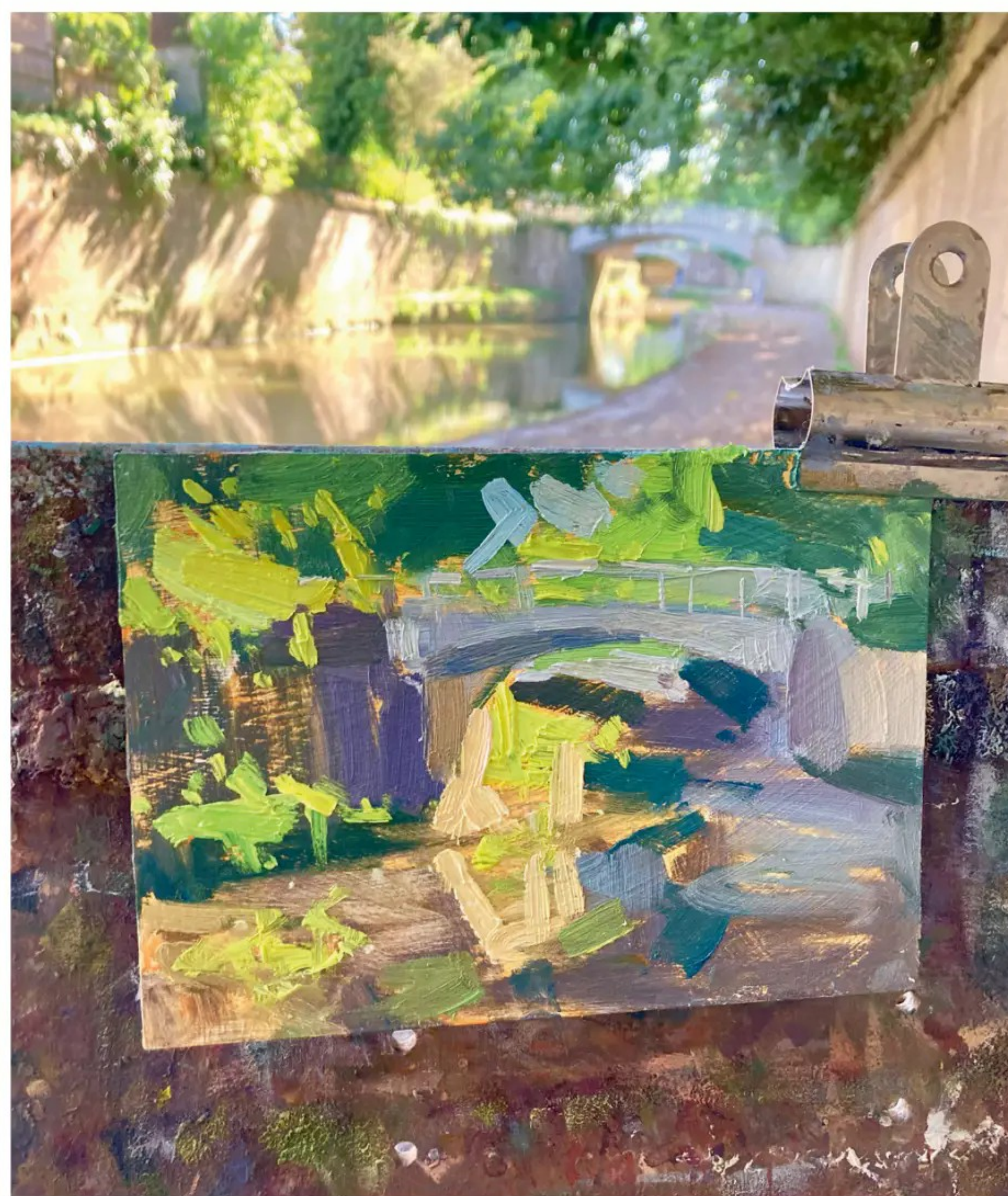
ABOVE RIGHT **Sydney Gardens, Bath, End of Summer – oil sketch, oil on board, 5×7in (12.5×18cm)**

‘One of my favourite places to paint in Bath is Sydney Gardens, a Grade II listed park dating from 1795. It is the only remaining Georgian pleasure garden in the UK. I love its beautiful bridges and magical foliage reflections on the Kennet and Avon canal. It’s a place where I know I’ll always find inspiration. I went painting there on a late summer’s day and started with a 9×12in board to capture the scene. It wasn’t about painting a bridge but rather a painting of late summer light falling on the foliage and water. I enjoyed varying the brushstrokes to tackle the various elements: the water is treated with thin scrubby marks, the bridge without too much detail, while the foliage here is the star of the show with bold, thick brushmarks loaded with saturated paint. After finishing the painting I set myself a challenge. How could I simplify this even more? What would be the essence of the painting if I had to restrict myself to even fewer brushstrokes? What could I get away with leaving out? To answers those questions, I had fun doing a quick 5×7in study simplifying the scene even more. Most painters like to do a small study before attempting a larger size, but for me the fun is usually to scale down a painting to see how far I can push the abstraction. It was also interesting to see how the light had already changed between the two paintings.’

or hotels. ‘Whenever I paint from photos, I force myself to paint as quickly and with as much energy as if it was from life. I don’t like to get lost in details so I ignore unnecessary information and focus on what matters; the essence.’ Sometimes she looks at a reference picture at a really small scale so that she cannot see the details, or she might blur it in Photoshop or even remove her glasses while painting.

A major breakthrough for Valérie was the day she started to see things in an abstract way. ‘It’s the famous “paint what you see, not what you think you see”. The brain is not always an ally when it comes to painting, and I often have to silence it when it tells me what a person or a tree “should look like”. For example, a “white” house in the shade can actually look dark purple. My brain tells me to paint it lighter, but I have to trust my eyes and the result is surprisingly more realistic.’ Valérie now forces herself not to see people, landscapes, or particular objects; all she sees are shapes, colours, and light begging to be captured with paint.

Rather than creating the same level of detail throughout the painting surface, Valérie likes to have areas for the eye to rest. ‘I think a painting needs to breathe. I often start loose everywhere then work more on the focal point (often the sunlit area). It is not a strict rule but I tend to make that specific area more saturated, contrasted, detailed with extra brushstrokes and hard



edges and use thicker paint, while leaving the darker areas looser, thinner, and less saturated.’

Depicting light

Valérie claims a good painting often has a good flow, so the eye can travel across it without feeling stuck or overwhelmed. ‘When depicting light, if the elements are too light or too vivid or too warm, then the other elements in the painting are penalised and the attention is taken away from the focal point. When one element is wrong, the whole painting can collapse. Darks are needed for the lights to show, greys for the colours to shine and cool areas for the warm parts to stand out.’

Small oil sketches – up to 5×7in – which take only about 20 minutes to complete, provide an essential part of Valérie’s painting practice. They serve various purposes: a warm up when painting *en plein air*, to get the first impression of the place; a test for the colours and composition before tackling a larger size; a record of colours and shapes to incorporate as ideas in other works or an exercise to simplify the subject and capture its essence. This consists of scaling down a painting to the smallest possible size.

Light, notably the way the sun falls onto the subject and creates areas of light and dark, catches Valérie’s eye in the first instance. Deciding the best way to build a

► **Cliffs at Kynance Cove, oil on board, 6½×8in (16.5×20cm)**

'Painted in Cornwall *en plein air* from the top of the cliff on a sunny but windy day, this was a small oil sketch produced to capture the colours of the place quickly. For me, Cornwall is all about the beautiful mix of greens and blues in the water contrasting with the roughness of the rocks around it. This is more a colour study than a precise drawing so I kept the paint treatment very loose and tried to convey the energy of the place with directional brushstrokes.'

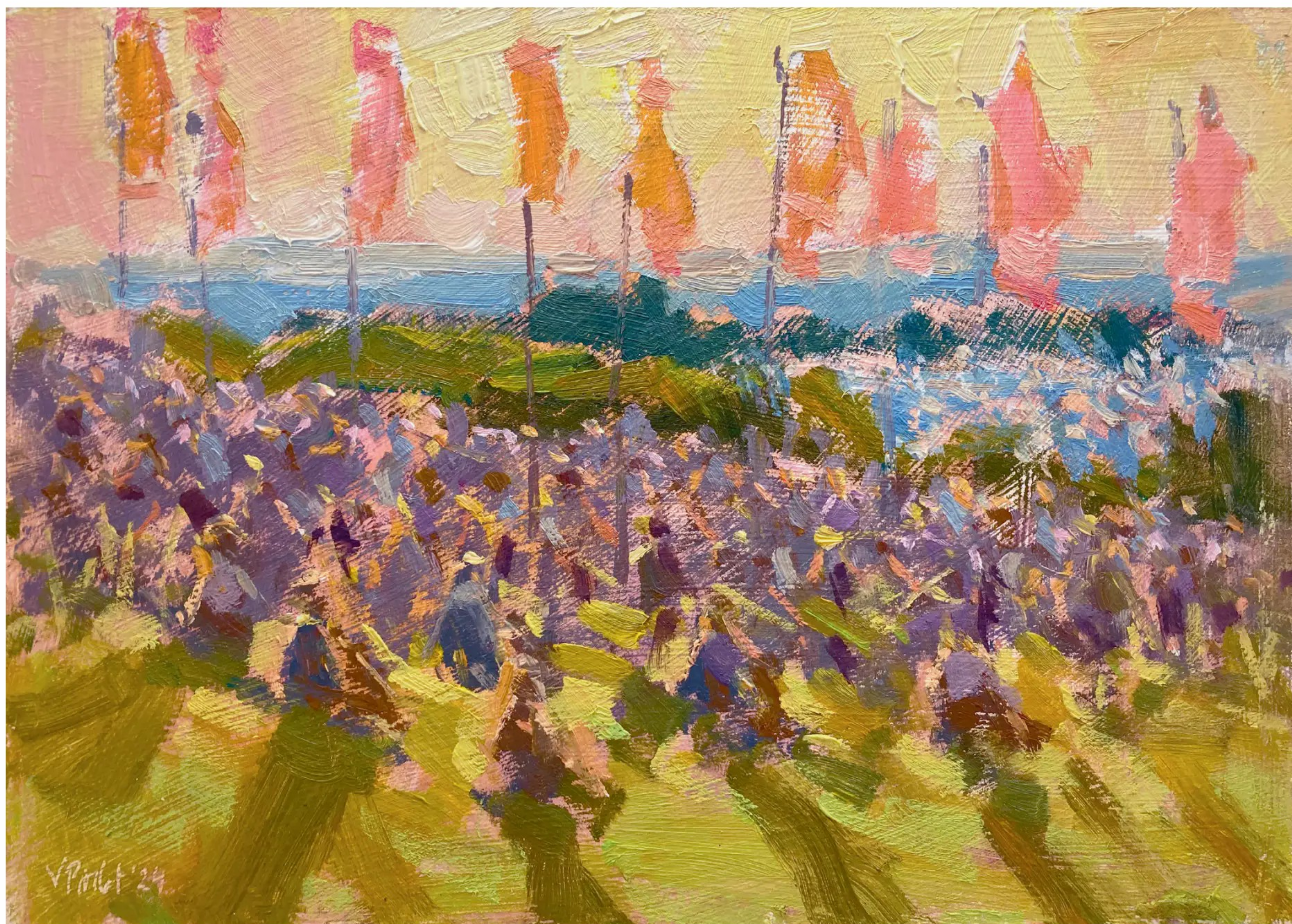
▼ **Watching Sunset from Above the Park, oil on board, 10×7in (25.5×18cm)**

'For the past few years I've had the privilege of painting live at Glastonbury Festival, capturing the spirit of the event. I go there most of the week and walk around the place with my easel, stopping anytime something catches my eye. As an artist I am spoilt for subjects: vibrant stages, colourful crowds and beautiful surrounding countryside. This painting (below) was painted at my favourite place at Glastonbury, from the hill above the park overlooking the whole festival. It was sunset on Wednesday evening, the day the doors open to the public. People don't



gather around the stages because there are no gigs at this point, but instead like to come to this beautiful quiet place to enjoy the sunset, which often coincides with the summer solstice. I'm not the only one under the charm of this place. I witnessed three

proposals in the crowd during the time it took me to paint this. I simply love the way the evening light falls onto the people, shining on the top of heads, wrapping like a glow around people's bodies and casting long shadows on the grass.'



IN CONVERSATION



◀ **Winter Landscape, River Avon, oil on board, 14×16in (35.5×40.5cm)**

‘This was painted *en plein air* on a blissful day at Dundas Aqueduct near Bath. Winter is definitely my favourite painting season. It takes a long time getting ready and wrapped up but once you make it out of the house, you are rewarded by the most gorgeous colours in nature: vibrant ochres and reds, golden yellows, frosty greens, and a crisp light you just can’t get in other seasons. For this painting I decided to be brave and go for the largest *plein-air* size I’ve ever done. I kept it as loose and fresh as possible. I applied bold and confident brushstrokes without feeling the need to blend the marks. There is a good “flow” in this painting that makes the eye travel from the river to the hills, bouncing on the rounded shapes of the trees. The grass in the foreground gives breathing space for the eye and enhances the parts in the sun.’

painting around this focal point, she tests various compositions using her fingers to frame the scene. ‘Looking at my paintings, I realise many follow a similar “recipe”. Often the focal point is off-centre, probably in the top third of the painting, with a darker foreground, and sometimes with a few light elements leading the way to the focal point. I often remind myself that not every element can be the star of the show. Many elements must take a back step as a “supporting act” setting up the scene to guide the eye towards the focal point. I tend to make all these decisions before I start painting.’

Valérie starts by applying a thin wash of ground colour to tint the pre-primed board (primed with three coats of Michael Harding non-absorbent acrylic primer). ‘I will choose a pink wash for a crisp cold winter day, and orange for a hot summer day, or a neutral grey for a still-life setup. A base colour has two aims: it brings harmony and atmosphere to the painting, but it also omits unwanted white gaps.’

A very basic drawing is produced (just a few lines to map the main shapes and define the horizon) before she tackles the painting stage. Working across the whole painting, she first blocks in the main shapes then divides these into smaller shapes filling in the whole painting as quickly as she can.’ Winsor & Newton water-soluble oils are Valérie’s preferred choice. ‘I decided to switch to water-soluble when I was pregnant to avoid the toxic fumes of solvents and brush cleaners. I have never looked back.’

Valérie’s colour scheme consists of some warm and cool primary colours: permanent rose, cadmium red hue, cerulean blue hue,



▲ **In the shed, oil on board, 10×12in (25.5×30.5cm)**

‘This is my father-in-law’s workshop/shed. I went in there to wax some wood for a shelf and quickly got distracted by the fact it would make a lovely painting subject. My father-in-law wondered why on earth I would want to paint his messy shed but I tried to explain how I found the combination of shapes, light and colour so appealing. He said it’s a reminder he needs to tidy it but I’m glad it was messy when I painted it! It is another example of how seeing things in an abstract way can help me find a subject. I started the painting with a warm tint for the background that is still visible, poking through parts of the painting. I purposely left some areas unfinished to go with the look of the rough and messy place.’

French ultramarine, cobalt blue hue, lemon yellow and cadmium yellow pale hue; some earthy colours: burnt sienna, burnt umber, raw sienna yellow ochre, as well as titanium white and Naples yellow hue. She prefers using hues to the real pigments as they are often considered less toxic to work with. The only premixed colour she uses is phthalo green (yellow shade) which is needed when painting something artificial or manmade such as a bridge, a vase or a jumper, and so on.

Rosemary & Co synthetic brushes from the Ivory range are a reliable choice. She likes rounded filberts with short handles because she paints from the wrist, close to the painting. 'They are perfect for applying *impasto* smoothly and pushing the paint around rather than absorbing it. My texture usually comes from loading the brush with a lot of paint and placing a thick brushstroke that leaves the marks of the brush.'

Valérie tends to work with a lot of brushes at the same time as she uses one brush per colour, and then holds it in her left hand until she needs it again. 'At the end of the painting I often have 20 brushes in my hand! It saves time as I don't have to wipe them between every stage and it saves paint too. But I must admit it does look a bit ridiculous!'

TA



▲ **Teacup and Marbles, oil on board, 10×10in (25.5×25.5cm)**

'One of my painting obsessions has been teacups. What's not to love about them? The shape, the colours, the delicate decoration, and the way the light plays hide and seek around the cup and saucer. The inclusion of the spoon, marbles and the vase is another way to play with light, reflections and shadows. It was painted from life outdoors so I had to be quick and placed the shadows first as I knew they would keep moving during the session. It's a playful subject and I painted it by looking at things in an abstract way, without any preconceptions of what something should look like but just recording what I saw.'



● Valérie received *The Artist Award* in the 2024 ROI exhibition for her painting *Kitchen Morning Light*. The 2025 ROI exhibition takes place at the Mall Galleries, London towards the end of the year. Entry to the 2025 exhibition will open shortly. For up-to-date information go to mallgalleries.org.uk



▲ **Watering the Vegetable Garden Under the Evening Sun, oil on board, 10×12in (25.5×30.5cm)**

'This is my sister watering her vegetable plot on a summer's evening. I like the way the sun is glowing around the silhouette and turns the foliage to gold. Aside from the figure, I think the focus is probably the sun shining through the water coming out of the hosepipe. These are the simple things that catch my eye everyday and make me want to pick up a paintbrush.'



The colour GREEN

Martin Taylor encourages you to ‘mix, taste and enjoy’ the colour green. Here he describes how he finds his perfect summer greens

Emotionally there is something calm about the colour green. Summer lawns, picnics on the grass, a walk in the park, leaves of so many shades of one colour on show in nature; it soothes the soul. Yet, be careful, it is also the colour of envy.

During the winter months the landscape is laid bare; the trees stark often against grey skies. It is fundamental, elemental, linear and graphic, often monochrome and lacking in colour. It is easier to see the structure, the bare bones as it were. Autumn has its own colours and after the spring an awakening of new fresh growth. As the summer settles in and the trees fill, I used to wonder how

to capture the lush green fullness of it all. Green is a predominant and obvious factor.

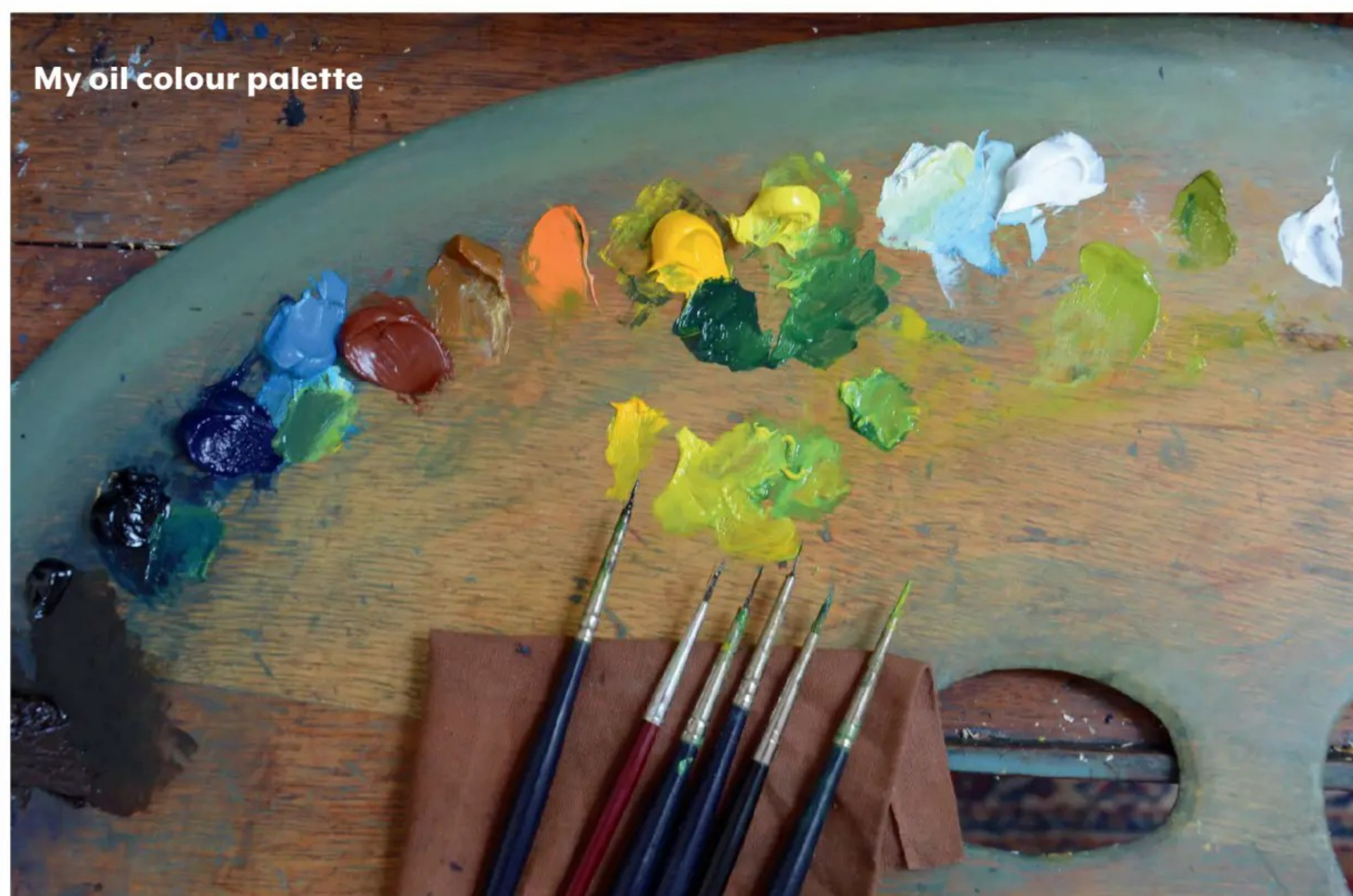
Colour palette

Determined to work *en plein air* as much as possible, I worked initially and for many years exclusively in watercolour. It was mainly a matter of convenience and practicality in the field. In the beginning, as a purist, I didn't use white and gradually through experimentation narrowed my colours down to 12. A limited palette, these are: lemon yellow; cadmium yellow; Indian yellow; cadmium orange; yellow ochre; burnt sienna; cerulean; French ultramarine; Prussian blue; black; Vandyke brown; and

Winsor violet. There are no reds or white here and of these, seven are blues and yellows. Since I started working with oil, I do use white and, of course when needs must, some reds.

