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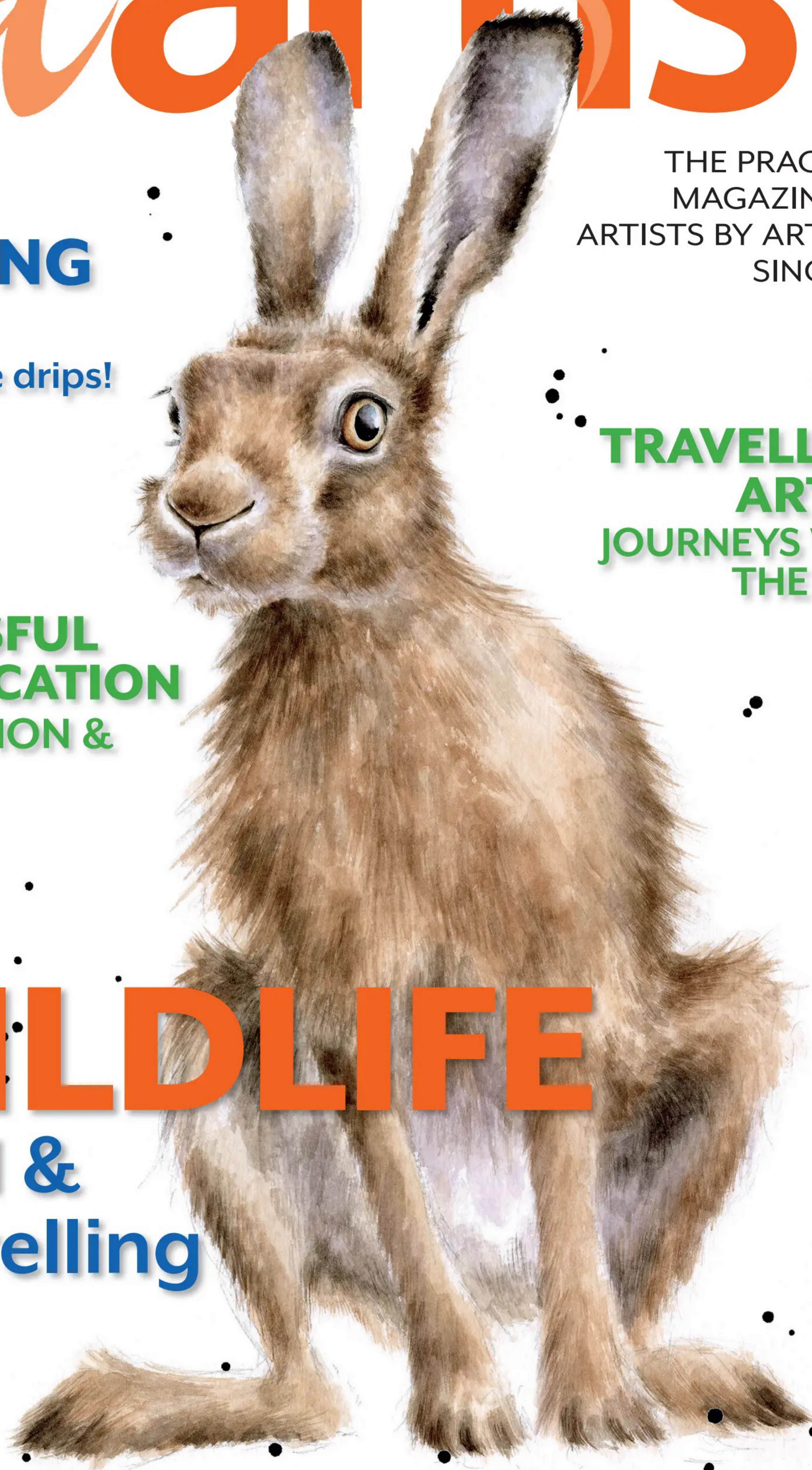
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SINCE 1931

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SHAPES THAT FLOW



"Meditaciones de un Moka vespertino", 50 x 70 cm, Nitram Charcoal on Gvarro 300 gsm paper

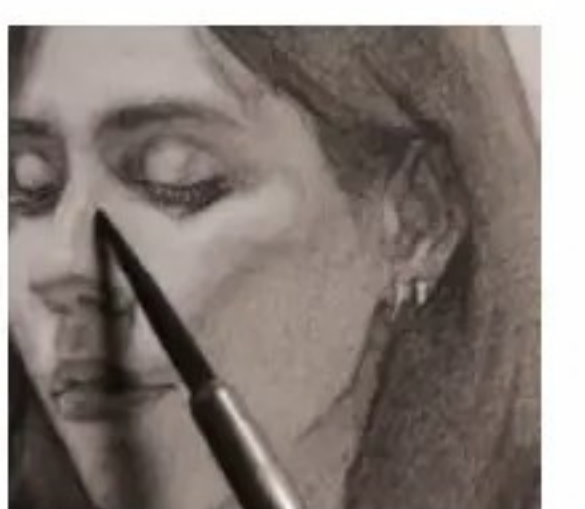
WITH NITRAM CHARCOAL

"'Meditaciones de un Moka vespertino' is a work that captures the feeling of enjoying an afternoon coffee while those thoughts that often linger in our minds throughout the day seem to fade away for a moment, making way for tranquility.

I really enjoy the versatility of Nitram products, particularly the ability to use wet media to create stains and free-flowing shapes with Liquid Charcoal. Likewise, I appreciate using charcoal sticks to add structure and detail to my drawings."

~ *Betzalel Maida Galicia*

To watch a video of how Betzalel Maida Galicia created this drawing with Nitram Charcoal, please visit: <https://nitramcharcoal.com/Betzalel> or scan the QR code



Betzalel Maida Galicia, a Bolivian-Venezuelan figurative artist, began studying at an early age at the Art Academy of the Ateneo de Valencia, Venezuela, where he took drawing and painting classes from 2008 to 2010. He later pursued further education at the Universidad Nacional Experimental Rafael María Baralt in Zulia, Venezuela, graduating in 2015 while also participating in the university's Culture Coordination program. His work has been exhibited in the USA, Spain, Venezuela, and Bolivia. Currently, he is a founding member of the Roca Gravato Foundation and serves as the pro-tempore director of the Academy of Figurative Arts in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

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Printed by Warners Midlands plc



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Warners Group Publications plc, West Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire. PE10 9PH

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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

There's something about the heat of summer that changes the way we see, and feel, everything. The sun sharpens shadows, saturates colour and stirs a certain restlessness in the soul. For artists, these long, golden days are both muse and challenge: the light is exquisite, the heat at once energising and exhausting. During these months, the world seems to hum a little louder, and we listen more intently, with brush or pencil in hand.

This issue of *The Artist* is infused with the warmth and vibrancy of the season.

From Becky Thorley-Fox's evocative plein-air studies of coastal birds at one of her favourite summer haunts, to practical advice on limiting your palette, perfect for travelling light, you'll find insights and inspiration to help elevate your work in the studio or out in the field.

Caroline Saunders had the pleasure of speaking with the wonderfully talented Hannah Dale, whose charming and widely adored wildlife illustrations continue to delight audiences nationwide. Her ability to bring character and warmth to each creature is captivating.

Elsewhere, Grahame Booth offers a step-by-step demonstration on capturing an open summer landscape, complete with that elusive (and sometimes divisive!) heat haze. We also bring you the remarkable story of Alan Cotton's travels to exotic shores as a guest of King Charles III, in his role as Royal Tour Artist; what an extraordinary experience to share.

So, whether you're sketching in the dappled shade or rising early to greet the morning light, I hope this issue meets you wherever you are, creatively, emotionally, and geographically.

Here's to summer in all its brilliance, and to the art it continues to inspire.

Warmly,

Jane Stroud Editor



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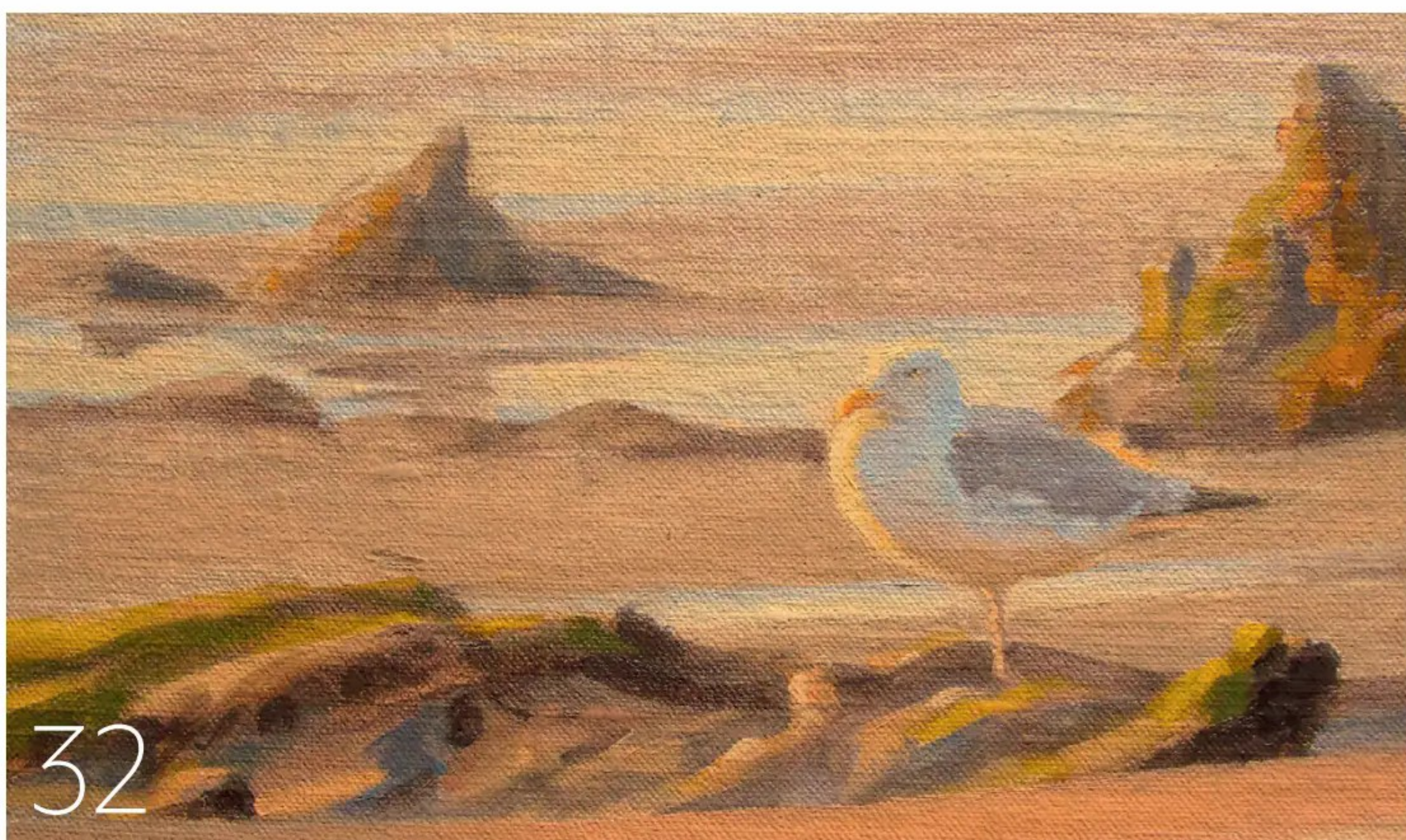
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THIS MONTH'S COVER



Hannah Dale, *Hare*, watercolour, 161/2x113/4in (42x30cm)
See pages 76 to 81.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS, EMAILS AND COMMENTS

Email theartistletters@tapc.co.uk or write to The Editor, *The Artist*,
Warners Group Publications, The Maltings, West Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9PH
Please note we may have to edit letters for reasons of space

STAR LETTER

More from the Impressionists

With reference to the Letters' page in *The Artist* June 2025, without doubt JMW Turner's influence on the French Impressionists cannot be understated. But nor can that of Corot, Courbet and even Delacroix – would we add those to the grouping itself? Monet himself took inspiration from Constable's expressive use of green during his time in Britain, should he be added too? The Impressionists earned and indeed owned their name, initially meant as an insult from the critic Louis Leroy. It was a term of its time, applicable to its contemporaries. Turner's influence is undoubted, but distinct. He is a British icon to be celebrated and revered in his own softly depicted and exquisite light. Turner is the Fighting Temeraire of 19th century art: resplendent, opulent, full of glory, but tugged into the future by his Impressionist descendants.

Owen Earwicker, by email



This month's star letter will receive a Rosa Classic Watercolour Metal Case with an assortment of six colours. Rosa Watercolours are handmade in Ukraine in collaboration with professional artists with a high pigment concentration and organic gum Arabic. They offer a high ratio of single pigment colours, so you can create clear, bright colour mixes.



The open air

I'm just back from the Arctic (Hurtigruten Post ship round the North Cape and back to Bergen) with some *en plein air* impressions, a book of pencil sketches and not very good photos. Perhaps one of your excellent contributors can recommend a simple set up for a non-tech artist on the go and give me some tips on how to photograph the Polar Lights on a pitch black night and whales in freezing blizzards with it. Even a stubborn all weather artist like me has to admit that photos do have advantages when attempting to recall 'my essence' of such a 2500-mile 12-day-and-night journey. That said, only by working in the open,

however arduous the conditions, can Nature's energy power you up in a way no studio is able to compete with. Together they offer a winning combination. Just think, old Turner had himself lashed to a ship's mast for four hours to paint his snowstorm at sea impression. Now there's an idea!

John Owen, by email

Thank you to *The Artist*

I must give a thousand 'thank-yous' to the judges who chose my painting, *Social Inclusion* to be shown at this year's TALP Open exhibition and for the Hahnemühle Award given at the Patchings preview. I often read comments from established

artists encouraging readers of *The Artist* to submit their work for exhibition, and I can now honestly agree it can be a life-changing step forward. I've been painting in oils – maybe three or four a year – for five years, having stopped with watercolour about 35 years ago when I turned my other hobby of guitar making into a full-time job. Working 12 to 15 hours a day seven days a week, it's been fun, from helping out the kid down the road to fixing instruments for the Arctic Monkeys' tours and recently restoring Paul McCartney's 'lost bass', but during all those years I've never stopped thinking about painting. Virtually every photograph I've taken has been for painting reference and I've absorbed books full of techniques, colour theory, effects, and so on that have been applied to imaginary canvas. It's felt like I had a jacket thrown over my shoulders with empty sleeves hanging around waiting for that other pair of arms. It won't be an easy change, but my workshop is about to become my studio. The encouraging words from your magazine and its contributors and now with the third painting I've had chosen for the TALP Open, it has to be done; and whatever the outcome I won't be living with the regret of not trying. I think there is a definite compulsion to make art that never goes away, whether you recognise it or not, and no matter how hard circumstances contrive to shove it to the back of your internal filing system, or how long it takes, it will eventually come out by some means.

Martin Harrison, by email



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THE ART WORLD

NEWS, INFORMATION AND ONLINE EVENTS IN THE ART WORLD

compiled by Jane Stroud

ANOTHER CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Lubaina Himid with Magda Stawarska: **Another Chance Encounter**
12 July to 2 November 2025

Initially trained in theatre design, Himid is best known for her innovative approaches to painting and social engagement, playing a pivotal role in the British Black Arts movement since the 1980s. Over the last decade, she has earned international recognition for her figurative canvases, which explore overlooked and invisible aspects of history and contemporary daily life.

At Kettle's Yard, her new work will centre on what is missing from the telling of life stories, who is left out of narratives, what strategies are used to fill in the gaps and the objects we choose to leave behind as clues.

There will also be a new installation that builds on Himid and Stawarska's *Blue Grid Test* (2020), drawing on correspondence between writer and artist Sophie Brzeska and artist Nina Hamnett. Alongside smaller interventions, Himid will also show a new largescale painting in the Kettle's Yard house.

Visit kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk for more information.

Lubaina Himid, **'Favours For Years To Come'**, from the series **'How May I Help You?'**, 2025, acrylic and charcoal on canvas.

Courtesy Hollybush Gardens, London and Greene Naftali, New York.

Photo: Gavin Renshaw.





▲ Emily Kam Ngwarray, **Ntang Dreaming 1989**.
NGA, Canberra. © Emily Kam Ngwarray Copyright Agency. Licensed by
DACS 2025)

EMILY KAM KNGWARRAY

10 July 2025 to 11 January 2026

Renowned Australian artist Emily Kam Ngwarray created compelling, powerful works reflecting her extraordinary life as a senior Anmatyerr woman from the Sandover region in the Northern Territory. One of the 20th century's most remarkable artists, Ngwarray translated her lived experience and spiritual engagement with her ancestral Country, Alhalker into vibrant batiks and later into monumental paintings on canvas. Running from 10th July 2025 to 11th January 2026 at Tate Modern, discover rich textiles, paintings, film and audio elements that embody the majestic scope of Ngwarray's Country and ancestral heritage. Created in collaboration with the National Gallery of Australia, this will be the first large-scale presentation of the artist's work ever held in Europe and a celebration of her astonishing career.

Visit tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern for more information.



CEDRIC MORRIS: ARTIST, PLANTSMAN & TRAVELLER

7 June to 12 October 2025

Cedric Morris (1889 – 1982) was one of the most talented painters of the natural world in twentieth-century British art.

This new exhibition explores Morris' relationship with Lett-Haines and Benton End, his travels across Europe to find and paint new plant species and his lifelong affinity with the natural world.

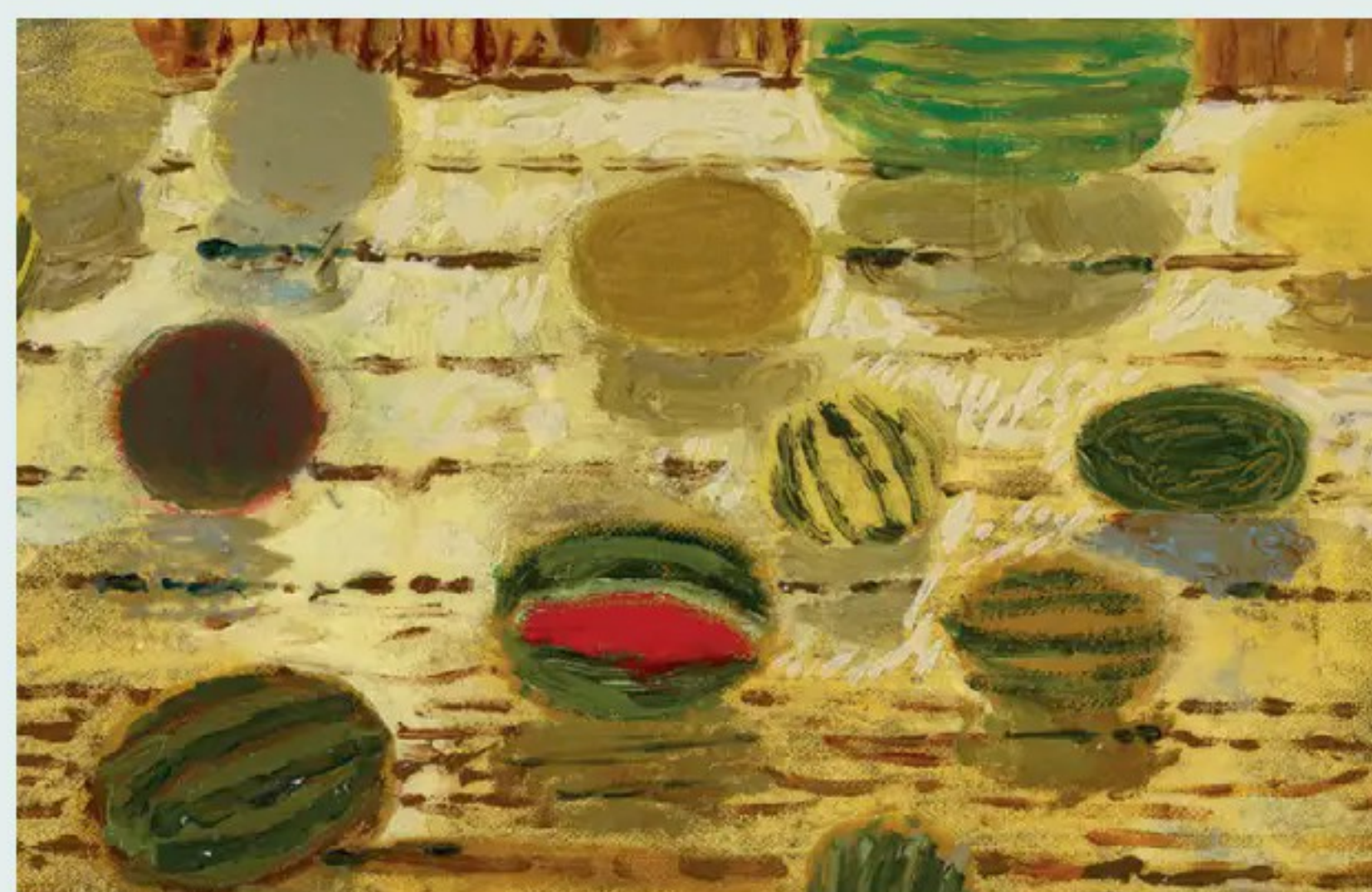
This is the first major presentation of Morris' work in the North of England and includes works on loan from Tate, National Portrait Gallery, Gainsborough's House, Philip Mould Gallery and a number of private collections.

Visit maltingsberwick.co.uk to find out more.



▲ Cedric Morris **Iris Seedlings (1943)** Tate © The estate of Sir Cedric Morris)

DREAMS OF THE EVERYDAY: PAINTINGS BY WINIFRED NICHOLSON & ANDREW CRANSTON



▲ Andrew Cranston **Melons and Heads 14x21.6cm**.

The Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney Islands:
21 June to 13 September 2025

The Holburne Museum, Bath:
3 October 2025 to 11 January 2026

Dreams of the everyday, is a new exhibition which brings together the paintings of **Winifred Nicholson** (1893–1981) and **Andrew Cranston** (b. 1969, Hawick, UK).

The exhibition explores the connections and contrasts in paintings by Nicholson and Cranston, many of which share a delight in ordinary, often domestic, realities – drawing on daily-life, memory and imagination, and incorporating figures, interiors and glimpses of nature. Both artists' practices are at once rooted in the real world, while going beyond conventionality and the commonplace to evoke a sense of non-physical, sometimes mystical, and occasionally visionary, realities.

Get your tickets at pierartscentre.com

RBSA SUMMER SHOW 2025

3 July to 2 August

As the largest open call of the year, the exhibition will take place over all three floors of the Gallery. There will be an enormous variety of work on display from a diverse collection of national and international artists.

Find out more at rbsa.org.uk

◀ Elena Degenhardt, **Meditation IX**



▲ **Late Quartets** by Tai-Shan Schierenberg

SUMMER EXHIBITION; A PORTRAIT OF ALDEBURGH BEACH

Until 24th October by appointment

A selection of artists including Regine Bartsch, Peter Blake RA, Eileen Cooper RA, Jude Hardy, Aaron Kasmin, Tessa Newcomb, Tai-Shan Schierenberg, Alison Wilding RA and Claire Zakiewicz will be displaying their work at Aldeburgh Beach Lookout and Arthouse.

Visit aldeburghbeachlookout.com for more information.

SCENTED VISIONS: SMELL IN ART 1850 -1915

15 May to 9 November 2025

Immerse yourself in the captivating world of Pre-Raphaelite art through the evocative power of scent.