We all know from our school days the basics of colour mixing: the three primary colours – red, yellow and blue – and that mixing them together makes the three secondary colours – orange, purple and green. Now let's go a stage further and explore the mixing of green.

First, a look at the yellows. Midway in the colour wheel is pure yellow. Lemon yellow veers towards the blue directions. Lemons compared to oranges are more acidic and have a greener tendency like limes and so lemon yellow is very conducive to making a good green. We must consider the colour value of the yellow we use even though it is always light. Cadmium yellow leans more towards the red and is slightly darker in hue, so it's great for making orange. I only need these two yellows – they are plenty. Looking at manufacturers' names and the number of yellow products on the market can be extremely confusing, therefore keep it simple.



► **Badby Woods, oil on board, 24¾×20in (63×51cm)**



OILS

‘A note here on ready-made greens. If you start with these, all are perfectly fine, but I prefer to mix them myself.’

Now to the blues. I don't generally use cobalt, unless very occasionally in skies, but it is pretty much midway on the colour wheel. I prefer to use cerulean, which leans towards the yellow, so, mixed with lemon yellow, makes a very good green. French ultramarine is darker; good for the higher deeper blue in skies. Mixed with lemon yellow it makes a good dark green. With cerulean and French ultramarine, I have enough blues. I include Prussian blue mainly because of its dark, rich quality. It's useful when mixing very dark greens, but be careful as it is so powerful.

Mix yellow and blue and you will make green. But if you use any of the colours where red is involved, you are going to veer away from the pure. Back to the colour wheel: mixing the three primaries will make brown. One secondary and one primary will also make brown: orange and blue, green and red, yellow and purple. Depending on the proportions, all have yellow and blue with some additional red.

Once you have made a good green, it is sometimes necessary to add a touch of red, via orange or purple, but be aware that this will make the green tend towards brown. So, the whole variety of green and colour mixing opens up.

► **September, Northamptonshire,
oil on board, 29½×23¼in (75×59cm)**

BLACK AND WHITE

A word of caution now with black and white. It is my opinion that black and white are void of colour. There is colour and then there is black and white, like in photography. This may be a subject for discussion in another article. Using black and white takes you into another dimension. Black can be dirty and will muddy your colours; white takes you into the pastel shades, so be careful when using either of these when you mix your colours.



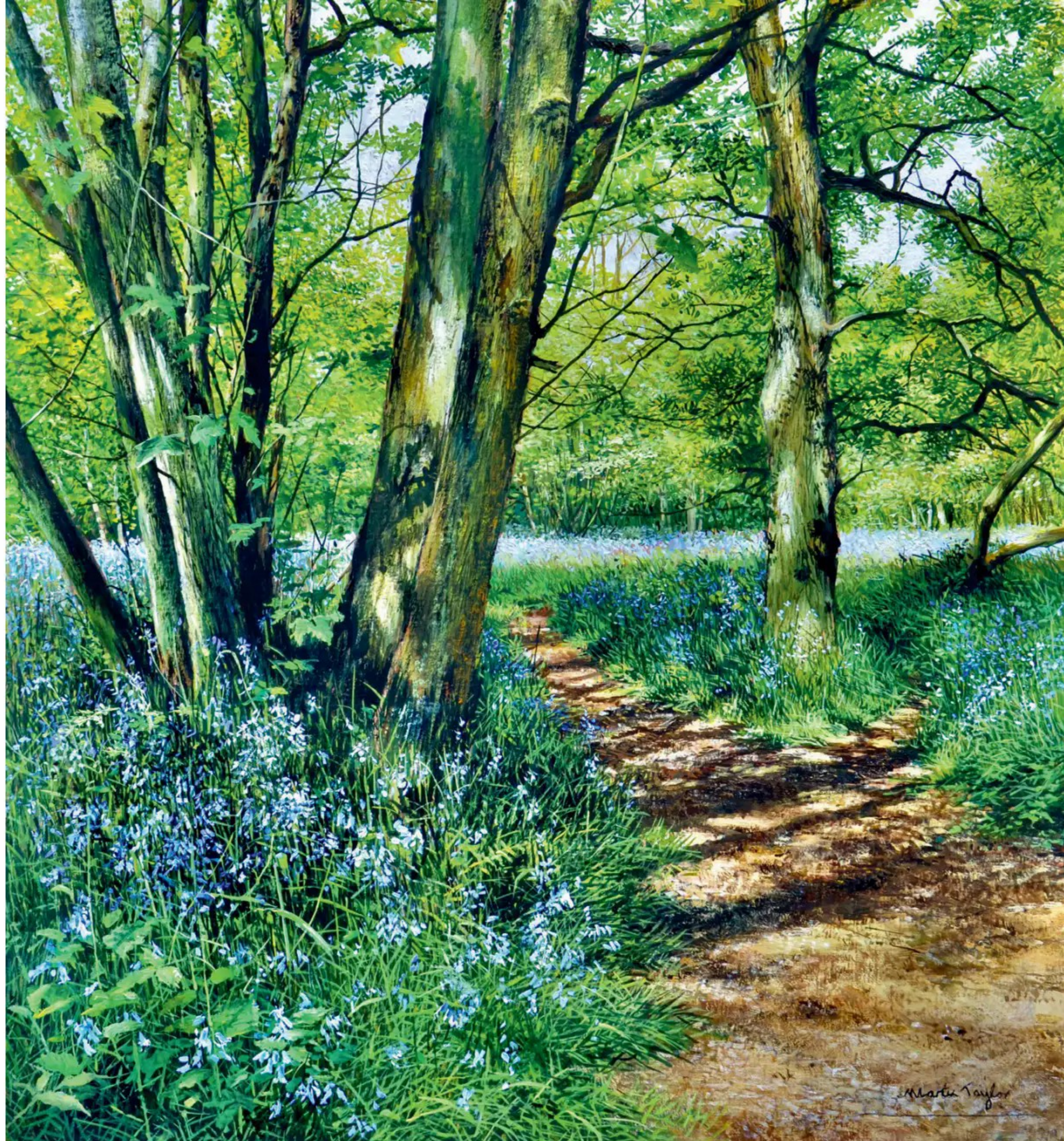


OILS

► **Bluebell Copse, oil on board, 11½×11¼in (32×28.5cm)**

A note here on ready-made greens. If you start with these, all are perfectly fine, but I prefer to mix them myself. For example, take the colour olive green. Oddly black and lemon yellow makes a good olive green. Viridian is another powerful colour and like Prussian blue can really dominate. It consists of a blue, which you won't find in nature. I never use it in landscape painting. When I see it in other artists' work, it jars – it just looks wrong to me. I love it as a jewel-like colour on its own, like alizarin crimson and Prussian blue, but there is an unnatural quality about it that I have never seen in the field.

Proportions are crucial in colour mixing and are subjective and personal to each and everyone's senses. It is intuitive and like seasoning in cooking, knowledge comes through experience and experimentation.





The permutations are endless and colour mixing is so fundamental in painting that it is an endless joy to continue to experiment and find out what happens when you add a little more of this and perhaps a little more of that. It's magic and just like the chef tasting the dish along the way: mix, taste and enjoy! TA

▲ ***The Broken Ash and Queen Anne's Lace, Leys Lane, Great Houghton*, oil on canvas, 15¾×19¾in (40×50cm)**

◀ ***Montgoble Copse*, oil on board, 11¾×15¾in (30×40cm)**

Martin Taylor

studied at the Ealing School of Art, Wimbledon School of Art and Goldsmiths. Now based in Northamptonshire, Martin's work reflects a love of nature, featuring detailed studies of the countryside that surrounds his studio – a converted stable on a farm. Having previously worked with watercolours for years, he now uses oils, finishing work in the studio. Martin has won awards through the Royal Watercolour Society and exhibits in exhibitions in Northamptonshire and London. He was one of the pod artists featured in the 2018 series of *Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year*, and is currently represented by the Gladwell & Patterson Gallery in Knightsbridge, London. His work is held in collections across the UK and the USA. Find out more at martintaylorartist.com

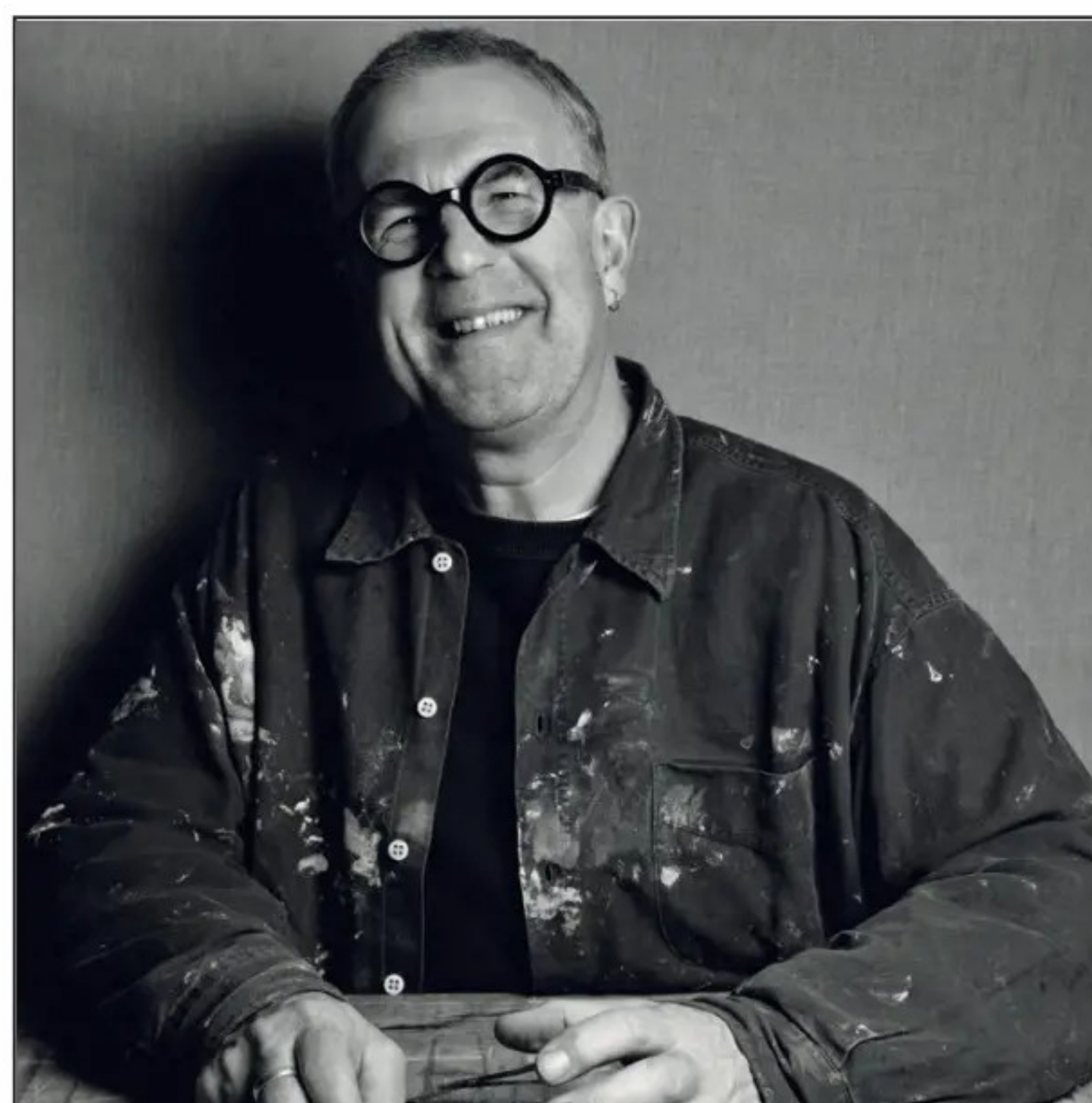




▲ Charles Williams **Big White Bear**, watercolour, 15×22in (38×56cm)

The Presidents' Exhibition

President of the Royal Watercolour Society, **Charles Williams**, takes a closer look at the role of the RWS and RE – their aims, ambitions and mission in today's world



Charles Williams

is the president of the Royal Watercolour Society and member of the New English Art Club. Since leaving the RA Schools in 1992 he has consistently maintained a studio and exhibited regularly in London, the UK, Europe and the US, making paintings, sculpture and watercolours. Interested in the role of the visual arts in the contemporary world, he has written two books on drawing and painting, and many articles for this magazine, and others, including open publications with www.susakpress.com. He is currently represented by New Art Projects, London.

In celebration of its 45th anniversary, the Bankside Gallery in London presents an exhibition of the work of the surviving presidents and past presidents of its two illustrious exhibiting societies, the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS) and the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers (RE). It is by way of thanks for the work that they do: with associate members, honorary members, honorary retired members, and the regular members, each society's membership is somewhere around a hundred souls. Each elects its membership, so as to claim an excellence



based on the quality of the work rather than its commercial advantage. Figureheads and representatives of the larger membership, the presidents are there as leader and guide.

It's a lot of artists. A lot of different ideas, opinions, skillsets and inclinations. What do they gain from membership? Scheduled exhibitions of the work of each society each year, some extra shows which may mix the work of the two societies, and a level of representation. The societies both have active education and outreach programmes as well. There is also the comradeship – I count some of my oldest friends among artists I've met in exhibiting societies – and there is the validation of being elected by your fellow artists to be one of their number.

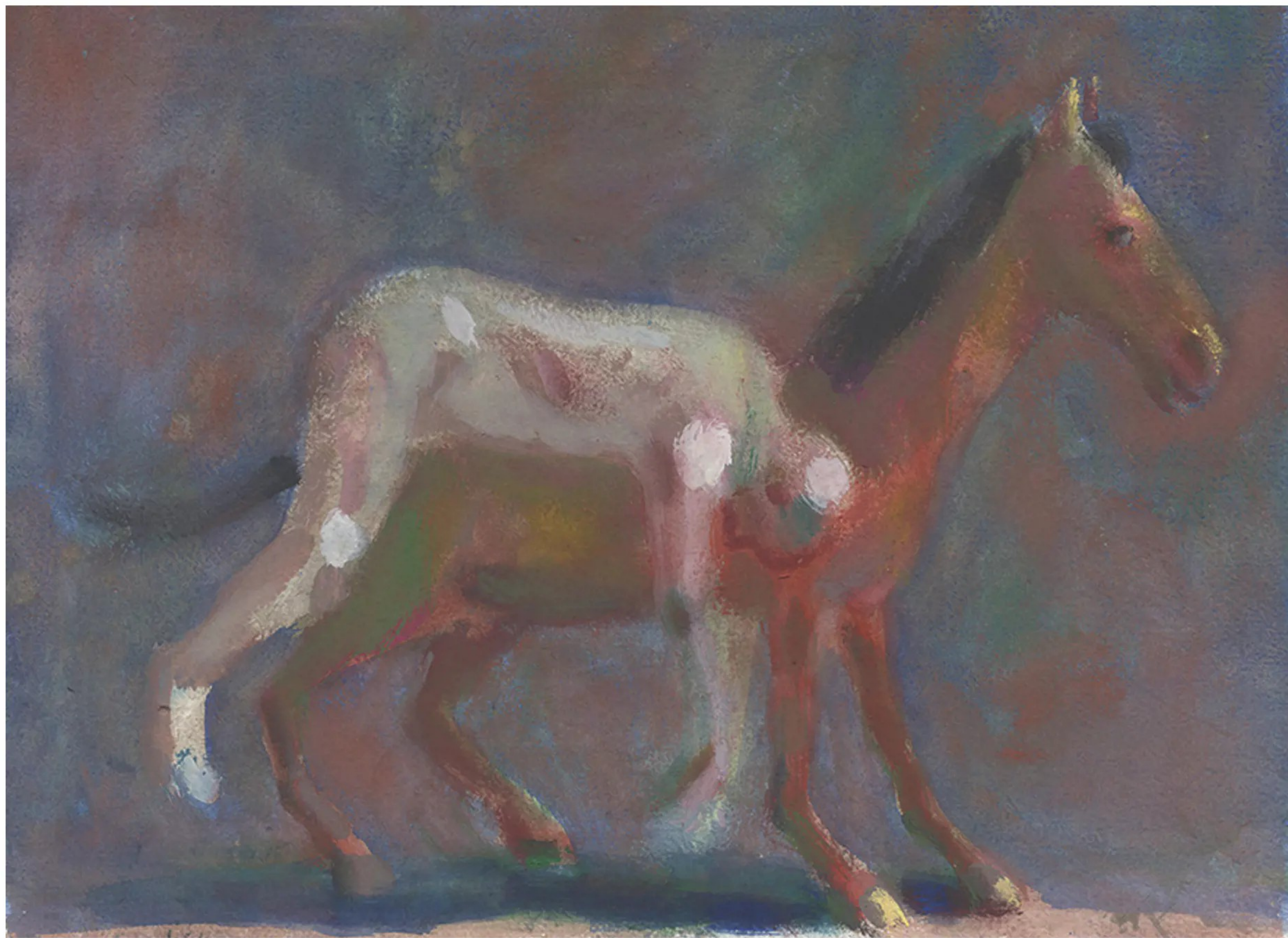
I have the great honour to be the current president of the RWS. There have been 34 others, including some famous names (famous if you are familiar with the minutiae of British Art), because it was on Friday November 30, 1804 that the first meeting of The Society Associated for the Purpose of Establishing an Annual Exhibition of Paintings in Water Colours was held at the Stratford Coffee House on Oxford Street, London. William Gilpin was the first president, and John and Cornelius

Varley were founders; it wasn't until the YBAs appeared in the 1990s that a British art movement had as much international recognition as British Watercolourists, and these fellows were some of its best-known exponents. The Watercolour Society was set up to rival the Royal Academy, which had turned its nose up at watercolour paintings, and in those days an exhibition

▲ David Ferry *The Midday Sun at Midnight, 2025*, digital archive print on photo-rag paper, 16½×23½in (42×59.4cm)

▼ David Ferry *The March Hares, 2025*, digital archive print on photo-rag paper, 16½×23½in (42×59.4cm)





by the Watercolour Society attracted queues that went down Piccadilly, and later, the presidency came with a knighthood.

Sadly, it no longer attracts such rewards, although I do get to wear the most egregiously ornate, late-Victorian medal of office, designed by Herbert Von Herkomer in a failed attempt to be made president. It is faintly repulsive, to be frank, and I toy with selling it, but only to liven up council meetings. These are the instrument by which the society is run; I am supported by two vice presidents and a council of officers, each with a responsibility, none of us with any remuneration. It's the glory that counts. The president's office lasts five years and delegation is the key. All the presidents are highly skilled watercolourists who manage to continue their practice alongside the demands of the role. John Doyle, Francis Bowyer, Richard Sorrell, David Paskett, Thomas Plunkett, and Jill Leman, the first female president and the one who took us so efficiently through the recent epidemic, are all exhibiting in a variety of different styles and water-based media. John Doyle is 97 and still painting, so it can't have been too much of a strain being president.