Engage your sense of smell to gain a new appreciation for the cultural context behind Victorian paintings, and the artists' intentions. This exhibition includes three bespoke scents, created by Puig in collaboration with Artphilia, inspired by key elements within selected Pre-Raphaelite works.

Discover the works of renowned artists such as Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, John Frederick Lewis, John Everett Millais, Evelyn De Morgan, G F Watts, Simeon Solomon, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Featuring loans from the Tate, the National Portrait Gallery, Birmingham Museums Trust, and Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, this exhibition offers a unique opportunity to explore the Pre-Raphaelite movement through a multi-sensory lens.

Visit wattsgallery.org.uk to find out more.

► John Everett Millais,
The Blind Girl, 1856, oil on canvas, 80.8×53.4cm.

Photo by Birmingham Museums Trust,
licensed under CCO



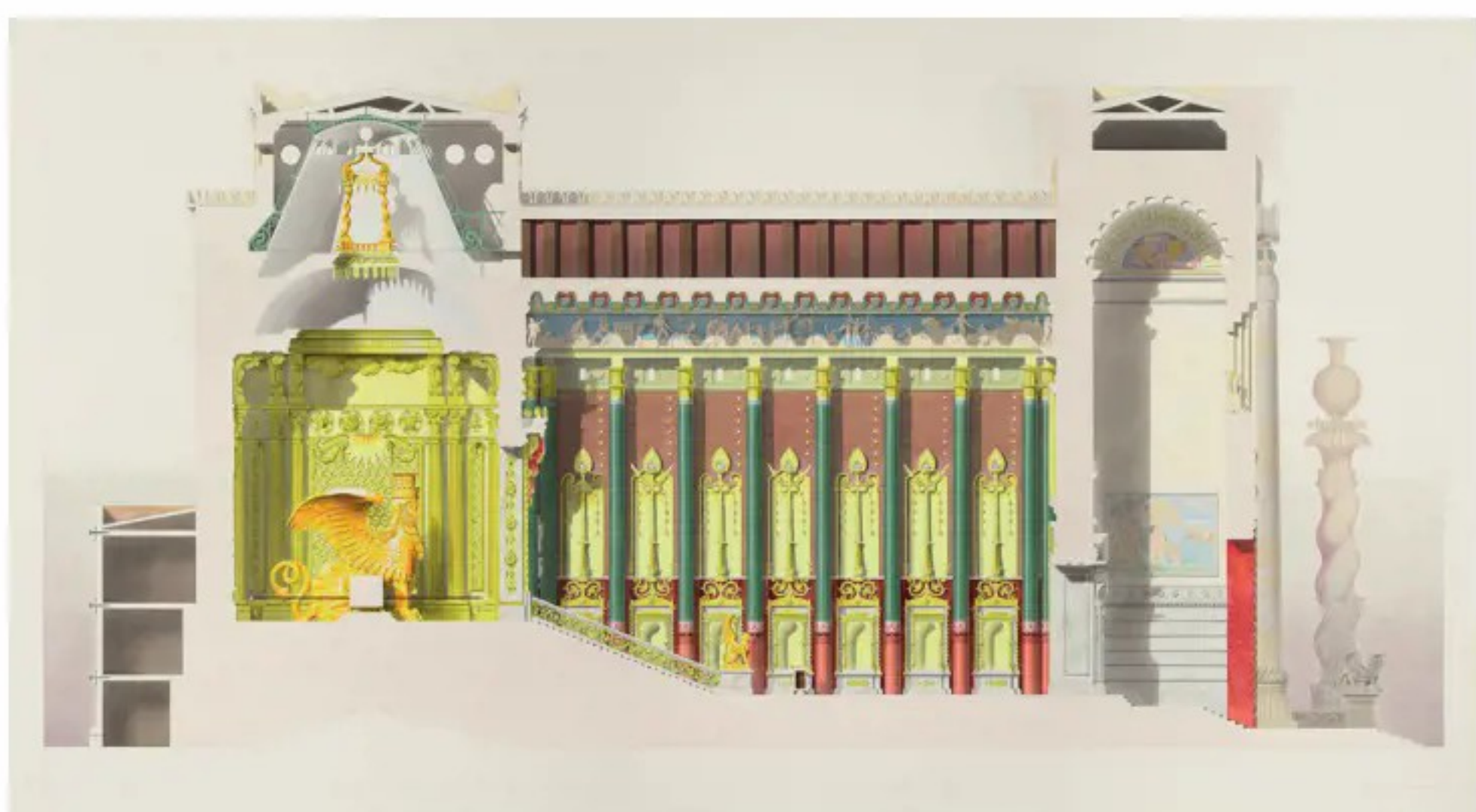
PABLO BRONSTEIN THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON AND ITS CONTENTS

16 July to 2 November

The Temple of Solomon and its Contents features a new body of work by Bronstein, one of the leading artists working in Britain today, including cross-sections and aerial plans, façade and frieze details, visualisations of the Solomonian columns, the principal contents, and much more. It promises a thrilling walk through one of history's great fascinations, a building that exists as much in the imagination as it did in reality.

Alongside the exhibition will be a display of drawings and architectural books from Waddesdon's historic collection, specially selected by the artist. Encompassing designs for altars and candelabra, furniture and panelling, rooms and religious ritual objects, it will be the first time they are presented at Waddesdon.

Find out more at waddesdon.org.uk



▲ Pablo Bronstein, **Temple of Solomon I, cross-section, 2024–25. Acrylic on paper, 105×200 cm.**

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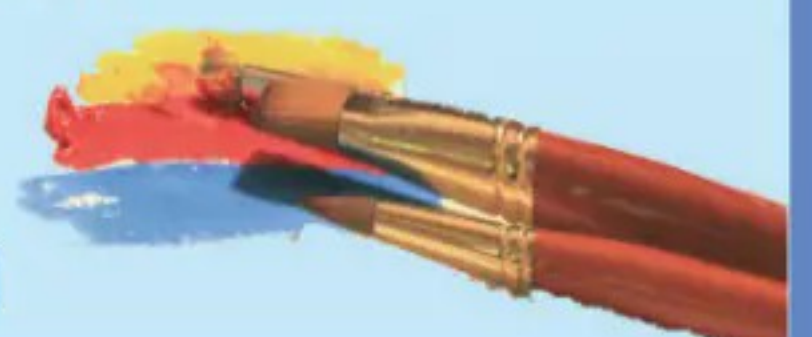
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A day in the life of PAUL WEAVER

Paul Weaver talks to Sally Bulgin about his life and career as a professional artist

After studying and working in graphic design, illustration and the print industry for 25 years, Paul has been a self-taught, full-time professional artist for the past two decades. Based in the southwest, he makes his living by tutoring painting workshops, courses and holidays in the UK and overseas, demonstrating for St Cuthberts Mill (where I first met Paul many years ago) and Ken Bromley Art Supplies, and by exhibiting and selling his work widely.

Paul enjoys working in a variety of media including watercolour, water-soluble oils, acrylic and line and wash, inspired by the light and atmosphere of his favourite subject matter, including landscapes, townscape, markets, marine and coastal scenes. He is an elected member of the Pure Watercolour Society and a regular contributor to *The Artist* and has some useful tips to share based on his experiences as a professional artist.



Paul painting on site
at Porthleven Harbour

Can you describe a typical day as a professional working artist?

'My working day is often varied, depending on what the priority is at the time. Most of my income comes through teaching, be that demos and workshops for art groups, online tuition or tutoring painting holidays in the UK and abroad. I'm also a regular contributor to *The Artist* magazine and Bromley's Art Supplies catalogue and online blog, both of which demand considered planning and time to create step-by-step tutorials.

'When I'm not preparing lessons, teaching or writing, I paint. Any spare time is taken up with administration: answering emails, chasing new leads or updating my website and social media. I'm eternally grateful to my wife, who is not only hugely supportive and constructive with all my creative efforts, but also does my bookkeeping.'

How do you divide your time between studio work and working en plein air?

'Plein-air studies are a vital part of my working practice, for gathering reference and keeping observational and painting skills fresh and sharp. I work in watercolour, water-soluble oil, acrylic and line and wash and the location, subject and weather will often dictate which medium I use. Some of these paintings might be suitable to frame or will provide invaluable reference for up-and-coming competitions and exhibitions. Commissioned work is usually completed in the studio.'

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

'I'm lucky to have my studio in the house. It is a practical, well-lit room with everything I need to work, day or night. I have an A1 drawing board by the window for large work and lesson planning. I usually stand at a box easel to paint. A plan chest holds watercolour paper, drawing pads and finished studies on paper, and I have a wall of shelves for wet oil studies. Cupboards



with roll-out racks hold all my teaching references, drawing and painting materials, canvases, boards and treasured library of books. My computer/admin area is in a separate room.'

How important is your membership of a professional society?

'I've been an elected member of the Pure Watercolour Society since 2010, founded in 1999 by James Fletcher-Watson RI, RBA, to encourage and preserve the classical working methods of the medium. I tutor several courses at Windrush House (his former home) across the year, as well as paint and exhibit with the other members when possible and have made many good friends and business contacts as a result.'

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

'I've worked successfully with several galleries over the years, as well as having success with solo and joint exhibitions I've organised with other artists. It's important to keep pricing parallel across all events, to maintain the established value with customers and to ensure that one venue doesn't compete with another.'

'It's important to keep pricing parallel across all events, to maintain the established value with customers and to ensure that one venue doesn't compete with another.'

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

'While a lot of my teaching work is face to face, my website is an important "shop window" for my business. All up-and-coming classes and painting holidays are detailed here, as well as my online shop carrying original paintings, cards and teaching films. New contacts can also message me here: paulweaverart.co.uk'

Which social media channels are most useful to you?

'I have a Facebook page linked to my website, where I post details of any current news, articles, events and recent work. This in turn drives interest and valuable contacts.'

▲ **Sunday Morning, watercolour, 13×18in (33×46cm).** 'This was my entry for the TALP Open 25 competition.'

It's so important to keep reminding your audience that you are still there and doing things.'

How does teaching affect/benefit your own working practices?

'As mentioned earlier, teaching forms an important part of my income and working life. It is something I greatly enjoy and find hugely rewarding. I welcome the variety of working disciplines. One day I could be sharing my experience and skills with a group, the next flying solo and deep in my own creative focus. Art for me is all about communication, be that passing on a painting technique to a student or capturing a moment on paper to help a wider audience appreciate the beauty of the world in a more visual way.'

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

'I've been inspired by many artists, specifically the Impressionists both past





and present. John Singer Sargent, Joaquín Sorolla, Edward Wesson, Edward Seago, James Fletcher-Watson, Ken Howard, Peter Brown, Trevor Chamberlain and David Curtis are a constant inspiration. Their incredible drive and work ethic, flawless draughtsmanship and ability to capture light and atmosphere are second to none. When light is the subject and reason for painting, every day is exciting, new and different, so remaining motivated is never an issue.'

Do you consider it important to continue to enter open competitions?

'Competitions are well worth entering. Apart from the attraction of prizes, they can create opportunities for valuable publicity with the public and potential galleries, exhibitions and expanding the portfolio.'

Finally, how do you price your work?

'My pricing has been driven by the galleries I've worked with, helping me establish a realistic high street value. This also takes into consideration my creative time, travel, materials, scale of the work and framing costs.'

TA

PAUL'S FIVE TOP TIPS FOR ASPIRING PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

- 1 My best advice was from Ken Howard OBE, RA, who said an artist should make drawing and painting an incurable habit and work from life whenever possible. Practise your craft and find your own creative voice.
- 2 Exhibit and get your work seen at every opportunity.
- 3 Network with as many potential markets as possible – suppliers, galleries and art societies, face to face and online through web and social media.
- 4 Visit exhibitions and study the work of past and current artists that inspire you.
- 5 Consider other sources of making a living in case painting sales go quiet.