Presidents need to have an aim, an

ambition, a mission, even if it is just a simple one; a prestigious book on the work of the society, for example, or, as Jill had, a crisis to avert. My own ambition is to widen the diversity and age-range of the RWS. Without getting too Greg Dyke about it, I think that it's a natural tendency for a society to elect a membership in its own image, and this inevitably means we get older and paler. I'd like to see more youth in the place! I'd like the RWS to give opportunities for younger artists, and not just the latest stars, to exhibit and to grow. I know that my opposite number feels the same about the RE.

By a welcome coincidence, professor David Ferry, the 13th president of the RE, lives near me; I'm in Faversham in Kent, and he in Canterbury, and we meet occasionally in Canterbury's best pub, the New Inn. This is owned by my ex-colleague and well-beloved friend Katrina Maclean, a sculptor and printmaker. We taught together at Canterbury Christ Church University when it had a Fine Art programme, and we had a great deal of fun. Canterbury is a cultural place, in its way, although always battered by the economic trade winds that rattle around its museums, galleries, universities and colleges.

▲ Charles Williams ***Tired Rider***, watercolour, 15×22in (38×56cm)

David is an inspiration. His enthusiasm and originality have excited hundreds of students and pushed them into new territory they never thought they'd experience. It's certainly hard not to get carried away in conversation with him: I expect I'll be making wild spray paint stencil prints or mono-printing on 20-foot-long strips of paper soon. His long and prestigious career in art colleges and universities demonstrates this capacity amply, and I think a lot of his strength comes from a refusal to relinquish his Blackpool roots. Art for him is grotesquerie, it is comedy low and high, multi-layered gags told with an off-hand style. I wonder though how this translates to being the president of an exhibiting society. It's a very different thing.

The answer is that of course it does, and it's his experience running university departments that determines the flavour of his presidency. He's keen to widen the remit, to include new techniques, to challenge orthodoxies, and to bring the society up to

date, in the same way that he might with a new department.

David's first response to the question of what the RE is for is to quote the charity aims. It's about spreading the word: developing awareness of printmaking in the community. Talks and school visits, lectures on technique and history, to make more people aware of its potential as a means of creative expression. The aims of the RWS are more or less the same, only with watercolour. My own experience, much less associated with academia than David's, takes me to a similar position.

Being president is also a matter of dealing with artists, as a group and as individuals. Exhibiting societies are anomalous entities in the contemporary scene. Neither galleries nor beneficial associations nor university departments, the institution could be seen as a relic of a different time, before the

'David is an inspiration. His enthusiasm and originality have excited hundreds of students and pushed them into new territory they never thought they'd experience.'

commercial gallery system evolved to its present position. They were never about support. The emphasis was always on validation, and still is: you can be sure that this is the best practice available.

But what is 'best'? How do we define it? The RWS has, over the years, developed an inclusive approach to this question, and it is one I wholeheartedly support. I suppose that this is where my own experience is evident.

David's academic experience makes his apprehension of the role of the president different from mine in another way. I've been more in the 'market' than he has, I think, working without any structure around me. For me, the fact that none of this work we put into the societies is actually, directly, paid is probably less of a shock. There's something else that we both experience though, and that is the strangeness of

working only with the final product of the artists we lead. As a lecturer, you deal with work in progress, all the time: you're in people's studios, talking about what they're planning on doing with their work, what to do next, whereas as president, what you see is what emerges. It's a different thing. We just represent our members; we can't take any responsibility for their work. For David that's perhaps harder.

Whatever the case, the RE, which is the junior society (began in 1880), is thriving. Under David's leadership, its membership is widening and its approach to printmaking is focused away from the traditional, always a temptation in a society whose initial *raison d'être* was based on a particular set of technical approaches, and much more on the experimental. It is now becoming a forum for artists who take risks rather than show off accomplishments. I am all for that. TA

▼ David Ferry ***The Mari Lwyd, 2025***, digital archive print on photo-rag paper, 16½×23½in (42×59.4cm)



The Presidents' Exhibition, from June 11 to 22, is followed by a show selected from the work of the membership of both societies by art critic and art world luminary Tim Marlow, from July 31 to August 10. Find out more at banksidegallery.com

Soft transitions and small details

Amber Tyldesley reviews the new polyester canvases from **ACF Canvases**

One of my top priorities when choosing a surface is to find one that allows me to paint soft transitions and the smallest of details. That usually means something smooth, but it is often difficult to find a surface that is smooth but not 'slick'. The surface needs to have enough tooth to hold the paint without interrupting its flow.

I have been looking to find a new surface for my oil paintings and decided

to experiment with an ACF canvas. I have previously only worked on cotton and linen canvases, and ACF canvases are different being 100-per-cent polyester. After reading more about the strength and durability of this canvas it made me keen to give them a try.

I chose the 20mm deep 10×14in (25.5×35.5cm) stretched canvas and my first impressions were very positive. In fact, I've never seen a tighter canvas! I noticed that

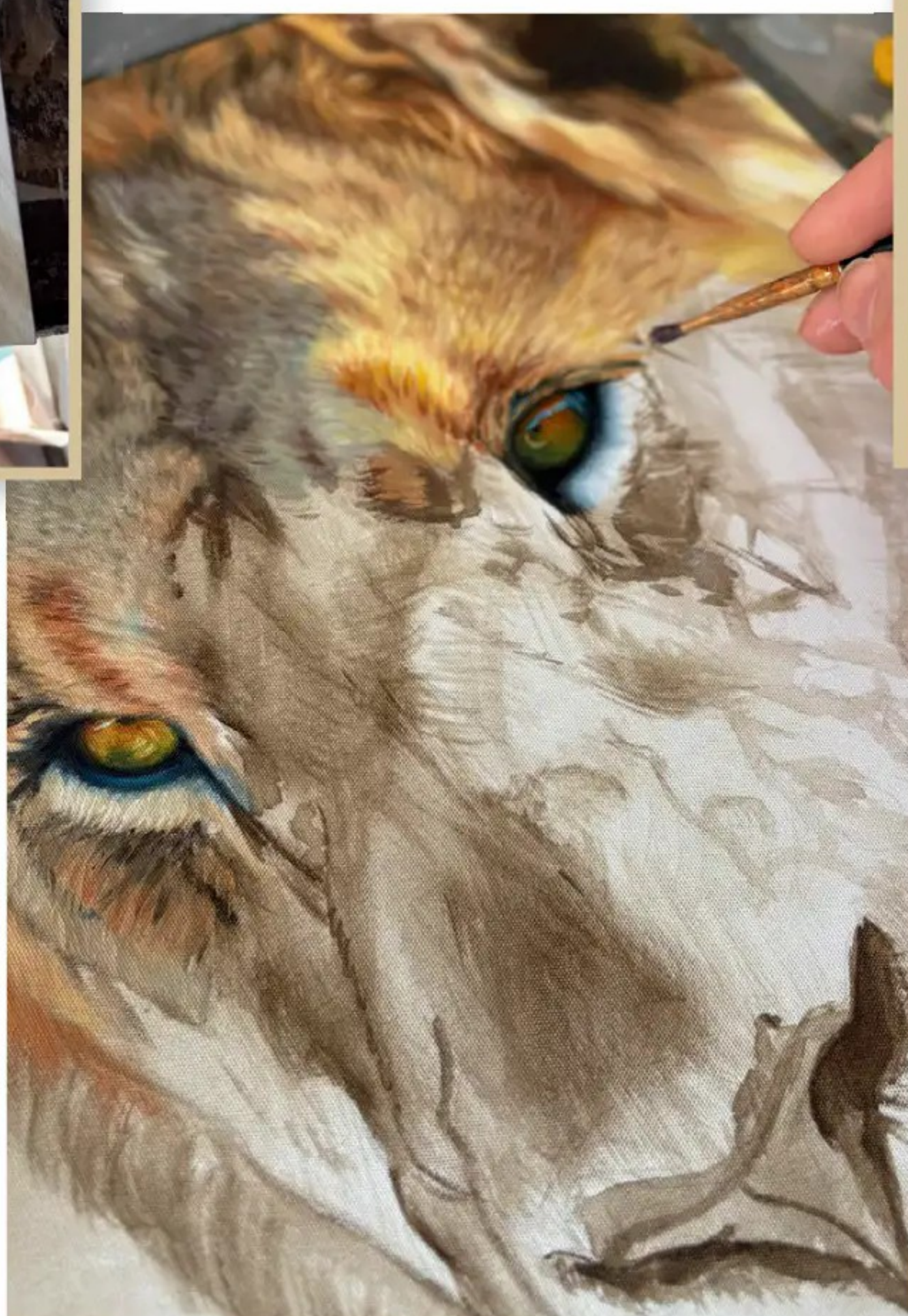
the canvas was also very 'square', which is something that is really important for my work. I often 'floater frame' my pieces, so having a perfectly symmetrical canvas with 90-degree corners is crucial for making the space between the canvas and frame even along all of the edges. The corners of the canvas were very neatly folded and fastened at the back, giving a clean and professional look.



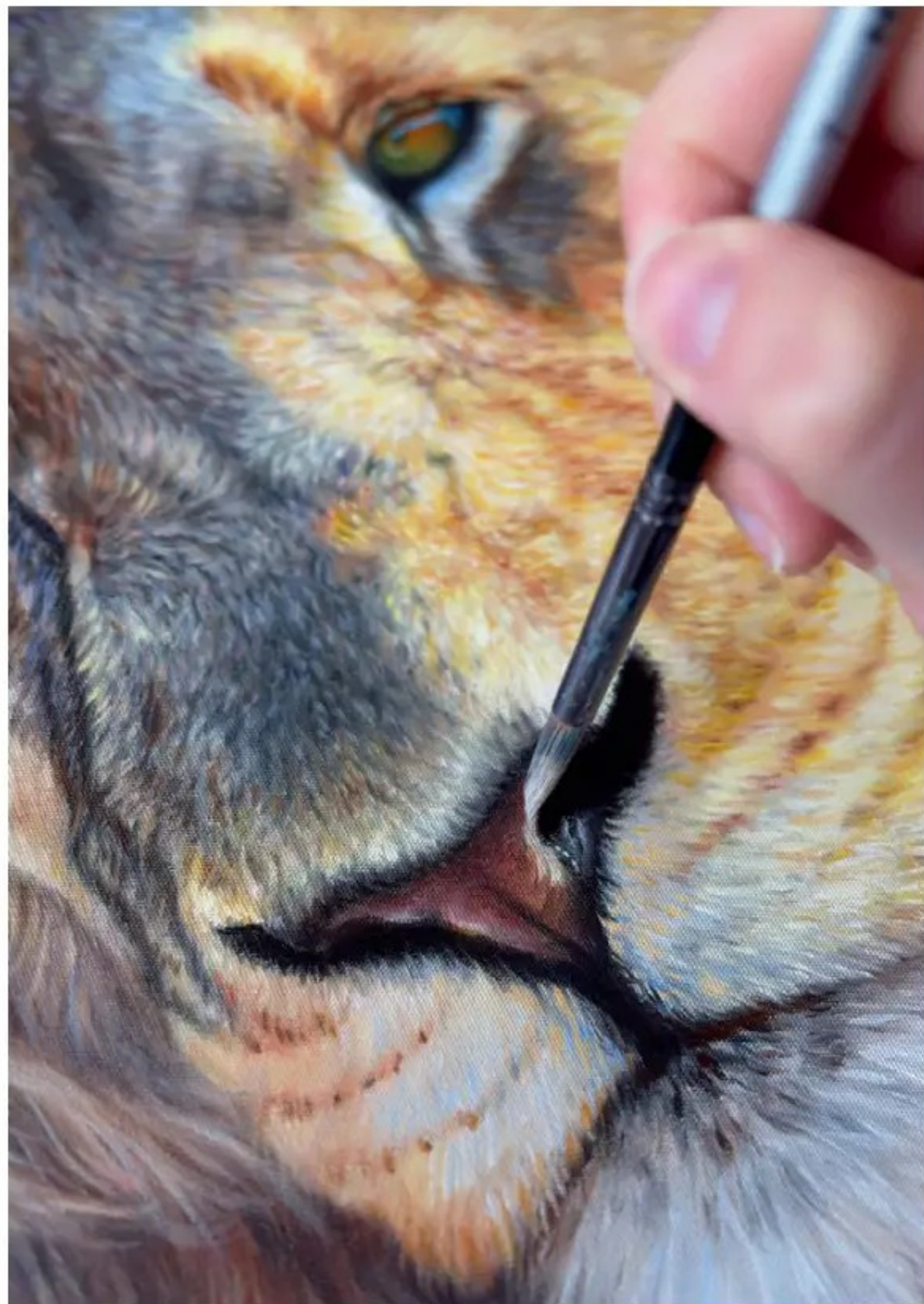
1 To build a foundation for this piece I decided to paint an acrylic underpainting. Using thinned-down raw umber paint, I looked at building the basic shapes and tones of the lion. This stage is absolutely essential as it helps me judge the values of the painting before I need to think about colour.



2 Adding a small amount of Liquin to my colours, I started to apply the first layer of oil paint with a soft synthetic angle brush. The paint adhered to the canvas effortlessly with very little pressure. When painting fur I need to include many subtle variations and colour transitions, so being able to apply the paint with a light touch is really important. I usually add an extra layer of gesso to my canvases to minimise the grain and increase paint adhesion, but this time it didn't seem necessary and I could use the canvas just as it was.



3 As I progressed what really surprised me was how well the paint adhered to the canvas. Being a fine grain, I expected the surface to feel a little 'slick' when painting the first layer, as I have found with some other fine-grain canvases I've used in the past. But this was not the case at all with the ACF canvas. I felt as though I could blend and manipulate the oil paint easily from the start. After the first layer of oils, I left the painting to dry fully. I was happy with how this layer looked but felt that I could push the contrasts a bit further with a little more work.



Amber Tyldesley

is a previous finalist in the *DSWF Wildlife Artist of the Year* competition and her work won the People's Choice Award and has been highly-commended by the judging panel on several occasions. Working from her studio in Warrington, Amber builds her high-impact pieces that celebrate the beauty of the natural world, using a series of layers to create a lively sense of depth, detail and luminosity. Supporting conservation efforts remains at the heart of her work, with artwork sales raising over £15,000 for projects across the UK, Africa and Asia in recent years. You can follow Amber on Instagram @Amber_Tyldesley_Art & Facebook @AmberTyldesleyArt. Original artwork and prints can be found on her website ambertyldesley.com

4&5 ▲►

Once the painting was dry, I added glazes and final details. The strong lighting was a key element of this piece, so I chose to strengthen the contrast between the cool and warm tones with Winsor blue glazes to the shadows and lemon yellow to the highlights. Around the lion's eyes, nose and the mid-point of the face, I added some finer details with a round brush as this was where I wanted the focal point of the piece to be.

►
6 Finally, it was time to hold my breath and add the whiskers. This would be a real test for the canvas as I needed to paint very precise, flowing lines. The fine grain was a real advantage here and the paint went on beautifully.

Conclusion

It can sometimes feel as though a canvas is fighting against you and what you want to achieve, but my experience with the ACF canvas was just the opposite. I felt like every mark I made went onto the surface just as I wanted it to, and it made the whole process feel very relaxed and intuitive. Finding a fine-grain surface that readily accepts the paint from the start made the process even more enjoyable, so I will certainly be using ACF canvases again for future works. TA



- Amber has produced a step-by-step tutorial featuring how she painted this lion using acrylic paints. For more information go to her website ambertyldesley.com
- Amber's new collection will be showcased at the *Exhibition of Wildlife Art* at the Goredale Garden Centre, the Wirral, from July 25 to 27. Full details can be found at ewa-uk.com
- Find out more about the new range of 100-per-cent PET canvases (polyethylene terephthalate) from ACF canvases below.



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▲ **Sheep, Lanercost, Cumbria**, gouache on Arches cold-pressed paper tinted with a burnt sienna acrylic ground, 9¾×13in (25×33cm)

Summer light

Robert Brindley uses gouache to capture summer light and atmosphere and shares tips on making the right tonal and colour choices



Gouache is a versatile, opaque medium providing great covering power and the ability to correct errors very easily. The range of colours is relatively small compared to other media, but gouache colours produce vivid, clean results with a unique, beautiful, matt finish. Little equipment is needed to paint in gouache, making it light and easy to carry. Taking all this into account, together with its rapid drying time, it's the perfect medium for sketching and small *plein-air* paintings.

The Green, Scotby, Cumbria (left) is a small sketch, painted in around an hour-and-a-half, using a limited palette of three colours plus

◀ **The Green, Scotby, Cumbria**, gouache on Arches cold-pressed watercolour paper tinted with a burnt sienna wash, 7½×9¾in (19×25cm)



▲ **Sun and Shade, Borca, Italy, gouache on Arches cold-pressed watercolour paper primed with one coat of white gesso, 6×6in (15×15cm)**

white. I kept the image small, making it a perfect subject for gouache. Here are some pros and cons of using gouache. Overall, it's not difficult to use, but it does require some practice.

PROs of using gouache

- Gouache dries very quickly, and is water-soluble, non-toxic and opaque, making it perfect for a speedy execution.
- It is extremely simple to mix and use. The small tubes are easy to store and transport. They also have a relatively long shelf life, so there is minimal wastage.
- Mistakes can be corrected easily by removing pigment or overpainting.
- Gouache can be used on a variety of surfaces including paper, card, canvas and wood.

CONs of using gouache

- Initially, gouache can be challenging for the beginner, as the amount of water used in a mix at different stages needs to be carefully controlled. However, with a little practice this is quickly mastered.
- Some dark colours tend to dry lighter, while most colours dry darker.
- If applied too thickly gouache can crack, or peel over time. This can easily be avoided

by working on a rigid surface and applying only thin layers of colour.

Sun and Shade, Borca, Italy (above) is a small work, painted as a gift for our Italian friends who live in this picturesque, Italian village. It was painted in around one hour in the studio, once again using a limited palette of four colours plus white.

TEN TOP TIPS

- 1 Work from dark to light.
- 2 Be aware that the tones alter when dry. With experience you will be able to compensate for this in your mixes.
- 3 Paint the base layers first before adding the final details. If the first layer of colour isn't as opaque as required, carefully add a second coat trying not to disturb the dry paint.
- 4 Experiment by using more or less water in the mixes. Try using a weak, watery wash of acrylic paint to tint the surface of your board or paper first. This will aid unity in the finished painting and you will be able to avoid flashes of unpainted, white paper which can be a distraction.
- 5 Lighten the paint using white instead of diluting the mix. Using white will ensure opacity; however, be aware that it may reduce the intensity of the colour.
- 6 Colours can be reactivated, or removed from the paper by the gentle use of a clean, moist brush.
- 7 Rehydrate any dried-out colours on the palette by rewetting or spraying.
- 8 Try working with a limited palette of colours. Mixing becomes simpler and colour mixes are less likely to be lifeless, dull or 'muddy'.
- 9 Ensure that the underlying colours are thoroughly dry before overlaying.
- 10 Clean your brushes thoroughly between colour mixes to avoid muddy colours.

BASIC MATERIALS

The materials needed are relatively few and reasonably inexpensive. The following list may help those new to the medium in their selection.

- **Paint** There are many brands of gouache paint available, however, I would recommend using a well-known, reliable brand such as Winsor & Newton or Daler-Rowney. Start out with a small number of primary colours, plus white, which will allow you to mix a fairly wide range of mixes. (For my step-by-step demonstration in this article, I used a set of four primary colours and white.)
- **Brushes** I use the same brushes as I do for watercolour, with the addition of a couple of less expensive flats and rounds, consisting of: a Pro Arte Series 203 rigger size 2; two Pro Arte Series 203 rounds, sizes 5 and 3; a Rosemary & Co flat series 274, size 4; two unbranded, inexpensive synthetic rounds, sizes 8 and 12; and an inexpensive synthetic 5/8in flat by Royal & Langnickel.
- **Paper / Surfaces** Gouache works well on any reasonable quality watercolour paper providing it is at least 140lb (300gsm) weight. A good quality card, or scraps of mountboard, can also be used. I always prime both sides of card with a coat of acrylic white primer.
- **Palettes / Mixing trays** I use ceramic mixing palettes as I find them far superior to plastic. If you don't want to buy palettes, then old plates work very well.



▲ **View to the Lakeland Fells, gouache on an Arches block of 140lb (300gsm) cold-pressed paper, 4¾×13¾in (12×35cm)**

Capturing summer light

Gouache is the perfect medium for capturing the effects of summer light. The pure, vivid colours enable you to reproduce the vibrant, warm light and

cool shadows observed in many sun-bathed landscapes. For all paintings there are a few vital considerations to be made before making a start: light, tone, colour and composition – the essential ingredients that hold any painting together.

In this article I will focus on light, tone and colour; the three vital components for painting summer light. It's important to understand the differences between these three elements and how they combine to create a successful painting.

The small painting, *View to the Lakeland Fells* (above) has all three essential elements: light, tone and colour. Although the colour is not intense, the sketch illustrates how these three elements combine to produce an atmospheric, well-balanced painting.

Bright light influences every element on a summer's day, including the warm colours in the light and the cooler colours in the distance, especially in the shadows. Remember that even the most successful paintings can't compete with nature and the real thing. The only way an artist can compete is to interpret these light effects as closely as possible, creating paintings that capture harmony, tone and colour. The variety of light present in all of the seasons provides excitement, mood, atmosphere and emotion. A constant summer light, however, provides the artist with fewer options, dealing mainly with brighter, more obvious light effects.

One of the more difficult aspects of painting *en plein air* in the summer is the ever-changing light effects that come and go constantly. With experience you accept this and gradually your ability to observe these effects and make quick decisions becomes automatic. The variety of light in a chosen subject often creates mood, atmosphere and recession. The direction of light is also an important factor for you to consider, as side lighting, low lighting, or back lighting can be used creatively to ensure good design and composition.



▲ **Wild Flower Garden, gouache on Arches cold-pressed paper tinted with a burnt sienna acrylic ground to enhance the warmth in the subject, 9¾×11¾in (25×30cm).**

A limited palette of colours was used to produce the bright light on a summer's day. These were: primary blue; ultramarine blue; primary red; alizarin crimson; primary yellow; and white. The colour mixes were relatively easy to mix and are generally clean and bright. The full tonal range provides a wonderful sharp contrast and feeling of light.

Different lighting conditions will offer you different challenges. Morning and evening light, for example, often presents the most rewarding opportunities, as the low light encountered early and late in the day creates strong shadows, ensuring good design in your paintings. Long shadows can be used creatively by allowing them to lead you in to the focal point. *Contre-jour* lighting on the other hand is dramatic and always seduces artists. If successfully executed, when combined with a simplified silhouette, it can result in stunning, atmospheric paintings.

Tone and colour

Tone, in painting terms, simply means how dark or light a colour is. By understanding

this, we can then consider colour or hue. Tone is probably the most important element in any painting, perhaps even more than colour? The use of correct tonal values is essential; if the tonal sequence is wrong, then the painting will not work. Colour, however, is a more personal thing and providing that the chosen colour palette is harmonious and colours used aren't too discordant, the painting will succeed. When considering the ability to capture light in summer landscapes, which is probably easier to achieve than any other lighting condition, the effective use of colour is essential. The colour mixes needed to capture overcast or misty days, or the subtle greys of the winter landscape are far more difficult for

the inexperienced painter to handle. To capture the variety and subtlety of such subject matter successfully requires a thorough understanding of colour theory and also an experienced hand.

Tone and colour should be considered separately, as the intensity and visual impact of some colours overwhelm us, and subsequently it isn't easy to assess their tone. Tone is relative, so how dark or light a tone is often depends on what it's surrounded by. On a bright, summer's day, a simple painting can be made using as little as three tones – a dark, medium and a light. The Notan, or similar App, discussed below can be used to isolate the three-tone relationship. TA

DEMONSTRATION Rape Field, Eden Valley, Cumbria

► REFERENCE PHOTO

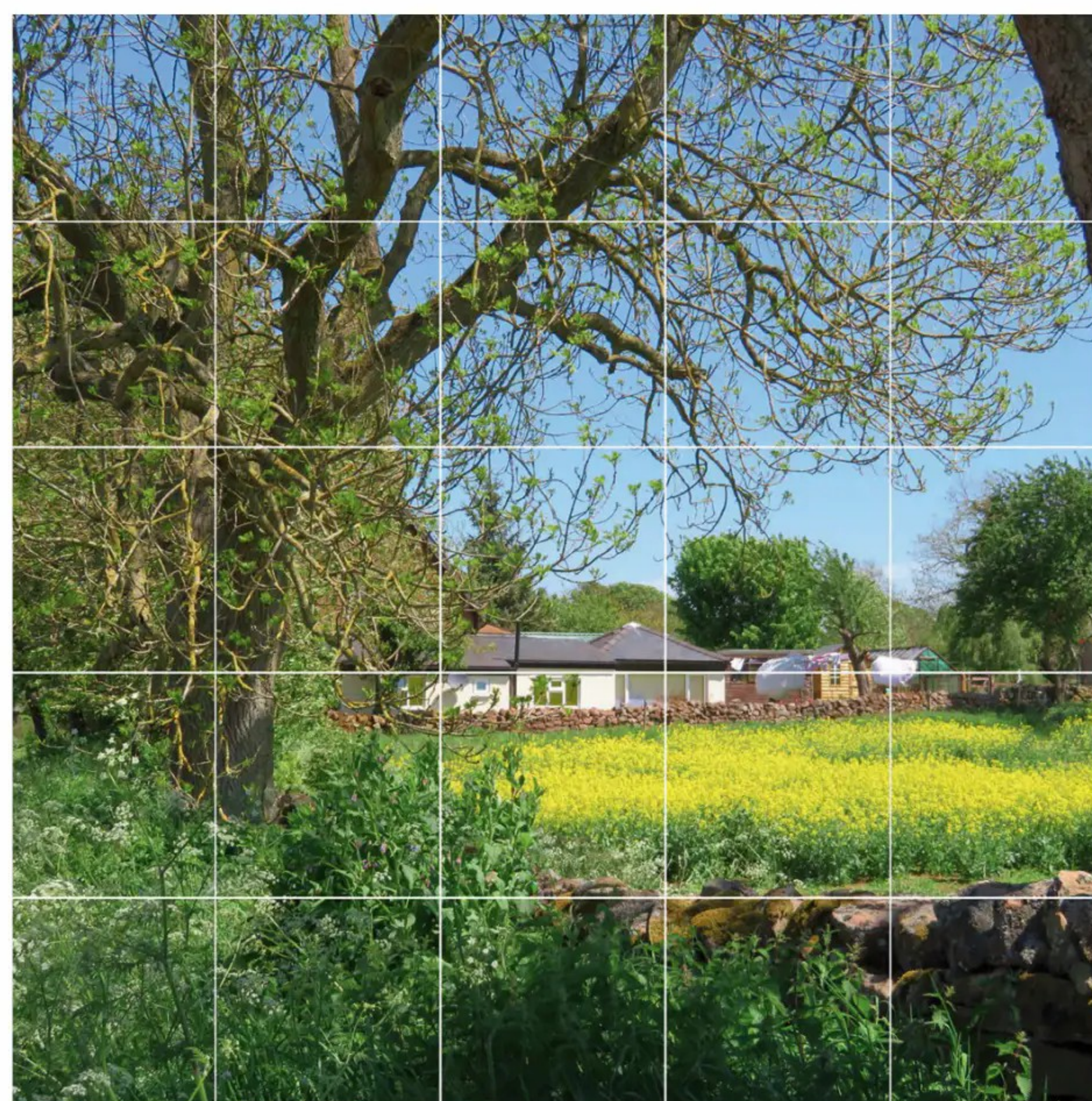
This simple subject was specifically chosen for the demonstration. Its simplicity allowed me to discuss the following: the use of a limited palette; a sketch; a Notan for tonal reference; and four easy-to-follow steps. The subject depicts warm light illuminating the rape field and distant landscape, framed by far cooler colour combinations present in the foreground and the large tree on the left-hand side. Making a small sketch, I decided to keep the process really simple by painting blocks of colour with limited colour variation and little detail.



PREPARATION

I drew out a quick, simplified sketch using a sepia ink pen, together with a small selection of coloured pencils. This enabled me to settle on the final positioning of the various elements and gave me a rough idea for the colour and tonal distribution.

I occasionally use an App call Notan, (right) which is an extremely useful tool for helping to identify the tonal distribution of the image. The App is free, very easy to use and can convert any image to black and white, or any combinations of tones from three upwards.



MATERIALS

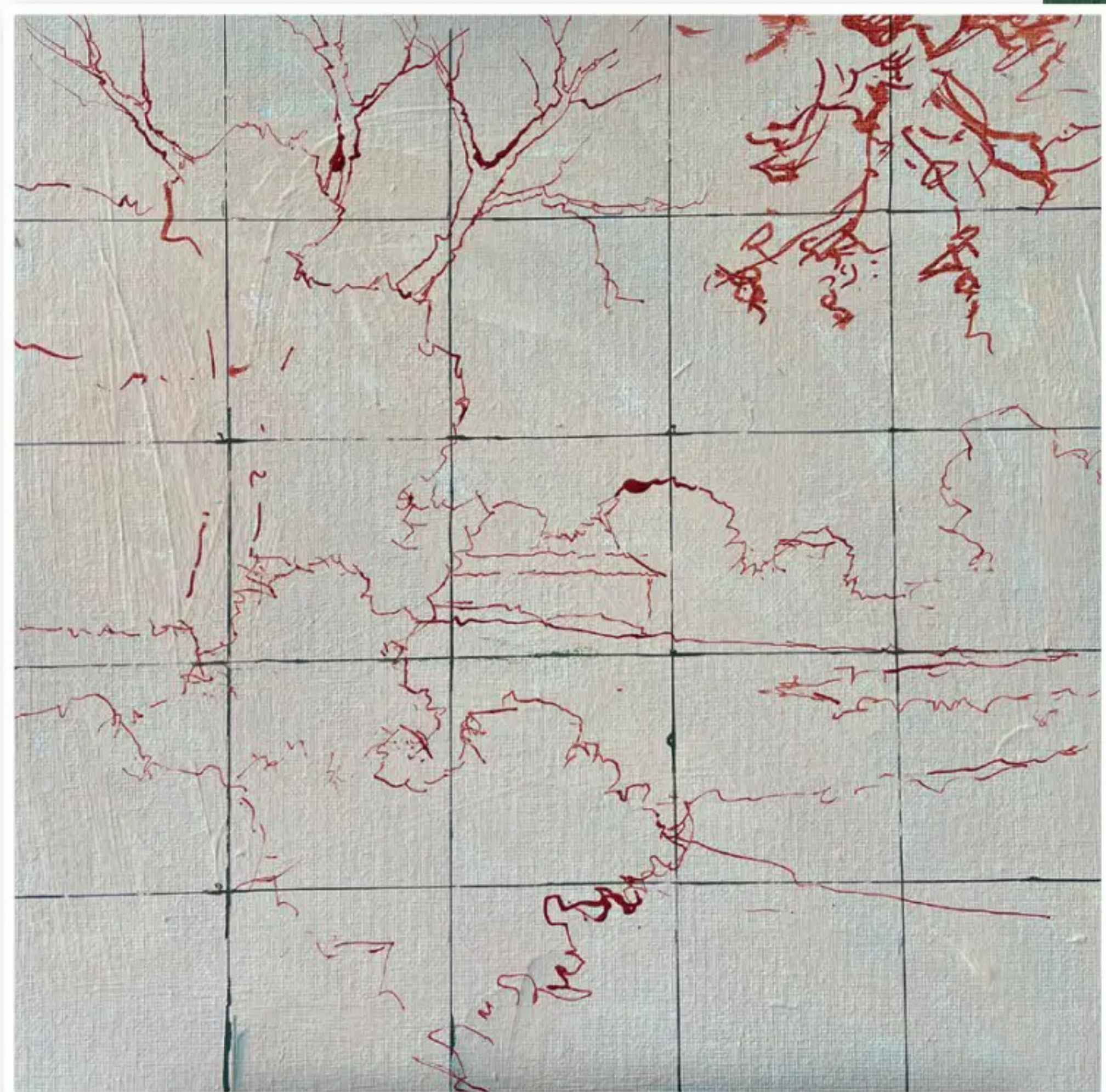
● **Surface** The back of an off-cut of mountboard treated with one coat of white acrylic primer each side to prevent warping.

● **Winsor & Newton gouache**

For this demonstration I used a limited palette of the following colours: primary yellow; primary red; primary blue; ultramarine blue; and permanent white.



GOUACHE

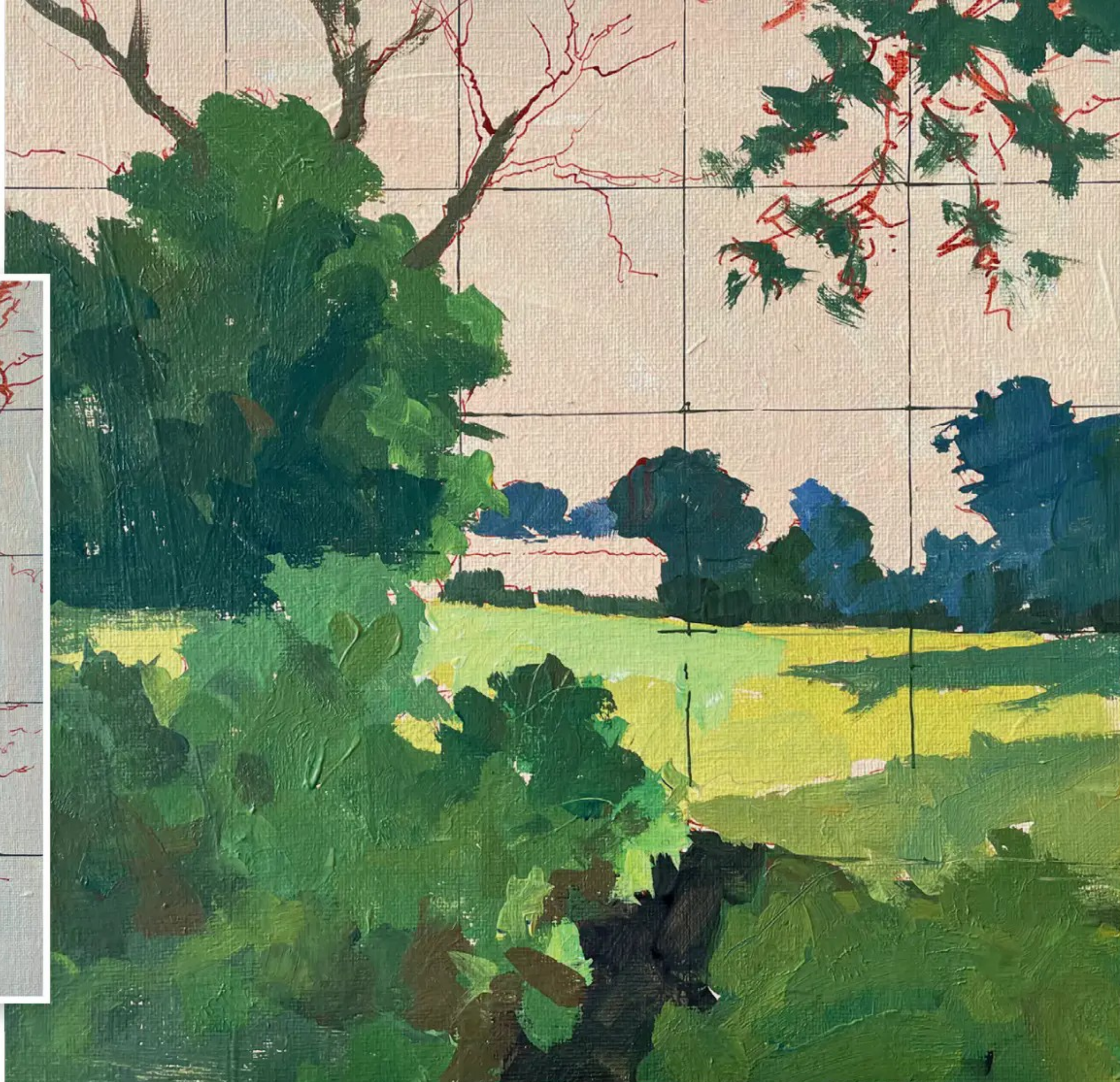


▲ STAGE ONE

I used a waterproof sepia fine pen to draw out the basic outline of the subject.

APPLICATION TIP

When overlaying colour, try not to disturb the previous layer. A light touch is essential. Practise on a scrap of paper before you start on the painting.



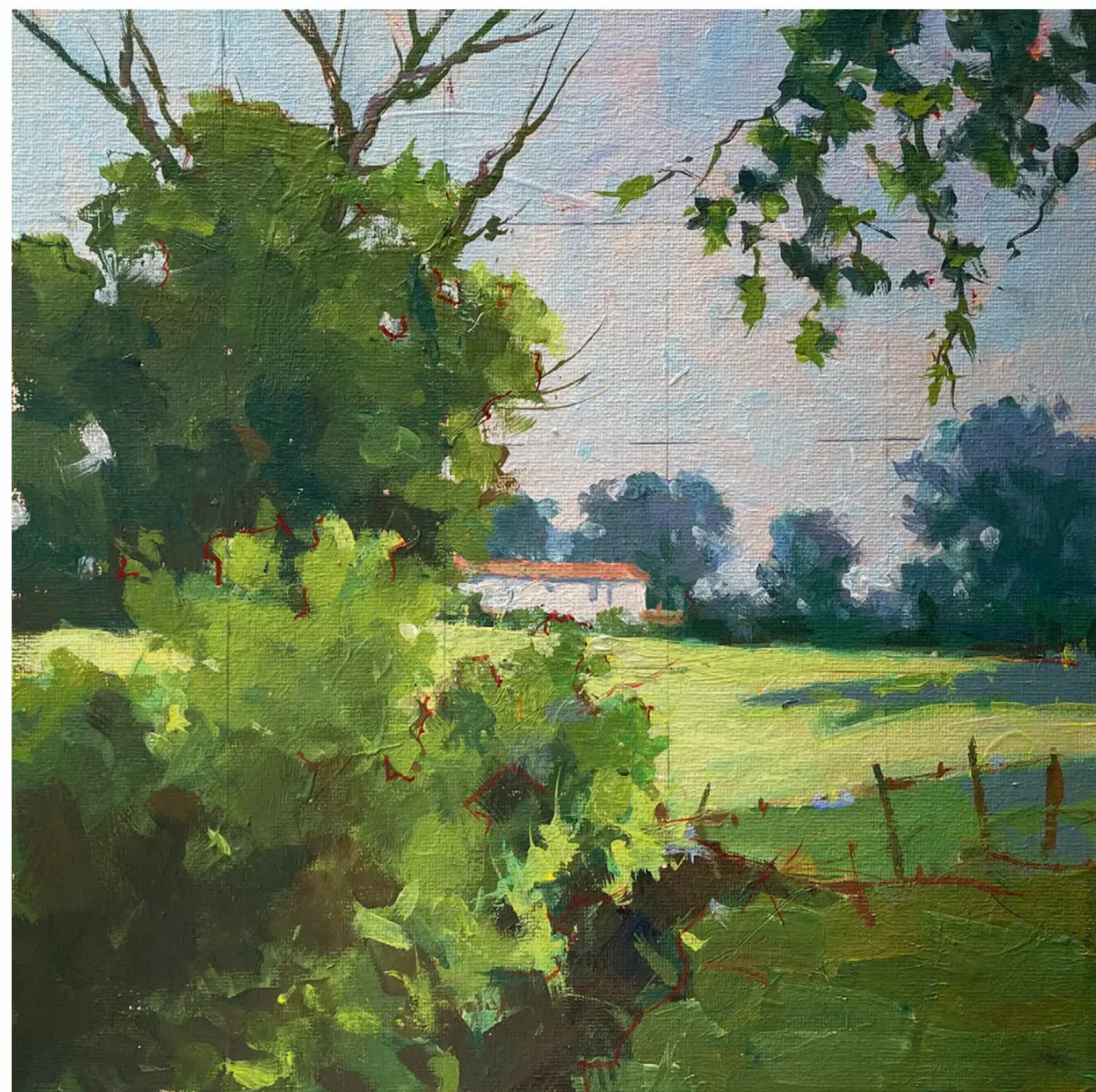
▲ STAGE TWO

Using all of the colours available I mixed the following combinations for the different areas:

Distant trees Primary blue, a touch of primary yellow, and white was used for the lighter trees. A mix of ultramarine blue, a little more primary yellow, and less white was used for the darker, warmer trees. I intentionally added more blue in these mixes to increase the sense of recession in the distance.

Foreground trees and bushes I made several combinations of primary blue, primary yellow and white, some with more yellow and some with more blue, and I varied the amounts of white. The darker areas were painted using ultramarine blue, a touch of primary yellow and red, plus a touch of white.