◀ **Crab Fishing, Bosham, water-soluble oil, 8×10in (20×25cm)**

A return to **NATURE**

Caroline Saunders talks to artist, **Hannah Dale** of Wrendale Designs, about her widely recognised, characterful illustrations that accompany her new book, *A Wilding Year*



▲ **Bullfinch on Beech, watercolour, 16½×11¾in (42×30cm)**

'The main focus of this painting is the bright coral colour and strong contrast in the bullfinch. I used pyrrol scarlet, a warm fiery red as the base and softened it with quinacridone rose to add a cooler, pinkish tone. A touch of burnt sienna created a slightly earthy tone, to make the colour more natural. I used touches of these tones throughout the leaves to ensure the painting felt cohesive. The white space is important in this painting and the leaves are positioned to allow it to frame the bullfinch.'



Hannah Dale

studied zoology at Cambridge University followed by five years as a stockbroker in London, before meeting her husband, a Lincolnshire farmer, and a return to the passion she always had for nature and painting. She established Wrendale Designs in 2012 'on a crowded kitchen table in Melton Ross, Lincolnshire', and since that time has won many prestigious awards including the NatWest Everywoman Award in 2021, given to the most inspirational woman running a business trading from six to nine years; five Henries (the Oscars of the greeting card industry) and in 2024 the King's Award for excellence in international trade. Her new book, *A Wilding Year*, is a deeply personal journey – part journal, part sketchbook – celebrating the beauty to be found in untidy landscapes, as she and her husband transformed unproductive ex-arable land into a thriving, self-sustaining landscape. Find out more at wildwrendale.co.uk

With a detailed, expressive, and character-driven illustrative style, Hannah Dale is heavily inspired by nature and wildlife. Combining aesthetic appeal with quirky, cute, nostalgic illustration, Hannah uplifts us all – not only with her formidable style, but her wise advice, that encourages wilding and wildlife, of which we should all take notice.

Hannah has always admired illustrators who bring warmth and personality to their work. Beatrix Potter has been a huge influence. The world of *Brambly Hedge* by Jill Barklem has also been a big inspiration: 'The intricate details and rich storytelling in those illustrations are wonderful.' For as long as she can remember Hannah has found peace in nature and had a passion to draw. As a child she spent hours alone in a small garden. When she wasn't outside looking at nature, she was inside drawing it!

Watercolour illustrations of wildlife, printed on beautiful quality, sustainably sourced greeting cards were, for Hannah,

where it all started. The charm and personality of each of her animal paintings, captured through soft watercolour washes, are then worked into with finer detail and depth of shading. This blend allows for the creation of life-like textures while maintaining a warm, whimsical feel. Within a few years of hard work Hannah's Wrendale collection grew and her giftware now sells worldwide. When Hannah first started the business, she visited shops with her small collection of cards and asked if they would be interested in stocking them. It helped her to learn what sold well and what did not. Soon she was approached by agents and had a sales team covering the UK.

'The name Wrendale came about as I grew up in a house called Wrenwood and my husband Jack grew up at Pepperdale Farm, so it's a mixture of the two. I could never have imagined where Wrendale would be today and I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunities that it has given me.'



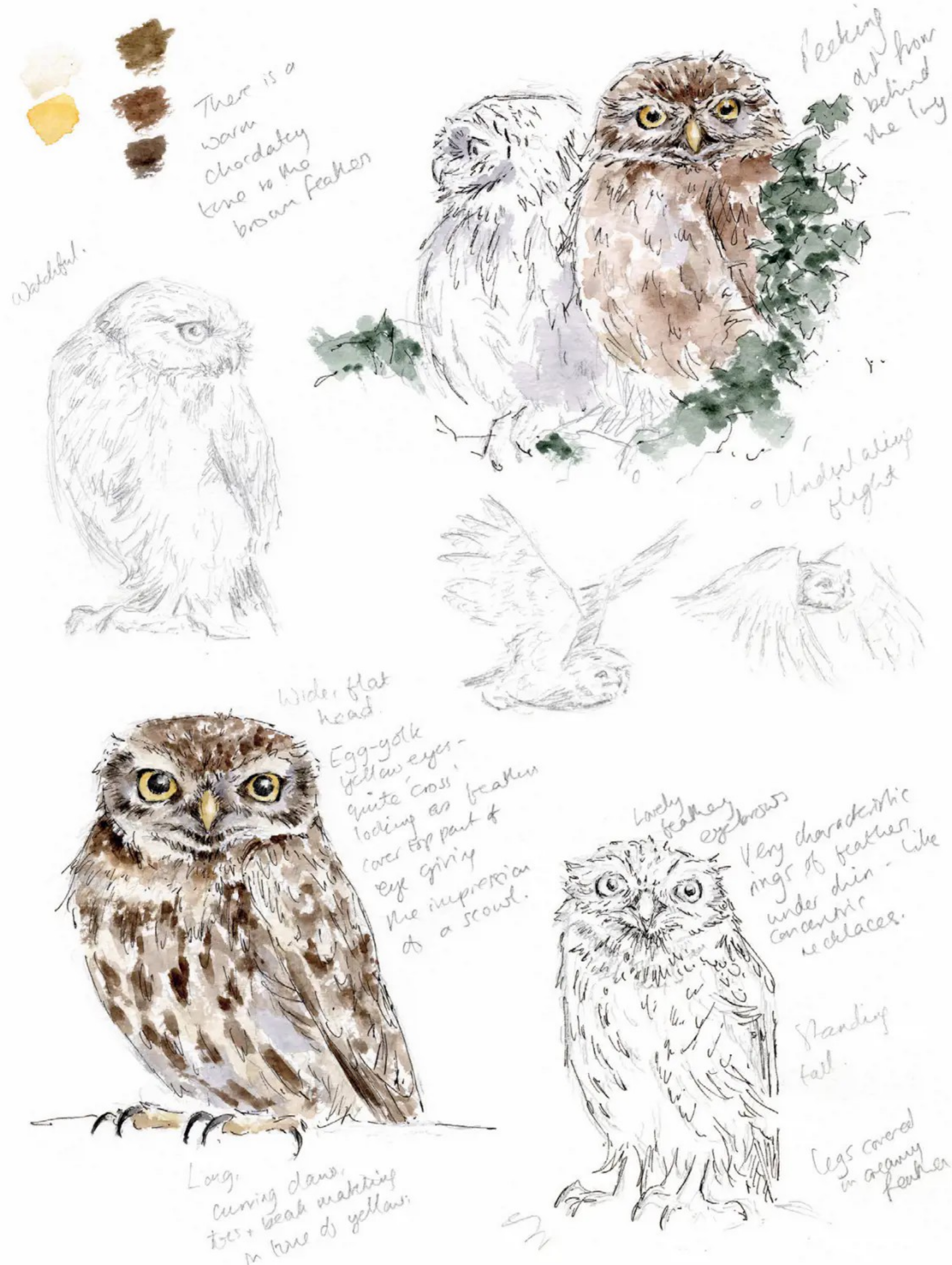
▲ Hare, watercolour, 16½×11¾in (42×30cm)

'The simplicity of this painting, with the hare taken out of any landscape context, allows the watchful gaze and alert pose to take centre stage. With the pared back composition, there is nowhere to hide and the detail has to be meticulous. The hare's fur takes in every shade from white to black. The mid-tones are created from burnt sienna, raw sienna, and quinacridone gold to add a glowing warmth, and burnt umber to create deeper shading. I contrasted the yellows in the fur with a mauve shadow that helps to add depth. Fine brushwork and dry-brush techniques replicate the texture of fur.'

Close observation

Developing her style involved sketching from life and observing animals closely; their postures, expressions, and interactions. Hannah experimented with different media but found watercolour to be the perfect choice for achieving soft edges and natural tones. Adding expressive splashes and loose brushwork helped her to strike a balance between realism and playful energy, which has become a signature element of her work. Hannah usually starts with the eyes. 'If the eyes feel expressive and engaging, the rest of the illustration naturally falls into place. From there, I build up the face and body, paying close attention to posture, movement, and small details that reflect the animal's personality.' Before Hannah starts drawing, she likes to observe the animal's behaviour if possible: how it holds itself, whether it's shy, playful, or confident. Capturing these traits brings the subject to life on the page.

IN CONVERSATION



Striking a balance between appealing to both children and adults can be challenging for Hannah, but she finds the answer lies in creating illustrations that feel warm, expressive, and full of character. 'For children, I focus on playful details — perhaps a curious tilt of the head, a fluffy texture, or a splash of paint that adds energy. These elements invite imagination and make the animals feel approachable. For adults, I aim to include more subtle details — delicate brushwork, naturalistic poses, or hints of personalities, that reflect familiar wildlife behaviours. This adds depth and realism while still feeling charming. Ultimately, I think people of all ages connect with illustrations that tell a story — whether that's a thoughtful fox, a curious hare or a cheeky duckling — so I always try to capture those little moments that feel relatable to the viewer and heartwarming.'

White space brings a sense of lightness and freshness, displaying the virtues of watercolour, essential for the natural feel of Hannah's illustrations. By leaving the background clear and enhancing the softness and delicacy of the artwork, the focus remains entirely on the subject, allowing the fine details and expressive brushwork to stand out. 'In some cases, the white background becomes part of the composition itself, creating breathing

▲ Sketchbook extract – little owls, pencil, archival ink and watercolour, 10½×6in (27×15cm)

'These are working sketches of a pair of little owls living on the farm. The sketches attempt to capture a sense of movement and form while also recording some detail and colour references for use in finished artwork at a later date.'

► Charm of Goldfinches, watercolour and archival ink, 16½×23¼in (42×59cm)

'For me this painting is so symbolic of my book's message: embrace the untidiness and it will yield treasure. I used pen and ink to create the sharp, angular thistles and combined it with a fairly monotone colour palette so that the bright colour of the goldfinches maintain the focus.'

'One valuable tip I've picked up is to embrace imperfections; those little unexpected details often add character and make the piece feel more natural and alive.'





◀ **Oak Tree, watercolour, 16½×11¾in (42×30cm)**

‘This piece is quite different from my usual style. I chose to allow the oak tree to bleed to the edges of the paper, rather than cropping it, to help convey its enormity. There are lots of stark contrasts within the painting – it is a study of light and how it falls across the tree trunk and branches, weaving between the leaves.’

▼ **Tawny Owl in Field Maple, watercolour, 16½×11¾in (42×30cm)**

‘The positioning of the leaves frame the owl, hinting at the larger mass of leaves in the tree, but stopping short of surrounding the owl altogether. This allows the focus to remain on the detail depicted in the face. The fresh summer leaves have a limey hue produced with hansa yellow medium and phthalo green. This was balanced with undersea green and raw sienna which I used for warmth in the owl and to create harmony within the painting.’

room around the subject and emphasising movement or splashes of paint.’ For Hannah this simplicity gives the artwork its distinctive charm and ensures each piece feels bright, lively, and full of character.

‘So many of my paintings are unsuccessful; I can spend days trying to get the sketch just right and sometimes I either need a break and to revisit it later or sometimes it just never comes together.’ Hannah does not work directly from photographs so there is a huge amount of artistic licence in her work.

‘I’m definitely my own harshest critic and it can be mentally draining. I’m never fully satisfied and always strive for the work to be better. Sometimes a fresh pair of eyes and a different perspective can be very helpful. I am lucky to have a fantastic team at Wrendale with lots of creatives so they are a brilliant sounding board for new illustrations or for opinions.’





▲ **Fieldfares, watercolour, 11¾×16½in (30×42cm)**

'The white space is important in the composition of this painting. The fieldfares are all looking in the same direction with momentum created by the angles of the branches, the birds' backs and their beaks. The viewer can speculate about what their gazes are landing on from hints of the context of the wider landscape.'