Fields These were painted using predominantly primary yellow plus white and varying touches of primary blue.



◀ STAGE THREE

To paint the sky and to refine the block-in, I used the following colour mixes:

Sky Primary blue, a very small touch of primary red, and white for the blue sky areas; and white with a very small touch of both primary red and primary yellow for the lighter areas.

Distant trees These were subtle mixes of primary blue, primary red and white, which produced a pale purple that was used to adjust the tone and colour to enhance the recession.

The foreground foliage and trees Subtlety was achieved by adding a variety of mixes of primary blue, primary yellow, primary red and white. The colour temperature was adjusted by the amount of blue and yellow used in each mix. The lighter areas generally had more white and yellow in the mixes. The branches were mixes of ultramarine blue, small touches of primary red, primary yellow and white.

Cottage The roof was painted using primary red, primary yellow and white.

The wall This was predominantly white, with touches of primary red and primary yellow.



▲ FINISHED PAINTING

Rape Field, Eden Valley, Cumbria, gouache on mountboard treated with one coat of white acrylic primer, 6×6in (15×15cm).

For the final step I used the mixes from the previous stage, overlaying and blending the colours slightly to achieve a softer rendition. Details such as the windows, fence posts and so on were added using some of the suitable tones available from mixes on the palette.

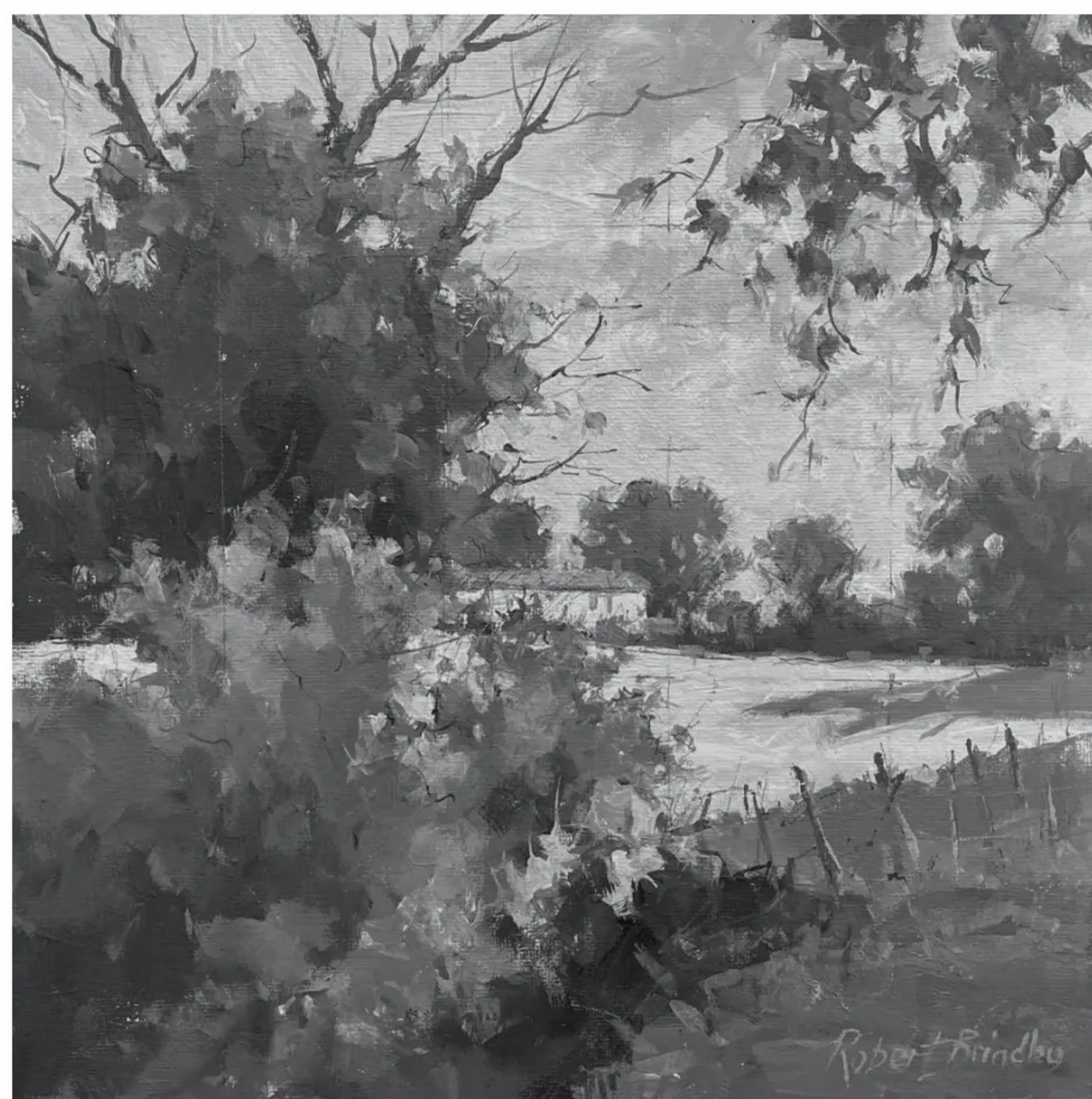
► FINAL ASSESSMENT

In some instances you may want to evaluate your finished work, especially concerning your use of tonal values. You can easily do this by converting your image to black and white using any readily available software. Look carefully at edges and also compare one tone against another. If there are any weaknesses you will be able to go back and make suitable adjustments.



Robert Brindley

is a member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists and currently the archivist for the society. He is the author of three books, and four DVDs have been produced by Town House Films. For more information see robertbrindley.com



In the footsteps of Tunnicliffe



Becky Thorley-Fox SWLA

is a landscape and wildlife painter specialising in oils. She carries a lightweight palette and easel out into the landscape along with a telescope to capture wildlife *en plein air*. Originally from Cheshire, she moved to the west coast of mid-Wales where she finds an endless source of inspiration. Becky is a member of the Society of Wildlife Artists; her work can be seen in the annual exhibition The Natural Eye at the Mall Galleries in London each autumn. Becky has an online gallery showcasing her latest work beckythorley-fox.co.uk

'A special thank you to the Erik Hosking Trust for helping to fund the upgrade of my field scope to a larger Swarovski field scope. This new scope has opened up a new world of painting opportunities that were previously out of reach!'

PROJECT INSPIRATION

Inspired by Charles Tunnicliffe's winter and summer diaries, I have made trips up to Anglesey to visit some of the artist's regular and favourite painting haunts, studying the wildlife throughout the year and seeing how it compares with Tunnicliffe's time.

Oriel Ynys Mon owns Tunnicliffe's private collection and showcases his work throughout the year in a permanent gallery space. The collection consists of over 1,000 artworks. I've loved studying Tunnicliffe's paintings and sketchbooks. He had a wonderful eye and feel for the behaviour of light and colour in nature and for compositional design, something I continue to focus on in my work.

Becky Thorley-Fox continues her three-part series painting *plein-air* through the seasons inspired by the artist and illustrator, Charles Tunnicliffe – this time focusing on wildlife on Anglesey

This month I will be turning my attention from the small birds in spring to larger works. I've especially enjoyed exploring along the Menai Strait, a beautiful expanse of water set against the backdrop of the mountain ranges of Snowdonia. There is always wildlife to spot. I saw a group of Great Crested Grebes one morning far across the water on the other side, but luckily there were a pair of noisy Sandwich Terns closer by!

This pair of Sandwich Terns (right) stood with their wings held low and their necks stretched tall as they chattered away to one another, their courtship calls carrying across the water. Their striking white and pale angular forms contrasted with the

hazy softly lit spring morning. I grabbed my biggest panel, 18x24in, and quickly placed the Terns – facing into the space they filled with their sounds.

When working on a larger scale I use bigger brushes and work fast to cover the canvas with the key elements. These can always be further embellished at a later stage. I take a few reference photos that will serve to jog my memory later in the studio. I would like to have caught more of the colour and texture in the water but I ran out of time before the light and water surface changed completely due to the rising tide and developing weather. I was pleased, however, to have sketched in the courting Sandwich Terns and the colour and texture of the buoy before it moved.



I needed to capture the Sandwich Terns quickly before they fled, the light changed and the tide rose



‘Their striking white and pale angular forms contrasted with the hazy softly-lit spring morning.’

▼ ***Sandwich Terns on a Spring Morning***, oil on linen, 18×24in (46×61cm)

▲ First stages of the painting

Back in the studio I refined my first impression, with the help of reference photos and my memory of the morning. The Menai is tidal and so things were changing fast on the water but I managed to catch the conditions that most inspired me: that glassy reflection, foreground ripples and background texture from a light wind disturbing the surface of the water. I kept the brushwork light and loose as the spring morning had a wonderful soft glowing airiness to it that I wanted to convey.

This Little Egret (over the page) was painted at Cemlyn later in the year in the north of Anglesey. This area is a magical wildlife haven, even after the summer Tern colonies have left. In this scene the light on the Egret caught my eye; its white



BECKY'S MATERIALS

- **Support** Belle Arti and Claessens oil-primed linen cut and glued to 3.6mm ply board
- **Michael Harding oils** Cadmium yellow light; cadmium yellow; cadmium yellow deep; cadmium orange; naphthol red; alizarin claret; ultramarine blue; phthalo blue; raw umber; transparent oxide red; yellow ochre; and titanium white. I recently expanded the yellows in my palette in order to increase my mixing range and capabilities for capturing light effects and I haven't looked back!
- **Brushes** Mainly synthetic ivory brushes for drawing and detailed work and hog filberts for larger areas as they are more robust for withstanding rigorous brushwork

▲ Close-up of the sunlit Sandwich Terns

PLEIN AIR

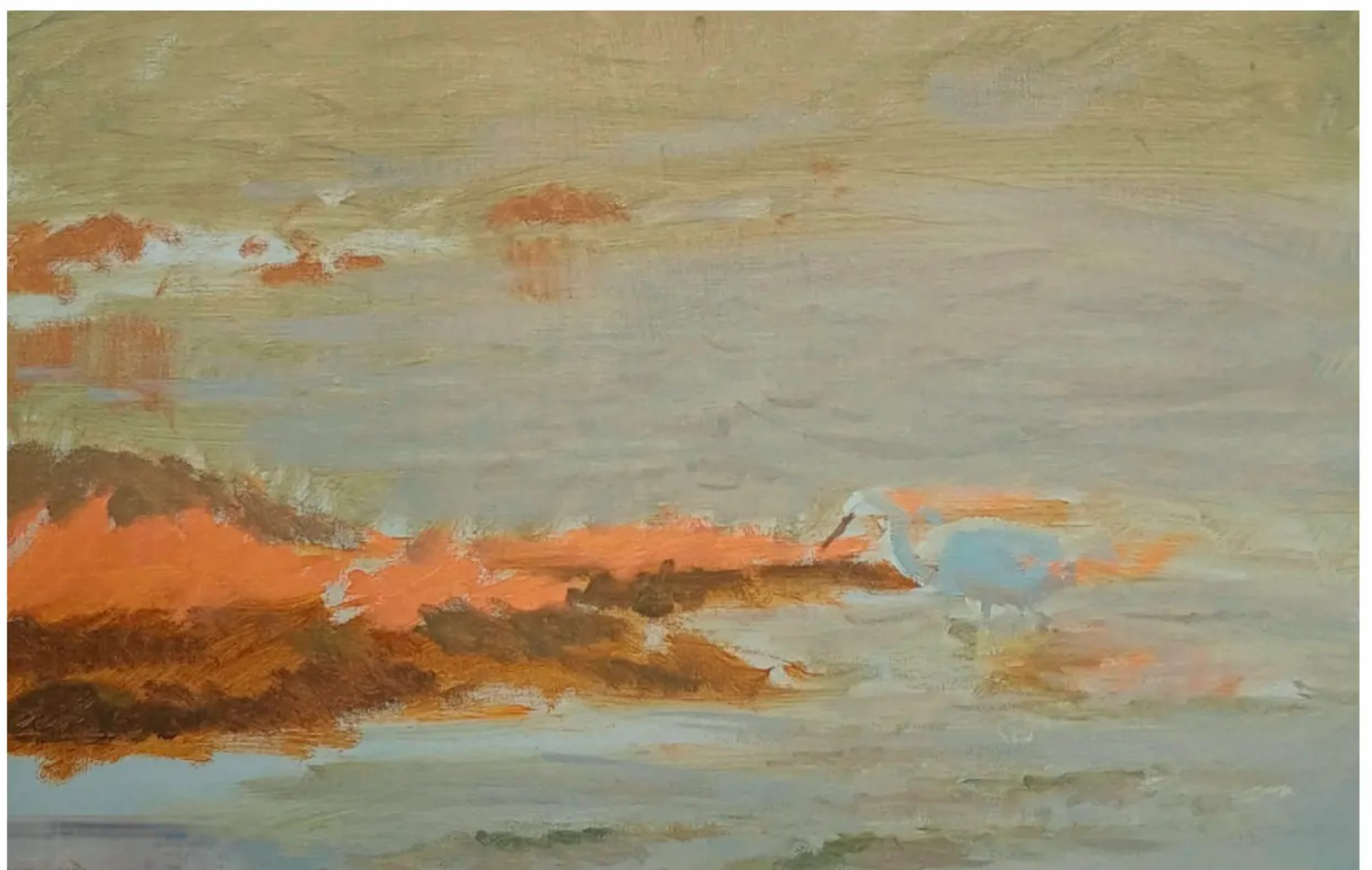


▲ The light on the Egret caught my eye

plumage glowed blue in the shadow areas complementing the oranges in the foliage. The Egret was walking back and forth, hunting along the water's edge, affording me the opportunity to study and capture its form.

Working at speed

I began working quickly with a loose block-in. The panel I used was quite large, 12×18in, and I was working against the changing light and a rapidly rising tide that would soon fill



▲ First stages of the Little Egret

this pool. I established an overall tone for the water, the light and dark shapes of the foliage and the form of the Little Egret. The foliage created a leading line up to the Egret, my focal point, which I placed a third of the way into the canvas, following the 'rule of thirds' for composition design.

I spent a further two sessions on this piece; the first in the studio, referring to my photographs and memory of the moment. I worked until I could no longer summon or decipher any further visual information

that could feed this painting. I decided to try taking it out a second time. The light was weaker than the previous day and the tide just low enough to reveal some of the foliage that I wanted to refer to for creating more texture in the painting. I was happy to keep background elements loose and suggestive, since it was the glowing form of the Little Egret catching the soft light that was my focal point.

A few days later I set off along Newborough Warren path with the



▲ *Little Egret at Cemlyn*, oil on linen, 12×18in (30.5×46cm)



▲ First stages of the Stonechats

intention of getting to the island, Ynys Llanddwyn, but I stopped in my tracks to paint this little scene (above and right). What caught my eye was the soft white clouds sitting on blue mountains, the emerald glowing sea and a pair of Stonechats chirping away on the tops of the shrubs and trees in front of me. I quickly got to work, painting in the background as it was the part of the scene most likely to change first. I also prefer to start with the elements that are farthest away where possible, so that I can increase the value, chroma and viscosity of paint as I work forwards. I made a quick sketch of where the tree and gorse bushes sat in my painting. The Stonechat pair didn't seem to be going anywhere and were attracting much attention from passers-by along the footpath with their singing and flitting from posts to tree tops. I painted the female faintly on a background tree. Her plumage

BECKY'S TOP TIPS

- It can be a challenge capturing the changing light, a moving tide and fleeting wildlife within a scene. Keep a clear vision in mind and retain the key colour and value relationships as you continue to work the painting.
- Start small and work *alla prima*, within a timeframe for consistent light conditions and to finish the piece in one session.
- Be open to the day, and to the unexpected painting opportunities that will occur as these usually are the most inspiring!



▲ **Stonechat on the Treetop,**
oil on linen, 9×13in (23×33cm)

was brown and camouflaged unlike the male with his bright orange body, white collar and black head. I placed the male Stonechat on the top of the tree as the focal point with the high contrast cloud and blue hills immediately behind him drawing the eye in. There was also a faint sparkle of light on the sea adding further contrast in my focal area. TA



Close-up of Stonechat



● **Plein Air Through the Seasons – in the Footsteps of Tunncliffe** is a solo exhibition of work by Becky Thorley-Fox, comprising four collections of paintings representing spring, summer, autumn and winter, inspired by the Ladybird *What to Look For* series, illustrated by C. Tunncliffe. Becky writes: 'I have strived to capture wildlife in the landscape, enjoying the seasonal highlights of flora and fauna throughout the year.' The exhibition can be seen at Oriel Ynys Mon, Anglesey until October 12. For more information visit orielmon.org

Watercolour freed!



Catherine Beale

specialises in watercolour techniques across a number of surfaces and paints landscapes and portrait commissions from her hillside studio on the edge of Bath. Her first book, ***Capturing Light – Creating Radiant Landscapes in Watercolour*** was published in May 2023 by Search Press as part of their *Innovative Artists* series. Catherine is a member of the Society of Women Artists and teaches at the Royal West of England Drawing School, Cornwall School of Art, Chapel Cottage Studios and art societies across England and Wales. Her current solo exhibition is at the Royal United Hospital in Bath. Keep in touch @catherinebealeart via Instagram and Facebook or view her paintings on her website catherinebeale.com

In the second of six articles on unlocking the potential of watercolour, **Catherine Beale** explores the effects of capillary action

This series of articles is all about encouraging painters to think differently about the medium and ‘supercharge’ their watercolours by embracing abstract behaviours. Step away from your brush! Abandon the hairdryer! Be brave! Trust the movement of water and use the power of suggestion to force viewers to ‘lean in’ closer.

This second article further explores the idea of using subtle drip marks to form atmospheric structures in paintings, which we saw in last month’s edition. Paint drips can be encouraged into wonderful ‘blooms’ that resemble distant tree canopies. Wet paint is sucked into neighbouring damp surfaces by capillary action to create marks that are impossible to make with a brush.

DEMONSTRATION *Dreaming Ridgeways*



REFERENCE PHOTO

My photo depicts a series of retreating ridges lined with trees in a succession of flat and diagonal horizons retreating up the page and into the distance. I cropped the sky to narrow the space dramatically between the horizon and the top of the painting.

► STAGE ONE

I began with the sky, and then dropped the first ridge into it as it dried. This encouraged the first ridgeway to bloom naturally into tree shapes. I propped my painting up at the top to tilt it towards me, then wetting my large flat brush, I applied it to the sky area down to the first horizon, turning my head so that I could see the shine all across the paper to avoid dry gaps forming. I then loaded diluted phthalo turquoise onto the brush and, starting off the page, I stroked on a couple of horizontal lines using minimum pressure. (More paint will drop onto the surface where the brush first touches so starting off the page prevents 'blobs' forming.) I applied less and less paint moving down the wet area so that it faded before it reached the dry edge and the paint petered out. I quickly added a little indigo and permanent rose to the turquoise using the same horizontal strokes. The diluted colours softly merged.