Hannah loves her small Moleskine sketchbooks that she uses all the time. For her finished pieces she uses cold-pressed watercolour paper. Stretching the paper is not really necessary as her work is not overly wet. 'I love Daniel Smith watercolours; they are so vibrant and rich. I use synthetic brushes in a variety of sizes and a rigger brush for fine lines and whiskers. When working in pen and ink, I prefer a Micron

fineliner for its precise lines and archival-quality ink, which doesn't bleed or smudge when layered with watercolour.'

In recent years Hannah has spent much of her energy and time on a wildness project, where, together with her husband, she has created an undisturbed haven for wildlife on their farmland in Lincolnshire. She has witnessed the return of skylarks, meadow pipits, hobbies, hedgehogs and many more species and written a book documenting the process. 'The opportunity to return to nature felt like it was a chance to give back to the animals and birds that had always inspired me and my artwork. The project has provided an unlimited source of inspiration for new paintings.' Hannah's camera is absolutely full of nature pictures; she is constantly distracted on walks by lichens, fungi, insects or plants she does not recognise. She loves recording interesting textures or colours and finds it a great

resource to come back to time and again when thinking about a new piece of art.

Hannah deserves to be applauded for bringing re-wilding to the forefront. 'It took two years to write, illustrate and compile the book and was mostly written in real time throughout the year, with extracts taken from my sketchbooks.' Having studied zoology at Cambridge University, Hannah has always had a passion for natural history so this was her perfect project.

Hannah calls upon us to see beauty in the wilder environment and cease our relentless obsession with tidiness while embracing a bit more 'wild' in our lives. We are encouraged to discover the amazing effect of a field of thistles or an untidy verge. With a deep appreciation for nature and its restoration, Hannah celebrates wildlife and gives out a hopeful message as nature re-colonises her own rural farm.

'There are definitely times that I find

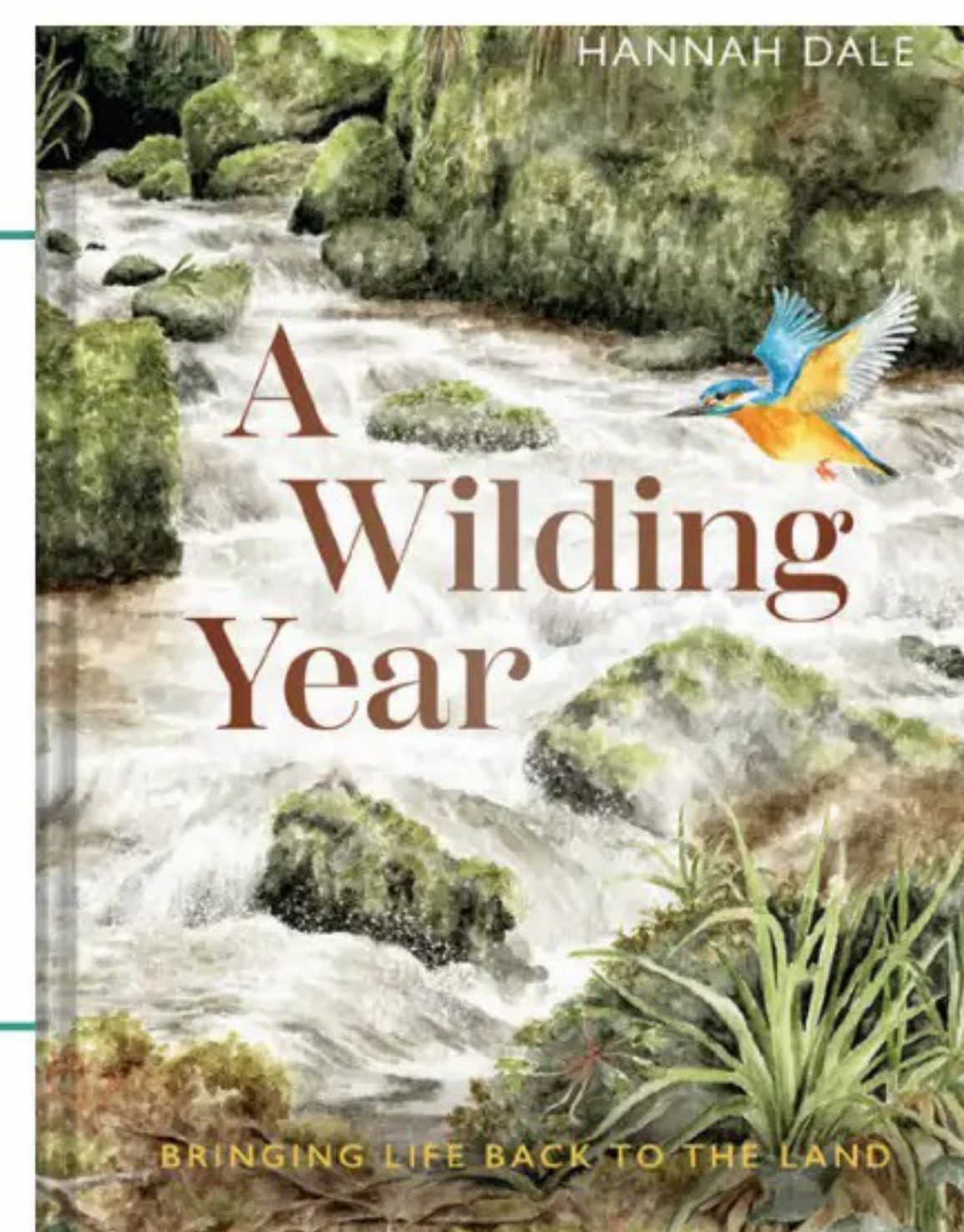
it difficult to stay positive with so much negative and worrying news related to climate change and wildlife loss, both here in Britain and globally. One of the worst feelings is one of helplessness in the face of such a monumental challenge, but we have seen such positive change on the farm in a very short space of time and I think that all we can do is focus on what we can control. If we all made small changes then it could make a huge difference to wildlife on a large scale.

‘Pesticides do so much harm and there is no need to use them in gardens or public spaces. I’d love to see people asking their local councils to let verges grow longer and be more tolerant of the little plants that cling to life between paving stones and in cracks. As a society we need to understand that ultra-tidy landscapes are devoid of life. We need to reject this as an ideal. Wilding is for everyone. It doesn’t matter if you have a window box or acres of land. Encouraging native species, even if it’s just in certain areas of your garden, can make all the difference to wildlife.’

In the future Hannah would like to use her farm for education to bring nature to communities with little access to wild spaces. One of Hannah’s favourite paintings in her book is of the goldfinches feeding on thistles, which, she thinks, helps to remind people why these unloved plants are so important. Hannah would definitely like to use her art to drive home this message even more in the future.



Look out for Hannah’s beautifully written and awe-inspiring book laced with her delicate watercolour illustrations. *A Wilding Year: Bringing Life Back to the Land*, is published in hardback by Batsford, £14.99.



Fox Cub, watercolour, 16½×11¾in (42×30cm)

‘This painting focuses entirely on the fox cub, with no distractions from a background. The fur is built up with layers of burnt sienna, raw sienna and quinacridone gold and darkened with burnt umber and sepia. The surrounding grass helps to ground the cub in its environment without overpowering the composition. The direct gaze of the cub, meeting the eye of the viewer creates an immediate connection, drawing the observer in and adding a sense of intimacy.’



Journeys with The King



Alan Cotton

lives in Devon, where the Hartland coastline has been a recurring feature of his work, much of which is held in the collections of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery at Exeter, Plymouth City Art Gallery and the University of Exeter. In 2000 Alan was a founding member of the South West Academy of Fine and Applied Arts and its president for the first six years. He has done much to support and promote the arts in the South West, particularly working with children, earning him an MBE in 2022. Art historian, Jenny Pery, has written three books on Alan's life and work, published by Halsgrove, and there have been a number of television programmes and radio broadcasts made about his work. Alan has been represented by Messum's Fine Art for over 30 years. Find out more at alancotton.co.uk

To coincide with the exhibition *The Art of Royal Travel: Journeys with The King* at Buckingham Palace, **Patricia Crossley-Hayes** talks to royal tour artist, **Alan Cotton** about his experiences of travelling with King Charles III

Devon-based artist Alan Cotton is always looking for new locations to inspire his work. He has travelled to Provence, Tuscany, Morocco, Ireland, Piemonte, Venice and, with Sir David Hempleman-Adams, as expedition artist to Mount Everest in Tibet on two occasions. He had never, however, visited the southern Hemisphere. So, when an invitation came from St James's Palace asking him if he would like to join the, then Prince of Wales, (now King Charles III), as his tour artist to Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, it took Alan no time at

all to accept the invitation. Preparations were made and they flew from RAF Brize Norton, first to Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka, following the devastating tsunami the previous December.

Alan remembers: 'We flew low across the landscape, as dawn was breaking, where hills appeared through the mist and rivers glistened in the early morning light.' He was able to make a number of drawings and written notes, from which he made the paintings of



▲ **Dawn Flight Through the Valleys, Sri Lanka, oil, 20×20in (51×51cm)**

'Although I had little time to draw as we came into land, the hazy scenes below, combined with the drowsiness of a long flight, left an impression of a mystical landscape, which I feel these paintings have captured.'

ALAN RECORDS IN HIS DIARY

'It was midnight in the UK when we touched down in Columbo, but over there it was 6am the following morning. Helicopters were waiting on the runway for the one-hour journey to Batticaloa, and as we flew low over the town, we could see the trail of destruction caused by the tsunami. The temple – a magnificent ornate structure – was split in half. For me it was a humbling experience. The fabric will be repaired, and donations for the appeal have been the largest ever, but the pain will be always in the peoples' hearts; many have lost whole families, and none remains unscarred. I spoke to many people, including one man who had lost three of his children. The Prince's visit gave everyone there an "uplift". He has the ability to put people at their ease and communicates easily – a great skill.'

► **Seaweed Caught in the Swell at Taiaroa Head, New Zealand, oil, 35¾×28in (91×71cm)**

'Along the rocks at the cliff-face, long tentacles of flailing seaweed moved with the motion of the water, like pulsating musical notes. The high energy of surging waves generated a variety of marks, allowing me to use rich areas of *impasto* pigment. This series of seascapes were a joy to work on.'