MATERIALS

- **Support** Daler-Rowney A4 watercolour Aquafine artboard supported by a wooden board. This prevents buckling and allows the paint to run evenly across the surface.
- **Artists' quality tubed watercolours** from Daler-Rowney and Winsor & Newton: Phthalo blue; phthalo turquoise; indigo; permanent sap green; permanent rose; and raw sienna
- **Brushes** Three watercolour brushes – lin flat; a smaller flat; and a rigger
- **Extras** Kitchen roll; table salt; and palette with deep wells



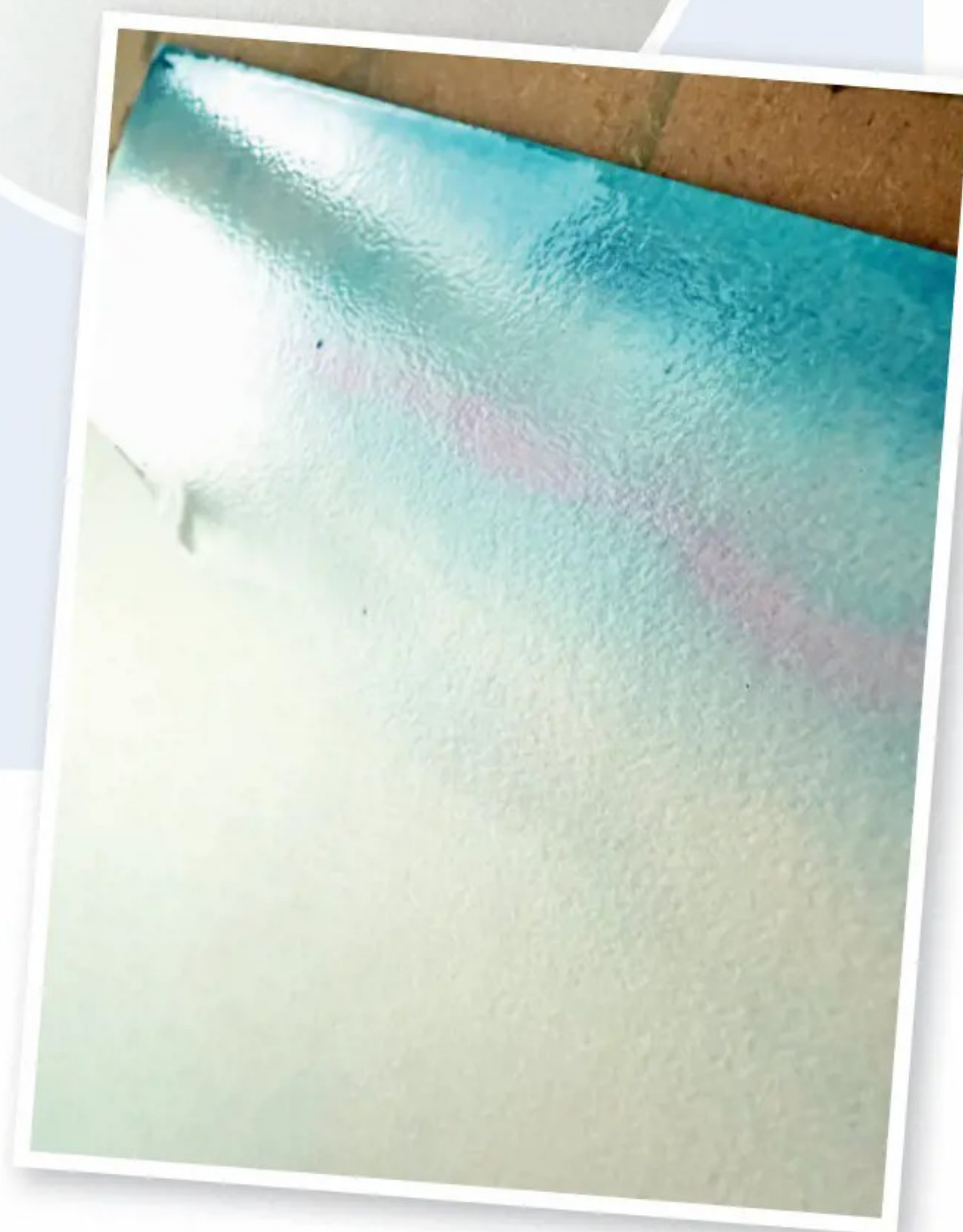
Note

Before painting I prepare my palette so that I can access every hue in two very different concentrations and tones – tubed and diluted. I squeeze a pea-sized blob of each colour into the edge of separate large well. I then pull about half of each blob out with my wetted large, flat brush, releasing the water from it by pressing down, to form concentrated (the consistency of single cream) lakes of colour around islands of thick paint, washing my brush between each colour.

STAGE TWO

I allowed the wash of sky to begin to dry until I could see the cold press bumps of the paper showing. You can see this point when it resembles the old-fashioned, rippled safety glass that you used to see in reinforced glass doors. It was then time to create the line of trees on the top horizon using capillary action as new, wet paint would be pulled up the paper into the drying sky to create the first ridge.

I applied wet paint with the brush at the edge of the drying sky. The bottom of this new area had a sharp edge against the dry paper below. However, the top area reached into the drying paint resembling trees. I added a few more colours to tint the paint area.



◄ STAGE THREE

I loaded my large flat brush with thick indigo and created a further ridge below this one, clipping the wet paint on the left-hand side so the ridges merged here. The gap of dry white paper below was left to represent mist and I moved on quickly, leaving the edge to be edited later. I added sap green and more of the inky indigo to increase the paint density (as watercolours tend to dry lighter and this is how I guard against this loss of tone). I swiftly dropped colour in allowing watermarks to develop to resemble different thicknesses of trees growing from the ridgeway.

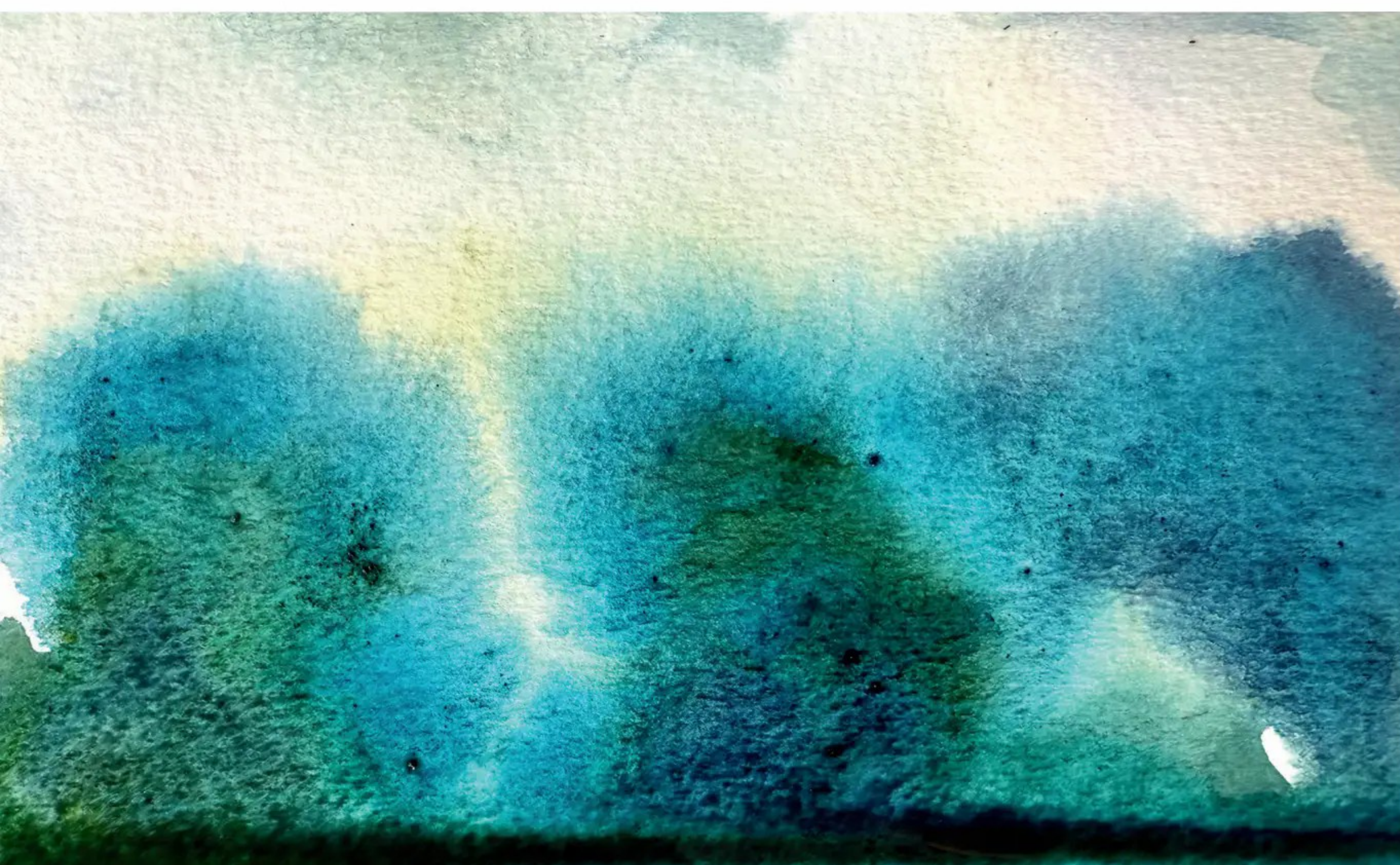


WATERCOLOUR



◀ STAGE FOUR

I used a wet rigger brush to refine the upper edges of the tree shapes while they were still wet to ensure they merged.



▲ STAGE FIVE

I wetted my clean flat brush and turned it to 'wash' the bottom, hard edge of the ridge lightly. Removing some paint softened this edge to suggest billowing mist rising irregularly up the slope. The artboard can take gentle washing with a wet brush. Avoid drying or cleaning the brush on kitchen paper towel as you will be about to use the paint mix left on the brush.

◀ STAGE SIX

The wet colour on the brush was the perfect mix of hues to bring down to the bottom of the painting. I dragged it down and, once again, allowed it to dry partially as before, waiting for the surface bumps of the paper to show through. I left white paper to suggest gaps in the tree forms and to create maximum tonal difference to draw attention.



◀ STAGE SEVEN

By this stage the capillary trees were in the 'safety glass' phase or slightly drier. I knew that any wet paint added to them would create 'cauliflower' paint blooms. I added thick indigo and turquoise to puddle and finally sap green (which was thicker) and the colours clashed together suggesting tree forms within the paint puddle.



Next edition, Catherine will be exploring how to pour paint and embrace the drips!

▲ ► STAGE EIGHT

I weighed the page down with a paperweight and left the trees to dry partially while I added a little more detail with my rigger brush. The delicate point of this brush is perfect for dragging out marks from drips, suggesting fringed tree tops and adding branches to the foreground. The drips lay on top of the watermark tree canopies giving them structure. I added a large, new tree specimen to the foreground to bridge the two ridges and add interest. I used kitchen paper towel to dab lightly at the upper treetops to remove paint and to lighten tone as desired.

▼ FINISHED PAINTING

Dreaming Ridgeways, watercolour on Artboard, 8¼×11¼in (21×30cm)

I left the painting weighed down and stepped back to take a 'helicopter view' of my painting. The washes appeared sufficiently illuminated and so I didn't have to remove any paint to lighten them. I decided to soften some edges a little more to add atmosphere.



LEARN FROM THE MASTERS:

8TH OF 12

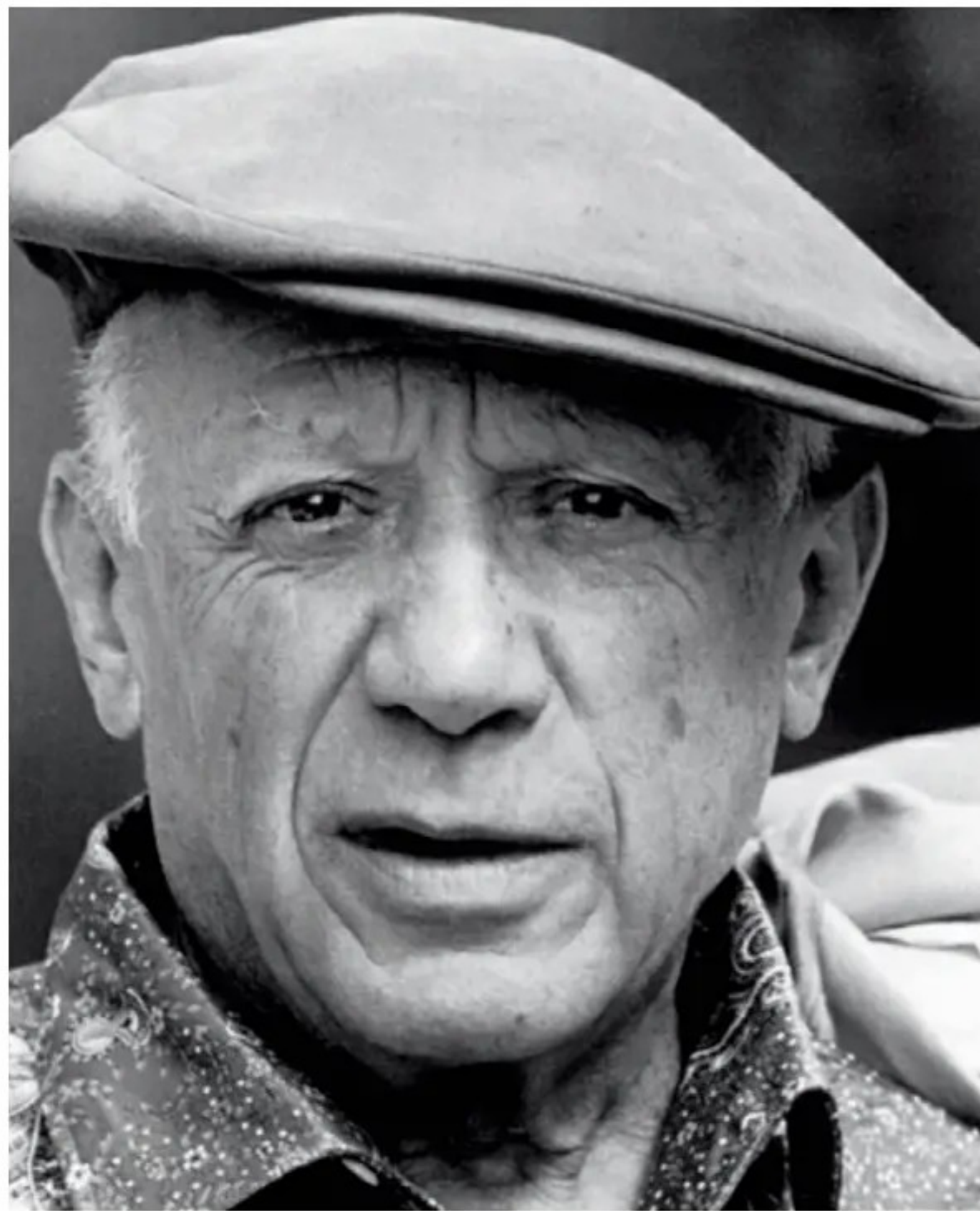


Sarah Edmonds

is the marketing manager for Pegasus Art, a freelance art marketing consultant and a watercolour painter. Sarah studied a short course at the Slade School of Fine Art followed by a degree in marketing and has worked in the industry ever since.

sarahedmonds-marketing.com

In her history of art series, Sarah Edmonds shines a light on lesser-known artworks by artists we know and love. This month she explores the work of **Pablo Picasso**



Pablo Picasso, 1969

Picasso

and his animals

The bond between man and beast

What can I tell you about Pablo Picasso that hasn't already been told? Born in Malaga in 1881, no other artist has had so much influence on the fabric of the 20th century as he. One of the most ambitious, anarchic and prolific artists, he saw great success in his own lifetime. He catalogued, archived and curated his own collections, controlled his image and protected his legacy. Married twice, with four children by three different women, he was a potent, red-blooded lover who pursued women with a passion and who played an integral part of his creativity, appearing on canvas upon canvas.

What you may not know, however, is that he absolutely loved animals and had a great affinity with them. Whatever was going on in his life, whichever woman was by his side or not, he always had an animal close by. They featured heavily in his paintings and his life. His love for animals was sometimes said to be even greater than his love for humans: 'Pablo loved to surround himself with animals. In general, they were exempt from the distrust with which he regarded his human friends,' said his partner Françoise Gilot.

The son of a pigeon breeder and an aficionado of bullfighting, Picasso had an eye trained for capturing an animal's

movement, shape, and personality – often with just a single line. From paintings, prints, lithographs, aquatints and ceramics, there are no boundaries to his creativity in depicting animals.

Bulls and minotaurs

The subject of bullfighting runs through almost the entire oeuvre of Pablo Picasso. It was his father, José Ruiz y Blasco, who introduced his son to the world of bullfighting. The bull in Picasso's work symbolised fertility and power, but it could also be interpreted as a commentary on social and political conditions. The bull often appears in his work alongside the horse, entangled and fighting, both beautiful and dangerous. Picasso is said to have equated this push-pull with the relationship between man and woman. The bullfight is a subject not tackled by many other artists. Goya was one of the few and inspired Picasso with his realistic and often gruesome drawings and sketches. The minotaur represents Picasso's alter ego, half man-half bull with an intellectual existence, yet not always in control of his sexual desires. The minotaur ties into his broader exploration of Classicism that persisted in his work for many years.

'Picasso may like or detest men, but he adores all animals. At the Bateau-Lavoir he had three Siamese cats, a dog, a monkey and a turtle, and a domesticated white mouse who made its home in a drawer in his table. In Vallauris he had a goat, in Cannes he had a monkey. And as for dogs, there has not been a day in his life when he has been without their companionship. If it had depended only on himself, he would always have lived in the midst of a veritable Noah's Ark.'

Picasso in conversation with Brassai, Paris, November 26, 1946



Pablo Picasso **Guernica** – Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, January 2010.

Photo: Pedro Belleza

Pigeons

His fascination for birds started early. His father was a pigeon breeder and had a dovecote in most of his childhood homes. He taught drawing at the Instituto da Guarda in La Coruna and little 'Pablito' joined his classes drawing bird after bird. He had a natural affinity with birds from the beginning, capturing their characteristics with alarming precision. In 1895 his sister Conchita died which was a turning point in his life. He had promised to stop painting if she survived and thus the dye was cast and the desire for a life as a painter became more profound. He continued to keep birds himself in many of his homes. His artist friend Brassai gave him a white pigeon, which kept him company while he worked, often perching on his head.

Doves

In 1937, Picasso moved into an attic studio in Paris with its own aviary. He had pigeons, canaries and exotic birds. A decade later Henri Matisse gifted him a white pigeon, which he used as a study for a lithograph. The white bird on a black background caught the eye of the poet Louis Aragon, a member of the French Communist Party, who reminded him he had promised to paint a poster for the World Peace Congress. He designed posters for many years and among these motifs is his most famous version, the *Peace Dove*, drawn with only a few lines, holding an olive branch in its beak, from 1961. Doves appeared as early as 1901, when he painted *Child with a Dove* in his Blue Period – he was just 20 years old, and his best friend Carlos had just died. When Picasso's daughter was born, he decided to call her Paloma, meaning 'dove' in Spanish.

Owls

Owls feature again and again in Picasso's work, often in ceramics, as a symbol of wisdom and feeding his fascination for the supernatural and ancient tales. While Pablo was still working at the Musée d'Antibes in 1946, the photographer Michel Sima had come to us one day with a little owl he had found in a corner of the museum. One of his claws had been injured. 'We bandaged it and it gradually healed,' explains Francoise Gilot. Picasso kept the baby owl with him in his studio and nursed it back to health.

Dogs

When Marguerite Matisse visited Picasso at the commune of Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre in 1906, accompanying her father as a 12-year-old girl, she doesn't recall anything in Picasso's studio, but instead his enormous Saint Bernard dog. In the case



Pablo Picasso **Acrobats Family with a Monkey**, 1905, mixed media, 41×29½in (104×75cm).



◀ Pablo Picasso **Boy Leading a Horse**, 1905-1906, oil on canvas, 86¾×51¾in (220.5×131cm).

Horses

Some of Picasso's most valuable works were made during the Rose Period including *Boy Leading a Horse* which became his largest study for *The Watering Place*, painted in 1905. *Boy Leading a Horse* depicts a nude, unmounted figure leading a horse – it's a peaceful painting of true simplicity. The horse has no reins, and the boy's clenched fist is used to instruct the horse to move forward.

Famously, a silently screaming horse takes centre stage in his epic, pacifist artwork *Guernica* whilst horses appear throughout his entire oeuvre symbolising strength, freedom, desire and prudence.

Fifty-two years since the death of Picasso aged 91 on April 8, 1973 we are still beguiled by this prolific, bold and single-minded character. Not a day went by without an animal companion by his side. TA



● See **Picasso: The Three Dancers** at Tate Modern from September 25 until Spring 2026. Find out more at tate.org.uk

● Studio members can watch an exclusive bonus video by Sarah to accompany this feature within their Studio Video area at painters-online.co.uk

The video includes information about the art materials used by the Masters, filmed at Pegasus Art shop.

of Picasso, dogs really were a man's best friend; they did not let him down where humans could.

Picasso and Lump

Lump was introduced to Picasso in April 1957 at La Californie, his hillside mansion in Cannes. The photographer David Douglas Duncan had taken portraits of Picasso and brought his faithful Dachshund with him. Picasso famously painted the dog on a dinner plate and presented it to Duncan as a gift. Man and beast struck up such a connection that Lump was left to live at La Californie for the next six years in happy company with his boxer dog, Yan and his goat named Esmeralda. According to Douglas Duncan, 'This was a love affair. Picasso would take Lump in his arms and feed him from his hand. Hell, that little dog just took over. He ran the damn house.'

Monkeys

Of course, Picasso kept a pet capuchin monkey. Her name was Monina and she lived with the artist and his first partner Fernande Olivier. Monkeys feature in his collage sculptures made from toys and found objects. They also feature in his early work from the Rose Period, when he lived alongside and closely observed the Cirque Medrano in Montmartre.