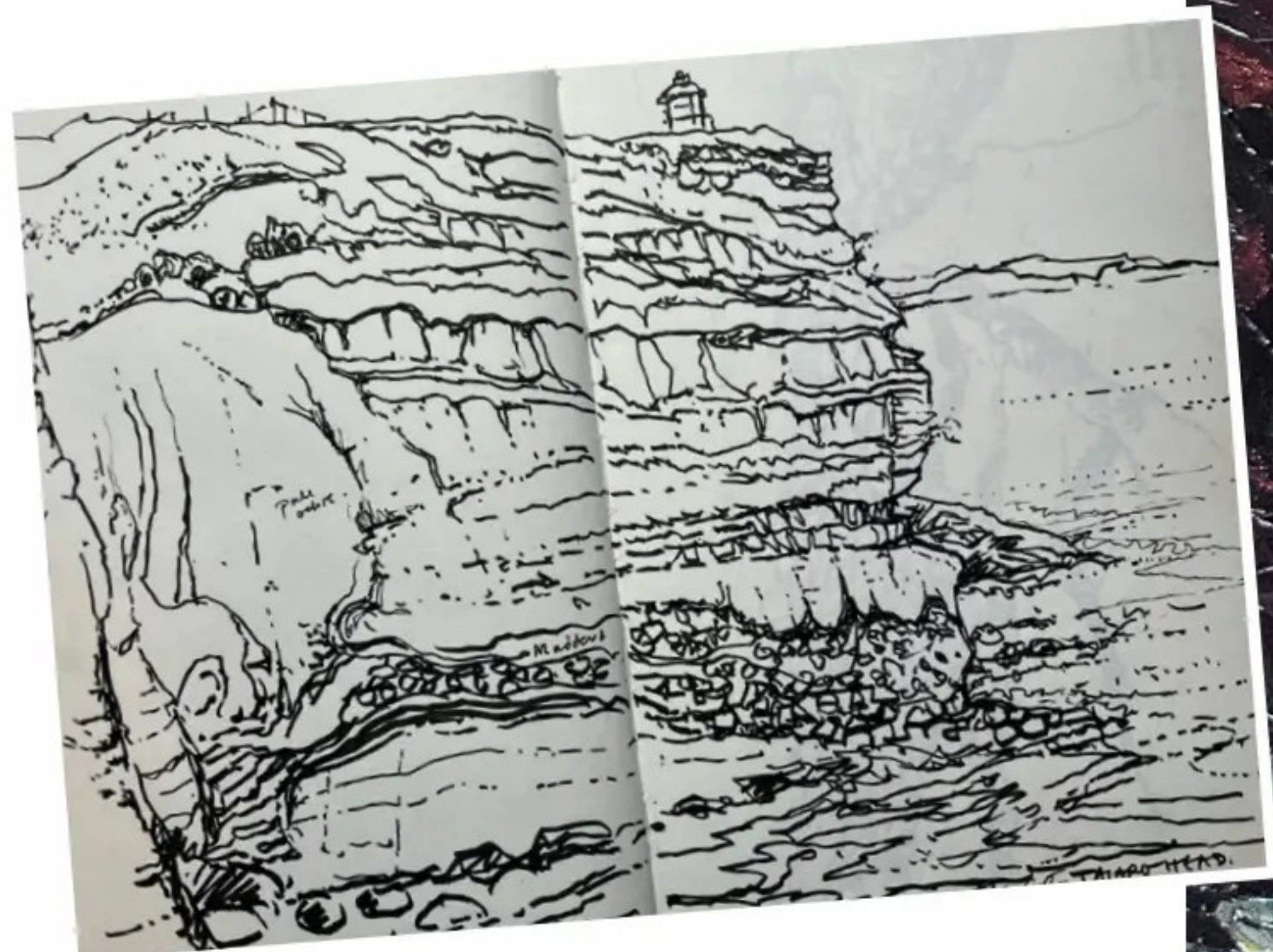
Sri Lanka back in his studio in Devon.

In Australia, the Royal party visited five places: Perth, Alice Springs, Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra, with short stays in each. Nevertheless, Alan was able to do a series of drawings as they travelled around. He was particularly impressed with the botanical gardens in Melbourne.

As part of a group of six, Alan travelled to all the events with His Royal Highness, which was a great learning experience for him. The highlight of the royal visit to Melbourne for Alan, was the reception at Timbertops, where, as a young student, the Prince of Wales spent two terms in the '60s. Alan said, 'A number of Prince Charles' old school chums were there, and His Royal Highness gave an informal and very amusing account of his time there.'

In Sydney they travelled by river to a new housing development, passing the Sydney Opera House and gliding under Sydney Harbour Bridge. Here, and again, when they visited the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Cancer Unit, HRH received an enthusiastic welcome from the crowds.

In late afternoon they arrived at the capital, Canberra and stayed at Government



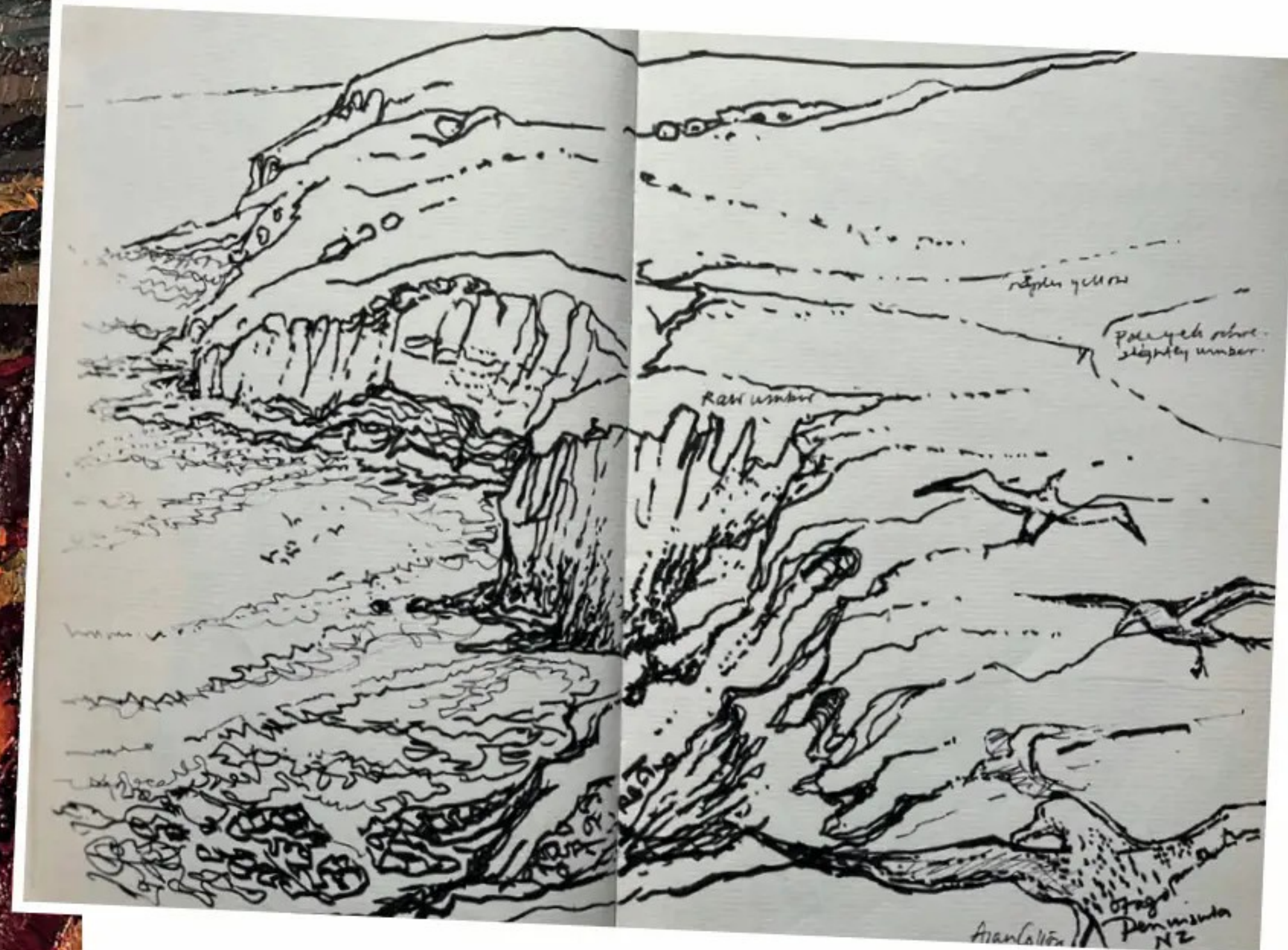
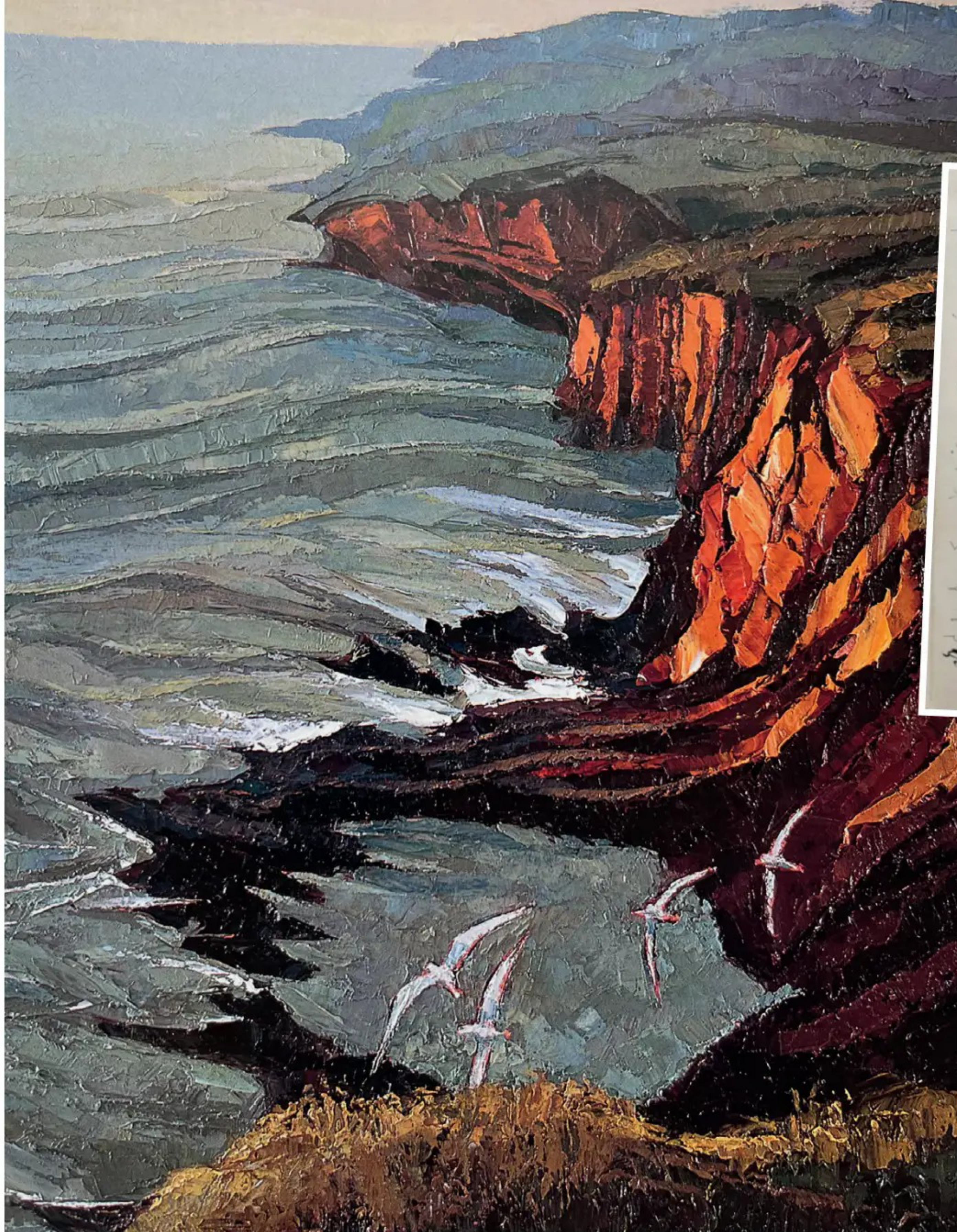
▲ **Taiaroa Head and Lighthouse, pen sketch**

'The drawing for this small painting was done looking along the coast in the opposite direction towards Taiaroa Head and the Lighthouse. The dark outline of the cliffs and rocks, contrast with the soft evening light on the horizon.'



▲ **Rocky Outcrops at Taiaroa Head, New Zealand, oil, 24×24in (61×61cm)**





▲ **Albatrosses at Taiaroa Head, pen sketch**

◀ **Soaring Albatrosses Near Taiaroa Head, New Zealand, oil, 35¾×28in (91×71cm)**

'As in many of my Hartland paintings, I love to use a vertical format, so that I am looking down to the rocky outcrops, with the sea crashing around them and then along the cliff tops to the distant horizon. The magnificent albatrosses were soaring above me and below me as I sat drawing at the cliff edge.'

House. One of the high spots was the visit to the Australian War Memorial, a long building open to the sky with the aisles listing every Australian whose life was taken by war. Alan remembers that: 'Touchingly, thousands of families and friends had attached poppies to the names of their loved ones creating a peppered design of red against the marble columns. We were told that this is the most visited monument in Australia.'

Their next stop was Dunedin, and here, on New Zealand's South Island, Alan at last found the wild landscape that he longed for, to inspire him. At Taiaroa Head, what excited him most, were the albatrosses, soaring above the cliff edge, riding the thermals and then sweeping down to sea level. When the Royal party moved on, Alan was asked if he would like to stay and work there. The Royal Albatross Colony was not accessible to the public at that time, as the birds were breeding, but under the watchful eye of a warden, Alan spent several hours observing these magnificent birds and making many drawings. 'To see these graceful birds, with a wingspan of three metres, gliding along the cliff tops and being lifted by the thermals, was a joyful experience.' The swirling waters below, also inspired Alan to draw and paint them.

He then re-joined the others for a flight to a sheep farm, where shearing was in

progress. Alan recalls, 'Prince Charles was offered the shears and despite his formal attire of suit and tie, he valiantly "had a go", much to the delight of the ever-present photographers and TV cameramen.'

The welcome in Wellington, New Zealand's capital, was spectacular. Navy, Army and Air Force troops lined the runway, bands were playing, and a group of Māori warriors performed a ceremony for greeting strangers.



The final stay in New Zealand was in Auckland where the royal party attended a reception at the New Zealand branch of The Prince's Trust. 'I was moved to hear two young people describe how, after being heavily into drugs and attempts at suicide, they had been rescued by the Prince's Trust and their lives saved and transformed,' explains Alan. 'Listening to these articulate young people brought the work of the trust strongly into focus for me.'

The landscape of Fiji was particularly inspiring for Alan and provided a rich source of material. The party's arrival was heralded by a colourful tribal display, followed by a vibrant village ceremony of welcome, where thousands lined the route, cheering and waving flags. 'No-where on this tour had we been greeted with such exuberance and enthusiasm,' Alan tells us. 'It was obvious that they have tremendous affection for our Royal Family. We then entered a sacred

◀ **Sunlit Peaks After the Storm, Fiji, oil, 14¼×14¼in (36×36cm)**

'Squally storms broke out as we dove up into the hills, then just as suddenly, the sun would break through and flood the mountain tops with brilliant light. The contrasts of light and shade always excites me, and I love the juxtapositions of close-up foreground and distant horizons. I always work on different colour canvas, never on white, and for a number of the Fiji paintings, I decided to use a red background, which I feel gave a luminous glow to the work.'

area, His Royal Highness was offered a drink of cava made from water and the juice of squeezed yaqona roots, and he was expected to empty the bowl. As we left the ceremony, hundreds of school children lined the road and despite a sudden monsoon thunderstorm they remained standing, waving and cheering along the entire route.'

For his work as tour artist, Alan was given a driver, who took him into the mountains and to his own village, where the artist was warmly welcomed. Here he did many drawings including the driver's tethered ox. He said, 'The weather was stormy, but there were brilliant passages of sun, when the landscape came to life and from my watercolours and drawings, I made a great number of paintings back in my studio in Colaton Raleigh, in Devon.'

'I would love to have spent more time in Fiji, but all too soon, it was time to leave and take the long 27-hour flight back to England. Travelling as a tour artist, was a great privilege and a unique experience and gave me a tremendous insight into just how much time and energy King Charles expends on these strenuous Royal Tours.'

TA



▲ *Storm Heading for the Nausori Highland, Fiji, oil, 9¾×11¾in (25×30cm)*



● Despite the hectic schedule, of Alan's tour with King Charles, he managed to gather a wealth of material and the following autumn, all the paintings from the tour were exhibited at David Messum Fine Art, in their Cork Street Gallery. All currently available paintings by Alan Cotton can be found by visiting the website messums.com or viewed at the gallery, David Messum Fine Art, 12 Bury Street St James, London SW1Y 6AB; telephone 020 7287 4448.



▲ *Blown Grasses Against Mountain Landscape, Fiji, oil, 8×8in (20×20cm)*

CELEBRATION EXHIBITION

This year it is 40 years, since His Majesty, the King, when Prince of Wales, first took a tour artist with him to record impressions of the trip. The King has paintings from the tour artists in his personal collection and to mark this anniversary, a selection of work from these will be exhibited in the ballroom at Buckingham Palace. *The Art of Royal Travel: Journeys with The King* will form part of the tour of the state rooms, when the palace opens to the public, from July 10 to September 28, 2025. Tickets can be booked online at rct.uk/visit/buckingham-palace



▲ *Mount Kovoba, Fiji, watercolour sketch*



▲ **Summer Landscape, watercolour, 11×15in (28×38cm)**

A summer landscape

In this abridged extract from his new book, *Plein Air Painting with Watercolours*, **Grahame Booth** shows you how to select, simplify and paint an open landscape scene on a hot summer's day

This is a fairly typical open landscape and it was a very hot (in British terms) summer's day. These landscapes do not present much of a challenge to draw, but be warned: I usually find that the subjects that are easiest to draw are the most difficult to paint!



Location insight
This was one of those really warm summer days, not too hot, but just perfect for *plein-air*. I was also able to set my board up so that it was shaded from the sun – much easier on the eyes.

Plein Air Painting with Watercolours by Grahame Booth is a practical and inspirational guide to painting outdoors, including invaluable advice on the materials you will need, choosing a subject, composition, sketching, pen and wash, perspective and essential watercolour techniques. Grahame then puts all these ideas into practice with demonstrations in all four seasons of the year. *Plein Air Painting with Watercolours* is published by Search Press on July 15 and available to order now.





1A



1B

▲ 1 THE INITIAL SKETCH

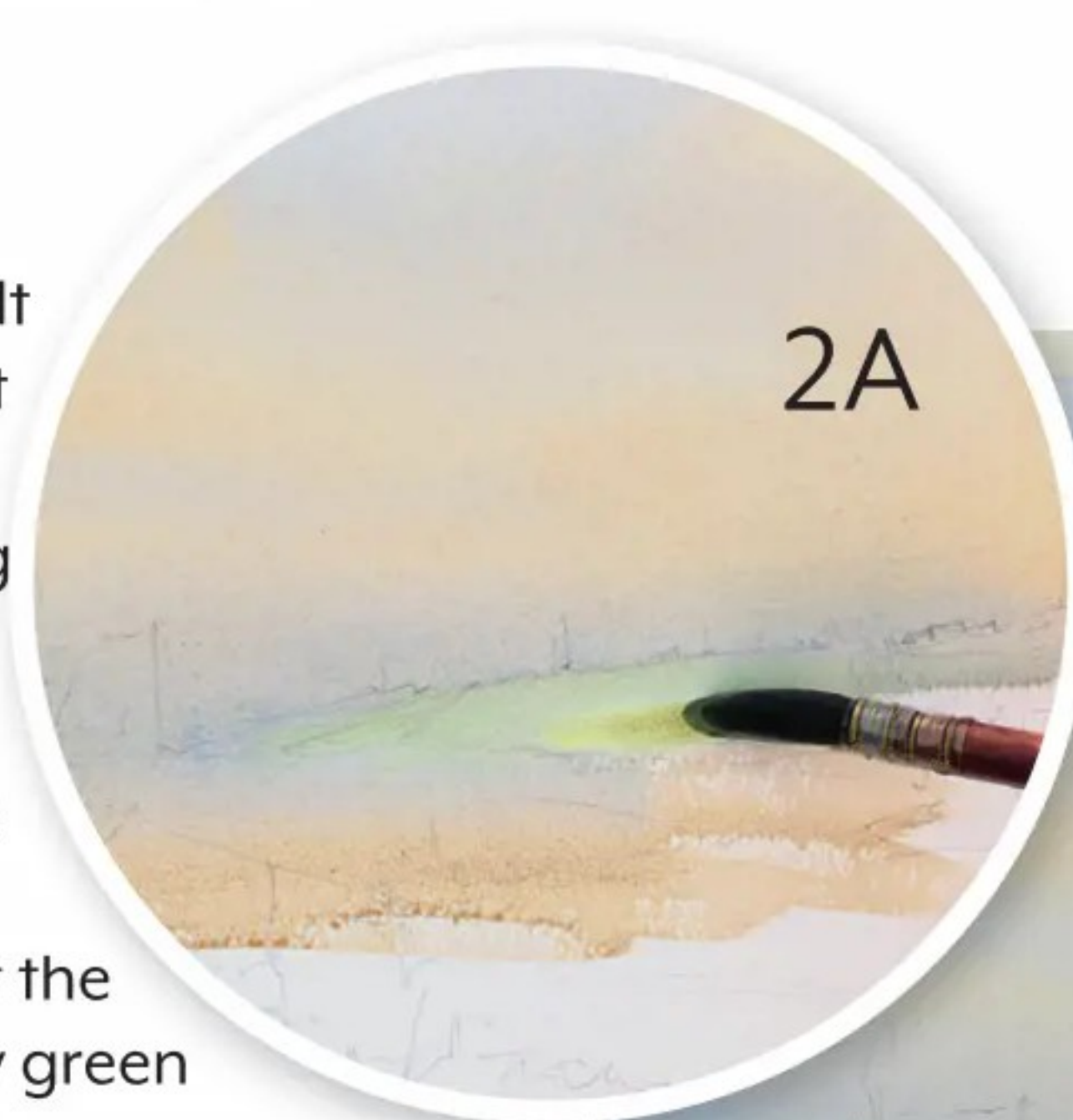
The drawing is not really much more than a few squiggles. I only ever indicate the trees very simply. Putting in too much detail can risk a painting-by-numbers approach and I try to avoid any pencil work in the extreme distance, especially today with a very obvious heat haze. Any pencil lines remaining in this area after the painting was finished would be very obvious to the eye. Such lines can sometimes be erased afterwards, even after being washed over, but there is no guarantee.

If you refer to the photograph (1A), you can see which parts of the original scene I chose to omit or change or accentuate in the final sketch (1B).