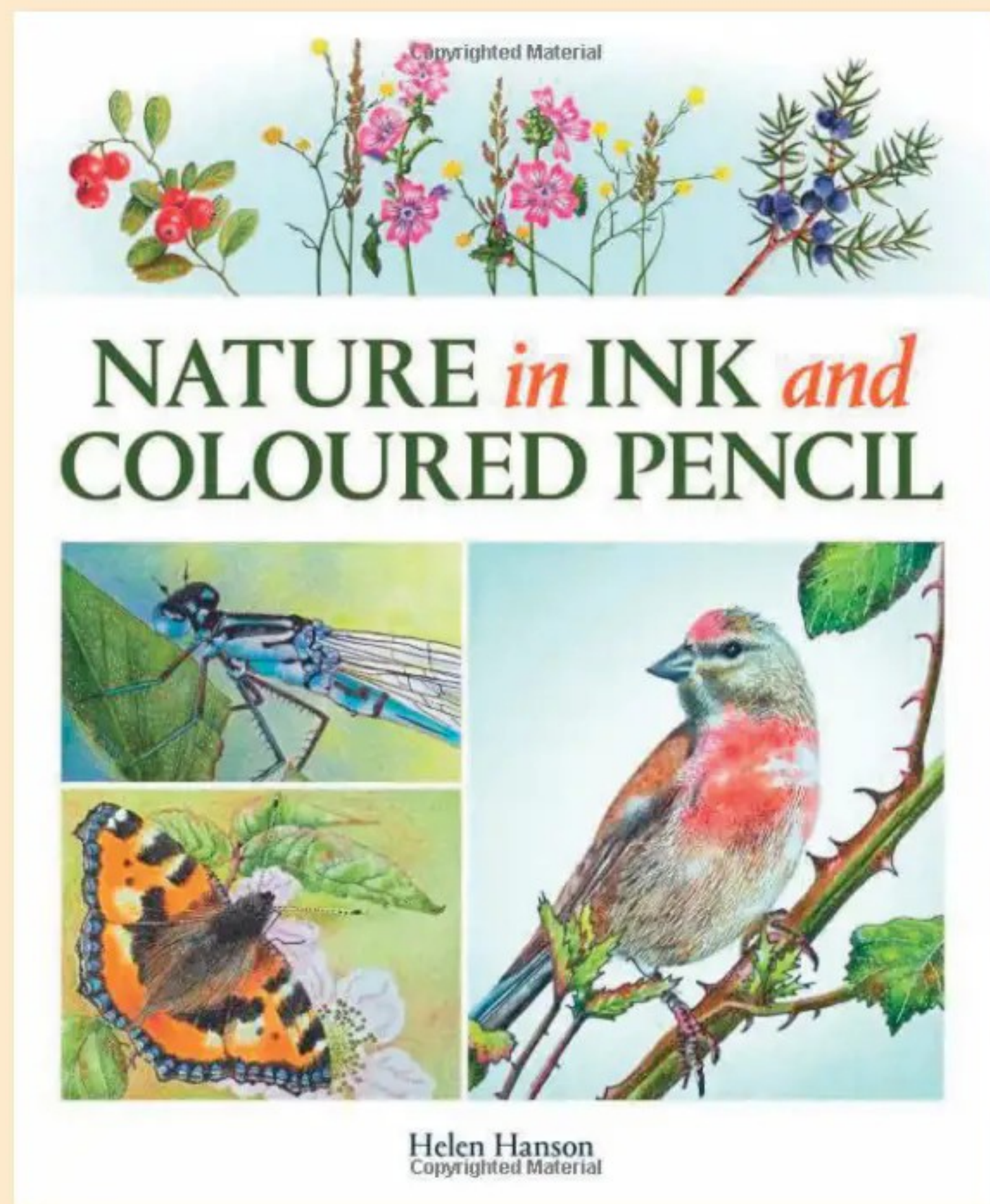
In the 1905 painting *Family of Acrobats with Monkey* Picasso captures an intimate moment in a family of circus performers. He was on the cusp of moving out of his Blue Period, painting the underdogs and impoverished, choosing warmer hues and more romantic subjects. The pyramidal composition has been likened to a Renaissance Mother and Child configuration and shows the monkey as a member of the family group.



Francoise Gilot and Picasso, 1952

ART BOOKS

Reviewed by Henry Malt



Nature in Ink and Coloured Pencil

Helen Hanson

Books on drawing and painting nature abound and choosing one comes down to personal preference and whether they offer something useful or different. Helen Hanson, whose previous offering dealt with landscape, provides plenty of variety and depth combined with a high level of accessibility, which you might consider to be a winning combination. The media she uses allow for precise work, so we're looking at a good degree of representation rather than colour – and shape-based interpretation. For all that, the level of detail is not obsessive and it is this, combined with some very thorough explanations that make the book so easy and pleasant to follow.

The cover image gives you a fair idea of what to expect – birds, insects and vegetation for the most part, with a few animals to complete the picture. Images are, as you might expect, mostly close-up and are arranged by the type of habitat.

Crowood £20, 160 pages (PB), ISBN 9780719844850

Buy it!

For a comprehensible but accessible guide to a popular subject

David Hockney – a Graphic Novel

Monica Foggia & Giovanni Gastaldi

Your esteemed editor and I had a bit of a discussion about this. 'It might be interesting', said Jane. 'It could be a lot of fun', was my feeling. I think this would be roughly your approach if you saw it in a bookshop, too. And, yes, you would be right.

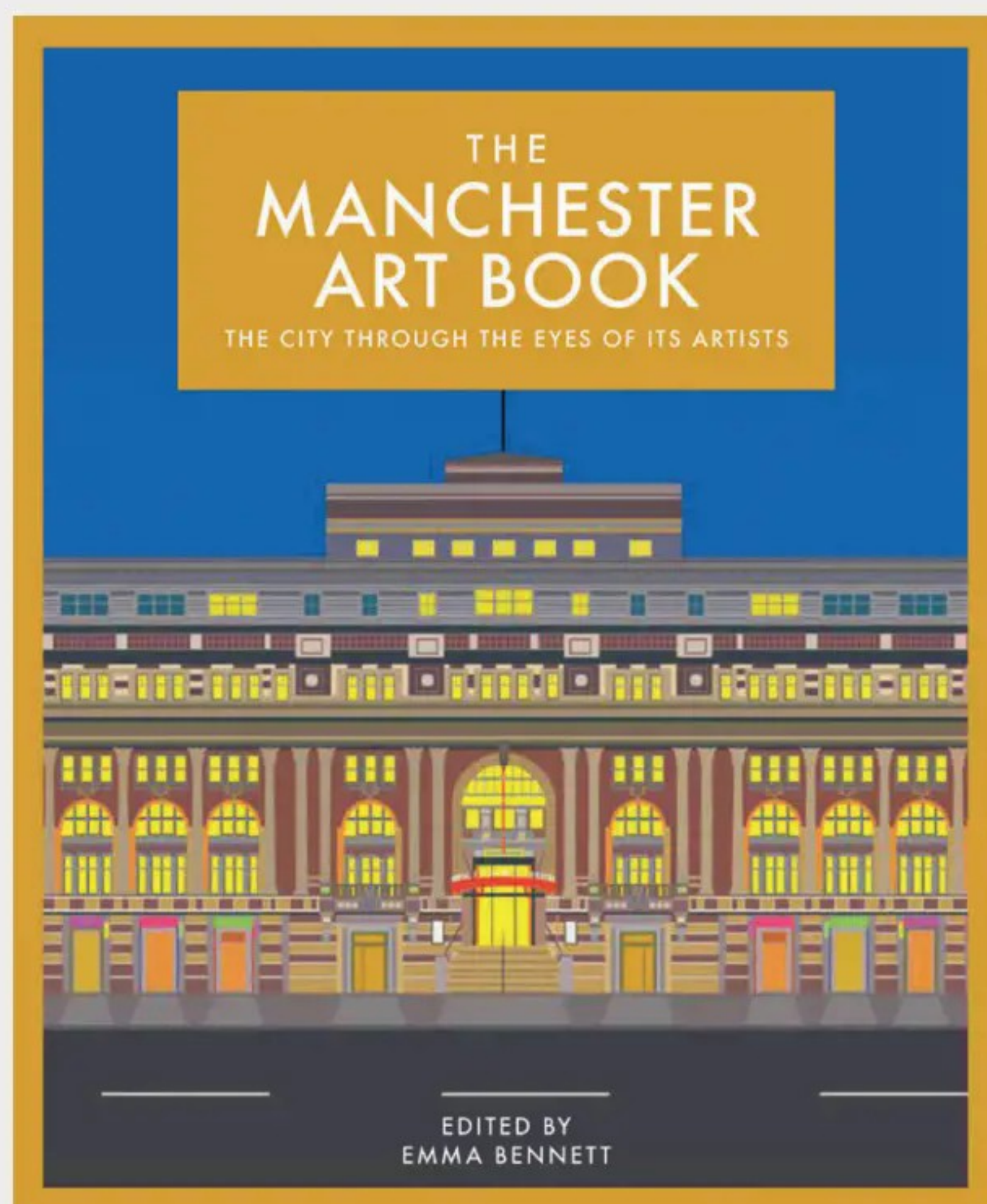
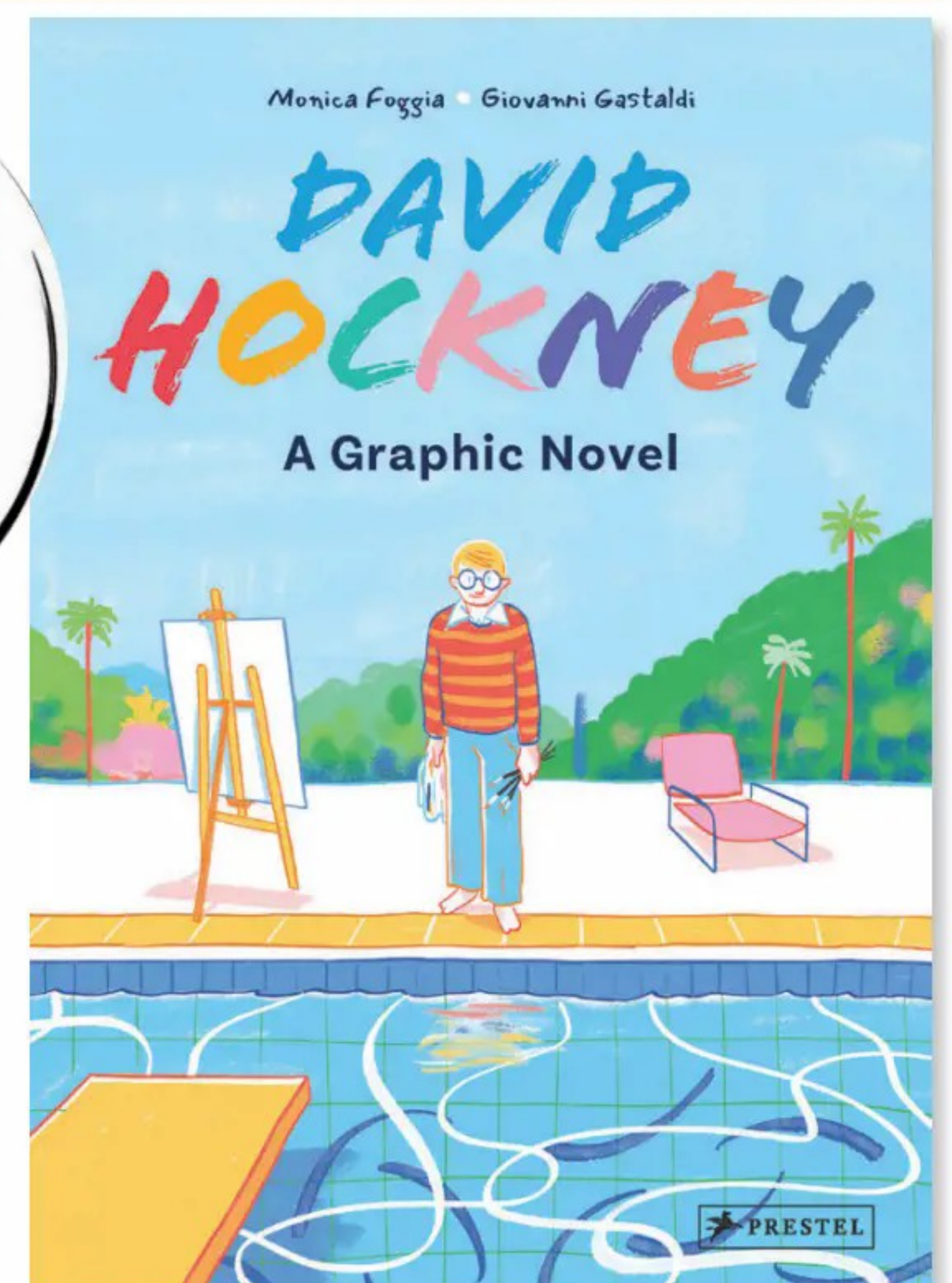
It's an absolutely remarkable book, not least because there is nothing about it not to love. I just want to pick it up and give it and its subject a hug. Handled wrongly it could be a joke, but the authors balance good humour and good nature perfectly and give us a story that is personal in its detail and brings its subject to life in a way that text never could.

The basic facts are laid out in a five-page introduction. What follows are lively and deceptively simple snapshots that brim with character and tell a compelling tale.

Prestel (prestel.com) £19.99, 128 pages (HB)
ISBN 9783791380353

Buy it!

For more fun than you have a right to expect



The Manchester Art Book

Ed Emma Bennett

Calm down, our kid, of course you knew Manchester had a flourishing art scene. The rest of us just need a moment to catch up. Not just flourishing, in fact, but positively vibrant, as this enthusiastic and really rather joyful celebration shows. The sheer variety of styles, media and approaches illustrated is positively inspiring, both to consider a visit, but also to get the materials out. The subject matter is mostly the built environment, but includes details, quiet corners and pure graphics as well as more impressionistic depictions by no fewer than 50 local artists. Apart from a short introduction, there is no commentary, so the more general reader will be left to do their own research. That is not necessarily a bad thing, because you can concentrate on what inspires you rather than being lead around by an over-talkative guide.

This is part of a series, so get exploring!

Herbert Press £16.99, 128 pages (HB), ISBN 9781906860974

Buy it!

One for the Mancunians but, if that's you, definitely

For a huge range of inspiring practical art books that can be purchased at discount prices by our Studio Members from our online bookshop visit www.painters-online.co.uk/ArtSupplies

Turning PROFESSIONAL



Rodney Kingston shares his experiences of his first year as a full-time artist

Regular readers may recall I have had a particularly busy couple of months. Alongside two public displays of my work to prepare for, I have had ongoing workshop and demonstration commitments, and time spent investing in developing the business side of being an artist by completing an intense Business for Creatives bootcamp.

As I sit in my studio surrounded by recent work, art materials, easels and a paint-splattered floor I am reflecting on the recent weeks and feel incredibly grateful for the knowledge I have gained by completing the course run by Mastered. So, what made it so good? For starters, my mindset has changed from being someone who has given up employment to 'try and make it as an artist' to someone who has given up employment to 'grow an art business and thrive as an artist'. It is a big shift and has come as a result of learning the skills to be successful in all the areas essential to any business.

As a group of creatives – others from my cohort included photographers, videographers, creative agencies, a voice coach, a games publisher, a mural artist and more – we offered support for each other and enjoyed a shared understanding of the challenges of being creative people in the business world. That camaraderie was useful and valuable. Our time together, which has been spent on hours of Zoom call seminars

and peer group sessions, culminated at an in-person event in Guildford. That event was yesterday (as I type) and gave us an opportunity to discuss the modules we'd studied, remind ourselves what we had discovered and each give a five-minute presentation about our business. Spending time with this group of creatives reminded me of the importance of community even in solo pursuits.

Some of the standout subjects during the course for me were when we explored our core values, reviewed our branding and studied marketing. Through a series of tasks we each discovered the three most important values to ourselves and worked through how they inform and shape our business model. With branding we looked at what we want to communicate, how that aligns with our values, researched what fonts, colours and themes help project the messages we want to give. The marketing module included research into who our clients are, what are the best channels to reach them and processes to discover answers to those questions. To a certain degree it has been a journey of self-discovery and understanding of why I am inspired to paint certain subjects.

One aspect about my work became clear to me over the duration of the course. There is a common thread throughout my paintings whether that be a London scene with a well-known landmark, a quieter view of the Thames close to home in Staines, the outside of a football stadium as fans arrive for the game, an iconic footballer painted onto a retro football shirt, portraits of friends and family (my own or those who commission me), a collection of objects from my kitchen or art studio – they are all depictions of the 'every day'. That observation and understanding is useful to me in many ways as I develop creatively, personally and in a business sense.



▲ A rare bit of painting this past month



▲ Meet-and-greet demo at *Spelthorne Artists Unlocked* event



▲ An organised studio made it easier to prepare paintings for display

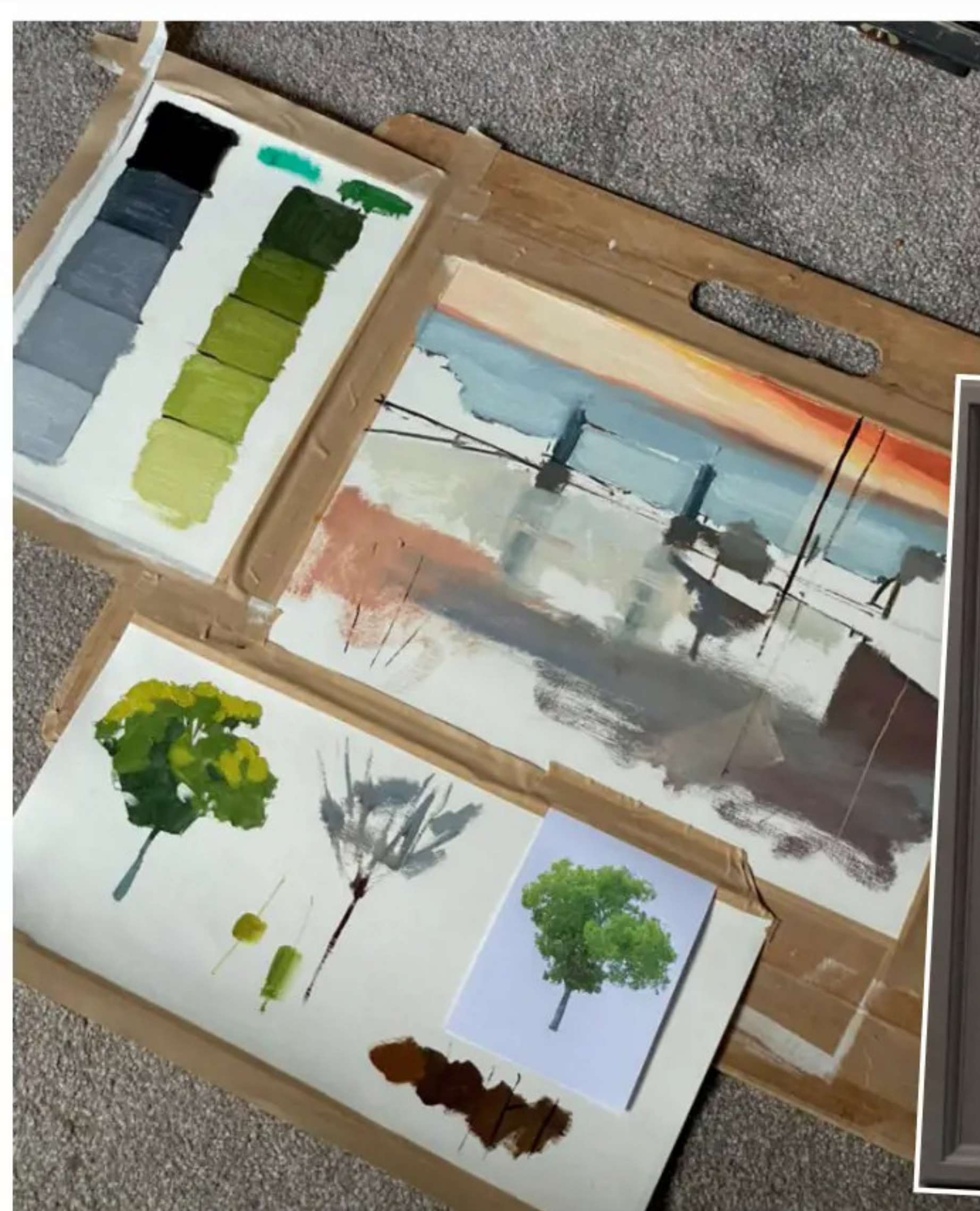
We also studied finance, sales and networking. Each module was a whistle-stop tour, taught at some pace but also in depth and, for me, immeasurable in terms of how useful the teachings will be for years to come. I have a long list of action plans!

I'm sure it's obvious from what I'm writing that I would recommend this bootcamp by Mastered or something similar to any artist already self-employed or thinking about becoming so. I'm grateful it fell into my lap so early in my journey of self-employment.

The course has occupied my thoughts but I have also been busy in a very practical way preparing for displays of work in both Staines and Esher on the same weekend. It feels like a distant memory but I certainly knew about the logistical demands of both when I was in the moment. They were great opportunities to raise awareness of my paintings and services and to transform new work, that was previously unframed, to being ready for display. Being organised in the lead-up was vital, so, knowing the dimensions of the wall spaces I had to fill was important, choosing appropriate works for each location, framing the work, preparing labels, checking hanging methods – in both cases wood screws – and making sure my drill was charged! You get the idea, there was lots to think about and get done. Once all these tasks were ticked off and the work was hung and ready for viewing, I could at least relax and enjoy the weekend.

The Staines venue was for an event called *Spelthorne Artists Unlocked*, organised and funded by the local borough council. Through the efforts of Charlotte Skinner, Arts & Cultural Development Officer, the weekend was a great success. There was so much interest in the various artists and groups taking part from people in Staines. I enjoyed many good conversations about oil painting and the scenes I'd captured locally of the Thames, town and surrounding area.

The Esher venue was an art fair which I'd booked many months before as something to work towards and to test the waters of showing at art fairs. A few times in the past I have had a stand at an art fair in Teddington with mixed feelings about how worthwhile it had been. I went into the Esher art fair with an open mind but eventually concluded that it isn't an avenue for showing work that I will explore anymore. I don't feel comfortable with the model of paying money to display my work to get it seen by the public. As well as art fairs I've also hired gallery spaces on a few occasions but for now I am going to explore alternative ways of getting work seen in person. Showing at



◀ Some workshop examples and an opportunity to use my brushes

▼ A recently framed work ready for public display



the art fair and subsequently coming to that conclusion made the weekend worthwhile. I also had enough sales to make it OK from a financial point but like I say, I feel there are better ways to reach the public – gallery representation, open studios, getting work on the walls of businesses and I'm certain many more avenues to explore.

Thinking back to the bootcamp again, time management was another module we studied and now that these recent commitments written about in this article have passed, I will be organising my time so that I can get back to more hours at the easel. After all, that's the whole point of this lifestyle! I've managed a little time painting in the form of demonstrations during

workshops and one venture to Fulham but not much else and I can't run an art business if I don't actually dedicate some serious hours to painting and developing my skill. I look forward to reporting next month on what I get up to and what inspires me next. TA

Until then, *thanks for reading!*



● To find out more about Rodney, his work, exhibitions and courses, go to rodneykingston.com



Ready for the doors to open at an art fair in Esher

ASK AN ARTIST



Ask an Artist podcast was devised by working artists **Laura Boswell** (printmaker) and **Peter Keegan** (oil painter) in 2019. Laura left the podcast at the end of 2021 to explore pastures new and **Tom Shepherd** (watercolour painter) joined Peter as the new co-host. The podcast is designed for working artists and makers, who are looking for tips and advice, ideas and strategies not only for making, but selling their art too.

KIMBERLEY KEEGAN SHARES TIPS AND ADVICE FOR WORKING ARTISTS



KIMBERLEY KEEGAN

The **Ask an Artist** podcast has been releasing episodes for over five years, with total downloads now exceeding 450,000. The podcast aims to assist and support working artists and makers with the administrative and business side of being an artist. This year, podcast producer Kimberley Keegan has been writing this exclusive Q&A feature for *The Artist* magazine, sharing advice from the podcast and her own wealth of experience. Kimberley, who has a Fine Art degree and is a qualified teacher, is also the co-director of Art Profile, an agency representing over 150 UK artists who teach workshops and deliver demonstrations for art clubs, groups, and societies. You can listen to the podcast on any of the usual podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts or Spotify as well as via the dedicated podcast website, **askanartistpodcast.com**

If you are a member of an art club or society, contact Kimberley on **info@artprofile.co.uk** or take a look at the Art Profile website for more information: **artprofile.co.uk**

Q I recently attended an art workshop with a really respected artist. It was hosted by someone in the UK but the artist himself was from abroad and had flown over especially to give this workshop. I paid a lot of money to attend but was really disappointed; the artist did not do anything that I would consider teaching. We essentially got to paint in his presence! I came away from the workshop feeling quite annoyed and like I had not got my money's worth. What can or should I do about this?

A It is the reality that there are some creatives who are very good artists but not good teachers, yet they are giving workshops when perhaps they should not be. Sometimes, said workshops end up being more of a vanity exercise for the artist as opposed to delivering a quality piece of education and it sounds like that is what has happened here. There can be a place for this type of experience, but if it's not what you were expecting or what was promised, that's a problem.

All three of us have been in your shoes, attending workshops where we were expecting to be taught more and shown more, but ultimately, we were left to our own devices with some minor, not particularly useful, advice. Good education, art education in particular, is something



Peter Keegan teaching a class

we all feel particularly passionately about. At the moment, maybe due to the rise of online learning, it does seem that there is a plethora of artists who are turning to teaching and therefore, I think it's more important than ever that we champion the good ones and weed out the not-so-good ones. Good teaching is something that needs to be learnt, developed and honed in its own right; it is not okay to paint alongside your students and dress it up as teaching. If this is the experience on offer, it should be made really clear at the point of sale that this is what people are buying. If

you were promised lots of demonstrations, critiques and one-on-one time which never materialised, you absolutely should make the course provider aware of this. Feeding back is important for a number of reasons, not least because you don't want the pattern to keep repeating and for this artist to be invited back only to deliver another mediocre experience to more unsuspecting students. You are also helping to protect the venue, as their reputation will be brought down by association, and in turn, possibly the other artists who teach there too. So, although this type of conversation can be awkward, you are doing them a favour. At best, they will apologise and offer you a refund in-full or in-part. At worst, they will ignore you, but at least you will know you have done everything you can.

Looking at it from the other side, Peter and Tom both teach, and agree that if someone had a bad experience in one of their workshops, they would want to know about it. Receiving feedback from previous students is how they have shaped and honed their current classes. In my experience, any teacher worth their salt will be humble enough to admit they don't know everything and that they are always developing. It might feel a bit critical in the moment, but in the grand scheme of things, it is positive for everyone. If you are someone who hosts workshops, either

yourself or for other artists, a takeaway point for you is to be really transparent from the outset about what it is that you are selling. This will mitigate customer complaints and dissatisfaction down the line; remember, no-one likes a surprise in this situation. Be super clear about what the student can expect, from the number of hours in the studio, to how long the tea break is, how many of the materials will be provided, to how many paintings can they expect to go home with. Will the artist demonstrate? Will the artist provide any handouts, or should they bring a notebook and take notes? Will they have time to look at everyone's work once finished, discuss and evaluate? Or is it a chance to paint alongside the artist and finish their work at home afterwards? Again, this is not really okay in my opinion, but if you are up-front about it, at least people know what they are signing up for.

There are some excellent art tutors and teachers out there, who really understand pedagogy but unfortunately, for every artist who 'wings it', it brings the whole industry down a bit. In summary, you owe it to yourself and the good ones to offer your feedback.

Q I have been accused by someone who I thought was a good friend, of copying her paintings, which I most definitely have not! She is a well-known artist in the area, but I can't see how she can have a monopoly on painting a certain subject, for example flowers, or a local landmark? I feel the friendship has most definitely ended and I'm not sure how to move on from here.

A This is such a sad question and a sad situation. If you are an artist who teaches, then there is a certain inevitability here; if you teach people to paint like you, they will go ahead and paint like you. I'm not sure if that is the situation here with you and your friend, but even artists who work closely together (geographically or theoretically) will end up emulating each other's style; it's how art movements have started and existed for centuries. Look at the Impressionists, for example, they went out painting in the open air together, like many artists still do today. Of course, the resultant paintings will end up looking fairly similar; I challenge you to walk around an exhibition at the Mall Galleries and not spot several paintings of London in the rain, which include a London bus and a black cab. Are these artists copying each other? I don't think so.

When an artist produces, in this case a painting, they own the copyright for that painting; that is widely understood. This means no-one else can reproduce that image and put it onto tote bags, for example, without the artist's permission. But if they have painted a picture of Big Ben, of course it's not possible to 'copyright' Big



Students critiquing each other's work



Students in a workshop



Materials ready for a workshop

Ben, and stop any other artist ever painting it in the future! Why would they want to do that anyway? It sounds to us like the person doing the accusing here lacks some self-confidence in their own work and maybe there's a bit of envy at play? My advice to you is, you know the truth; you know that you have not copied this artist's work. I think it's important to try to reach out to them and state your case – that you weren't copying, this is something that you have arrived at yourself. If you were inspired by them in some way, I also think it's important to tell them this; give credit where credit is due. Be open, honest and transparent and ultimately be the bigger person in this situation. I think that can only reflect well on you. It's up to them how they take it – they may continue to feel and act sour about the situation but that's their problem then. Hopefully, they won't; hopefully they will come round and see things from your

perspective and the friendship can be salvaged. Just to flip this scenario round and look at it from the other side: as an artist, you do have to be aware that if you are good at what you do, you are going to inspire others, but everyone has something completely unique to bring to their art and inspiring others is not the same as them copying you. As Oscar Wilde said, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Given enough time and freedom, they will develop in a different direction. They may be on a very similar curve to you, but you will always be that little bit further ahead on that curve. If you honestly do feel someone is copying you, such an accusation should be really well founded and never be dished out lightly, as it can have serious consequences. Tom knew an artist who had a very specific style of working, even as a youngster. He was the first to admit he was heavily influenced by one particular artist and it was clear to see this in the work, even though there were also distinct differences. One day he got an e-mail from the agent of the other artist, very accusatory in tone; accusing him of 'ripping off', and that he was in breach of copyright for copying his style of working (you cannot copyright a style, or an approach). The saddest thing about this is that it destroyed this artist's confidence, and he stopped painting completely. He hasn't picked up a brush since.

So, if and when doubt does creep in about other's copying you, do ask yourself, is this really the case? Is the world really not big enough for the both of you? Because most of the time, it probably is. TA

These questions are all taken from episodes of the podcast: to listen to the answers in full, check out the following episodes: Listener Questions 25 and Listener Questions 14. If you have any questions relating to your painting practice that you would like answered please email theartistletters@tapc.co.uk



Mike Barr

is a Fellow of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts. He has won over 80 awards, including 17 first prizes. You can find more of Mike's work at mikebarrfineart.com

The benefits of a painting series

However many times you paint a subject, there will always be something new to discover. **Mike Barr** encourages you to paint in series

While some artists refuse to paint the same subject more than once, those who do are in good company when we think of the likes of Monet with his famous haystacks and cathedral series. And while we might argue that Monet was exploring the effects of light at different times of the day and at different seasons, the benefits of such a way of painting are still important to artists today. Importantly, paintings done in series don't have to be executed one after the other. They could be weeks or even years apart. Painting the same thing in a row multiple times could easily burn-out our enthusiasm for any subject.

The benefits for doing a series of paintings, even over many years, are worth mentioning. Firstly, there is the enjoyment of the artistic challenge of tackling the same or similar subject in different ways. A series is not the act of doing the same painting over and over again, but rather a process of painting a subject from different standpoints. That could even mean using a range of palettes to obtain a new effect.

Painting the 'guts out of a subject' can be very satisfying for an artist and the viewing public. One way of expressing different things from a subject can be as simple as abstracting certain elements rather than the whole painting. It is certainly a worthy departure from trying to make a painting look like the reference all the time, even if the reference is from real life.

One of the biggest advantages for an artist to engage in painting series, is the development of seeing the possibilities in any subject. It is like a training exercise in seeing beyond the immediate reference. After many years of painting, I can say that it is a very big step in an artist's personal journey. So, while some may make comments like, 'can't you paint anything else?', we can rest assured that you are taking big leaps in becoming a true artist.



Like anything, repetition fine tunes your process. In painting, it produces a degree of confidence that always shows in your work. Such a confidence reveals itself in a painting in the form of a sense of flow, which can be missing completely in a work that has been heavily laboured. Artists that have such a flow will find that their paintings are more engaging – their confidence expresses itself in the attention of onlookers. It's almost a mystery that few talk about, but it definitely exists.

So, next time we are attracted to a subject, any subject, think of ways in which you can tackle it. It may be a way of cropping, the use of different colours, swapping elements of the composition,

▲ **Another Storm at the Stag, oil on canvas, 39½×39½in (100×100cm)**

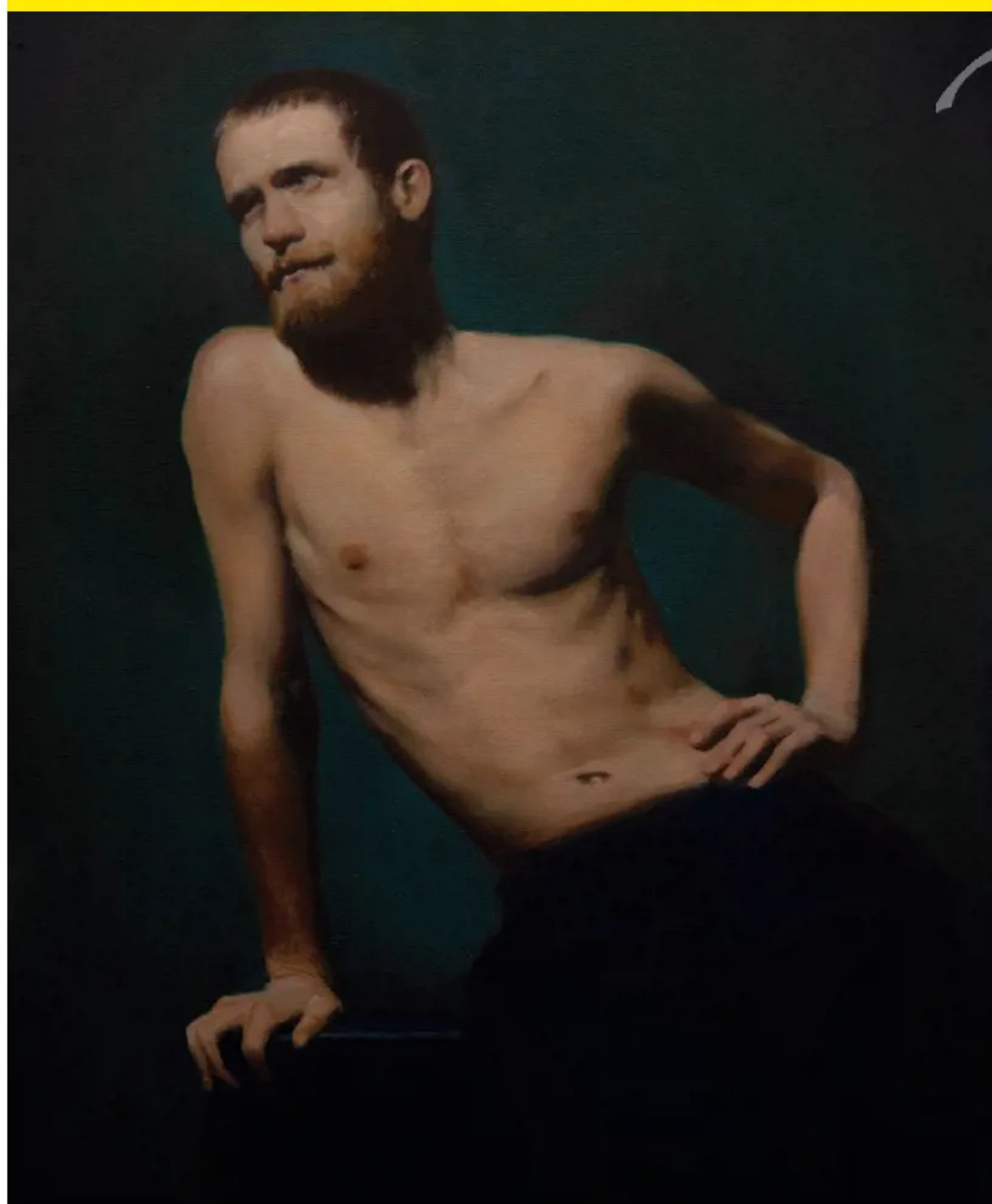
One of my latest paintings has been a series that started as a couple of small works, but now has developed into this major piece. The Stag is an iconic building and hotel on the fringe of the Adelaide CBD (central business district).

softening certain items and sharpening others, and my very favourite – adding figures in the landscape. Series painting is an exciting aspect of an artist's work that will give so many benefits and so much joy. Above all it will expand your way of looking at life in ways that others may not have considered.

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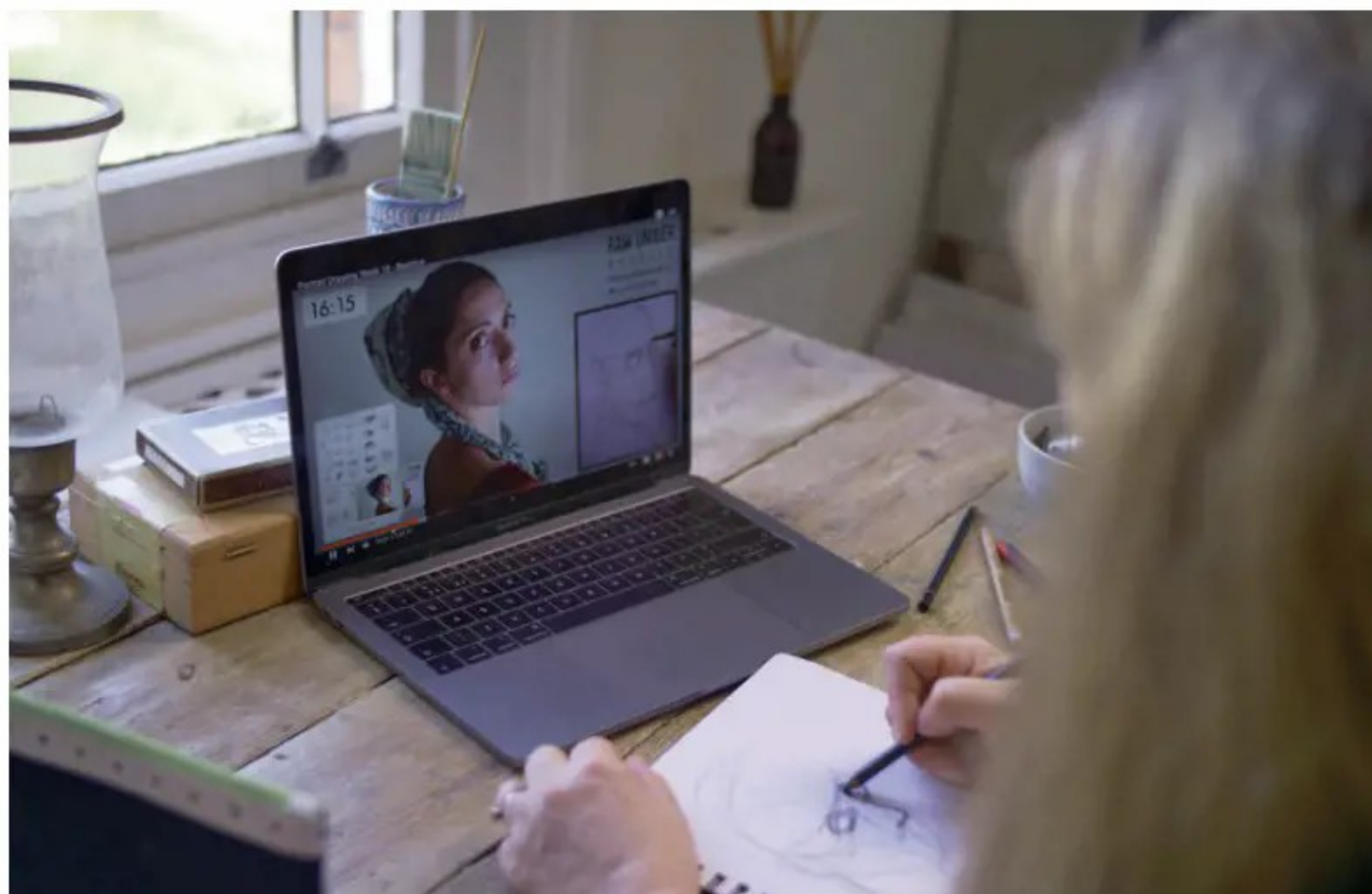
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