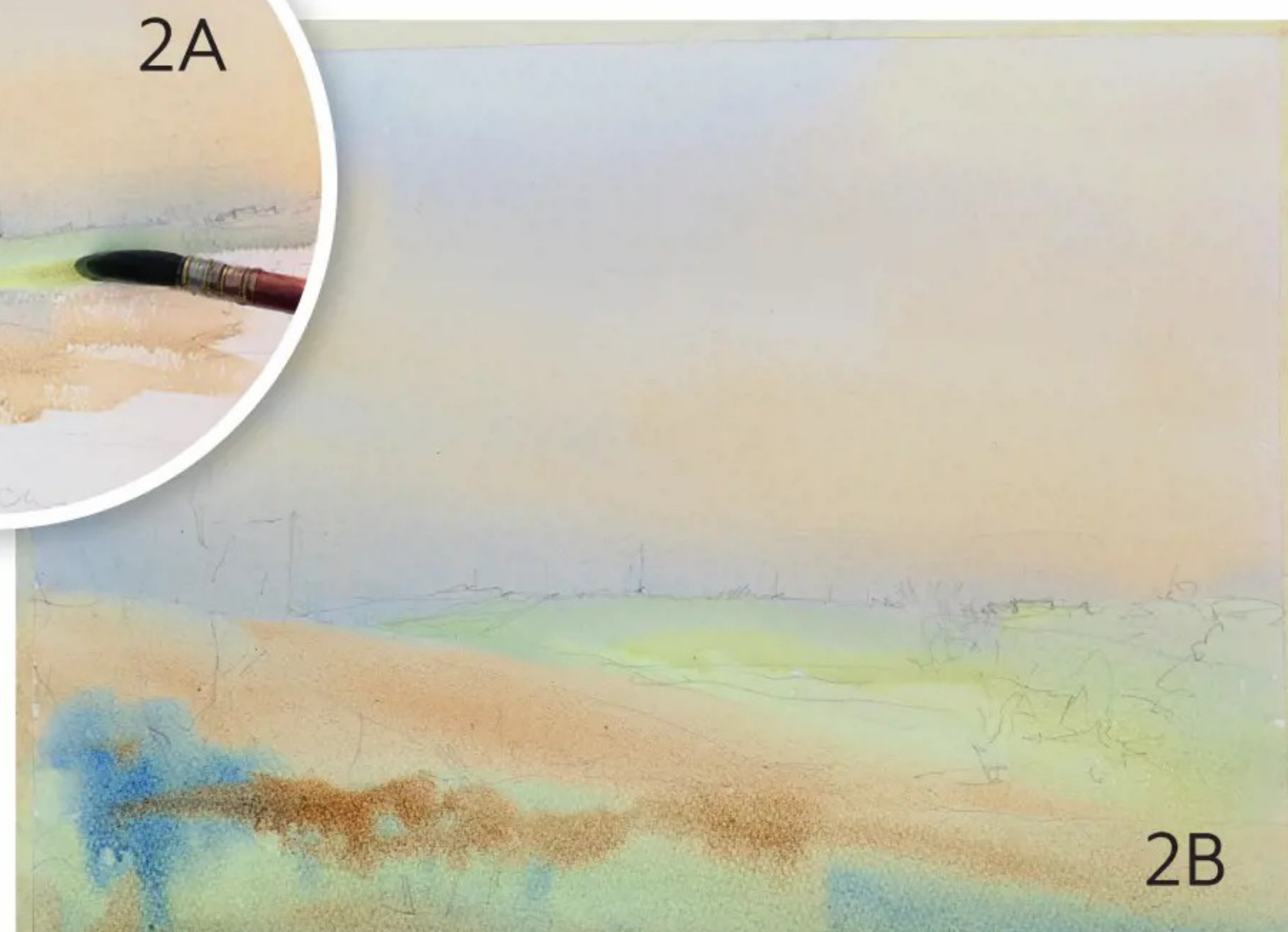
▶ 2 THE FIRST WASH

Use a large soft mop for the first wash, using cobalt blue for the sky and a weak burnt sienna to suggest clouds. (Leaving the clouds as pure white paper can make them appear very cold.) Blend everything together, leaving no hard edges.

Add a little cool yellow to hint at the greens in the distance (2A). In the foreground, drop in some pure ultramarine and burnt sienna (2B). I'm not entirely sure why I did this, but it seemed like a good idea at the time. Summer landscapes tend to be dominated by green so I was trying to avoid too much in the early stages.



2A



2B

On a hot day the washes will dry very fast and it is vital to paint very wet to help slow down the drying process.



▲ 3 THE HEAT HAZE

Before the first wash dries, paint some pure cobalt blue into the distance to simply suggest the heat haze. I found that the edge wasn't quite soft enough, so I used an almost dry Chinese brush to gently scrub the edge. (Using a damp brush to soften the edge would have risked creating a cauliflower.)



▲ 4 THE DISTANT FIELDS

Continue with a size 12 brush and loosely indicate the distant fields using cobalt blue. You want the previous wash to be just damp enough to soften the marks a little but not wet enough to let them disappear.

Use almost pure cobalt blue with just a touch of cool yellow here and there.

MATERIALS

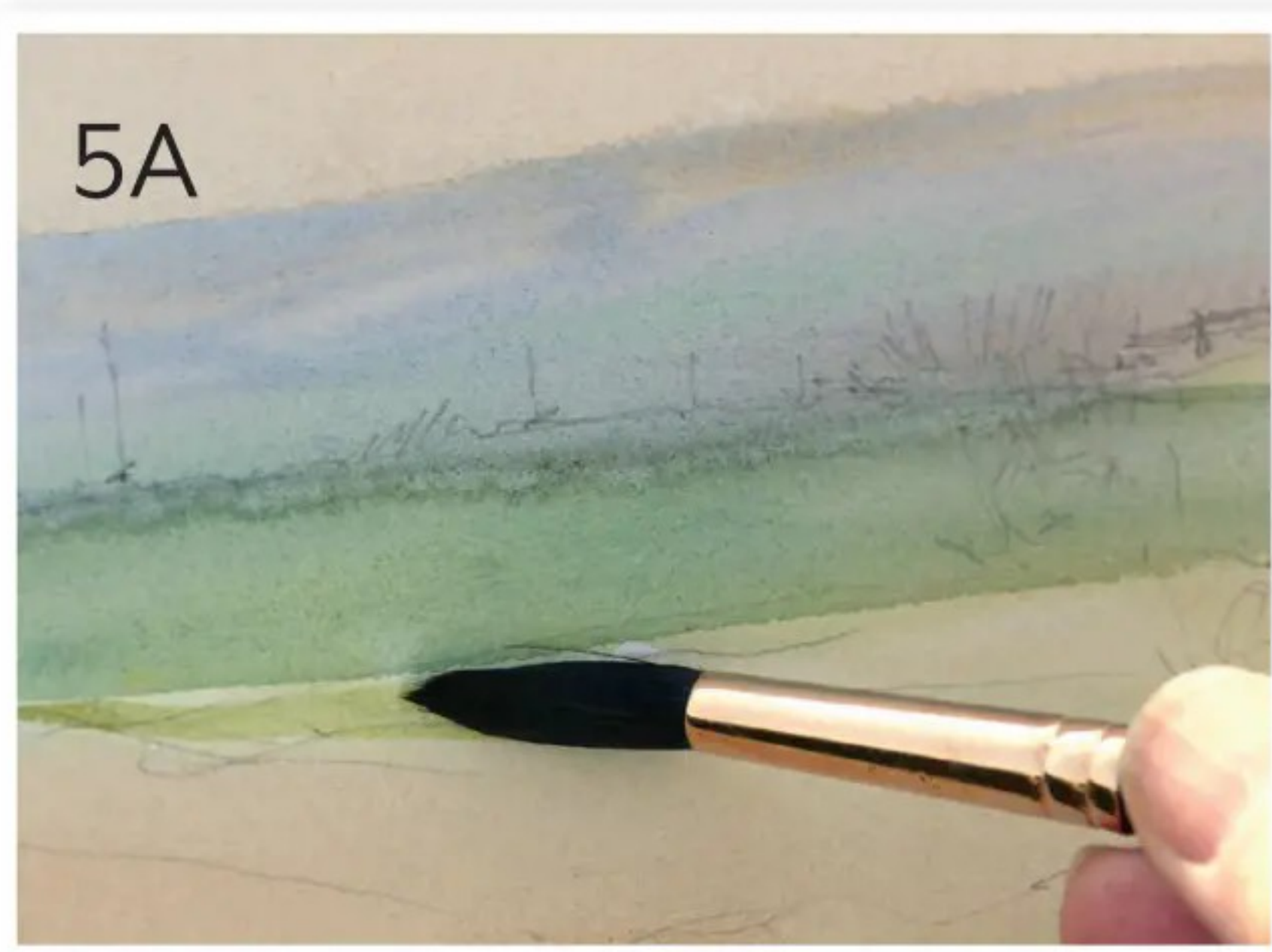
- **Support** Millford cold-pressed 140lb (300gsm) watercolour paper, 11X15in (28X38cm)
- **Watercolours** Ultramarine; cobalt blue; burnt sienna; cool yellow; and warm yellow
- **Brushes** Mop or other large soft brush, squirrel or synthetic; size 12 round, squirrel or synthetic; size 12 and 8 round, sable or synthetic; 1/4in (5mm) swordliner, sable, squirrel or synthetic; and an old size 8 sable for softening and lifting out

WATERCOLOUR

► 5 THE FIELDS

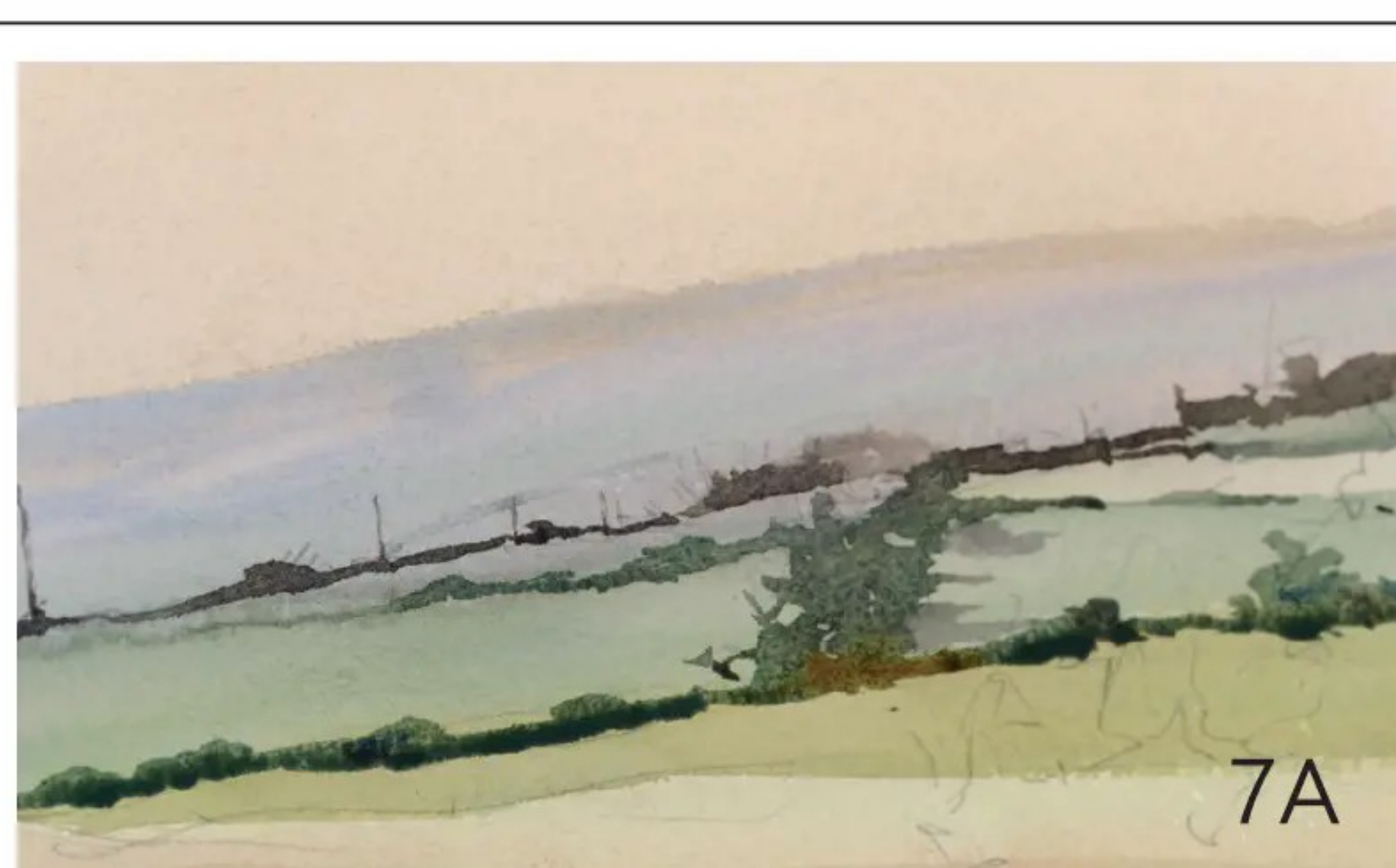
Continue down into the far field with a little more cool yellow in the mix. Continue to add more cool yellow as you create further distinct bands of paint for the fields (5A).

Use some stronger burnt sienna for the nearer golden field (5B), stroking in the paint to indicate the slope of the ground.



▲ 6 DISTANT FEATURES

Wait for the wet paint to dry, then simply suggest some of the more distant features with a mix of ultramarine and burnt sienna, making a broken, irregular line along the far field line. Here and there, soften the edge using a damp softening brush to suggest distance.



7 THE HEDGELINES

Use a dark green mix of ultramarine with both cool and warm yellow to paint in the hedgelines (7A). Make irregular marks that hint at the shapes in front of you and resist any temptation to add detail (7B).



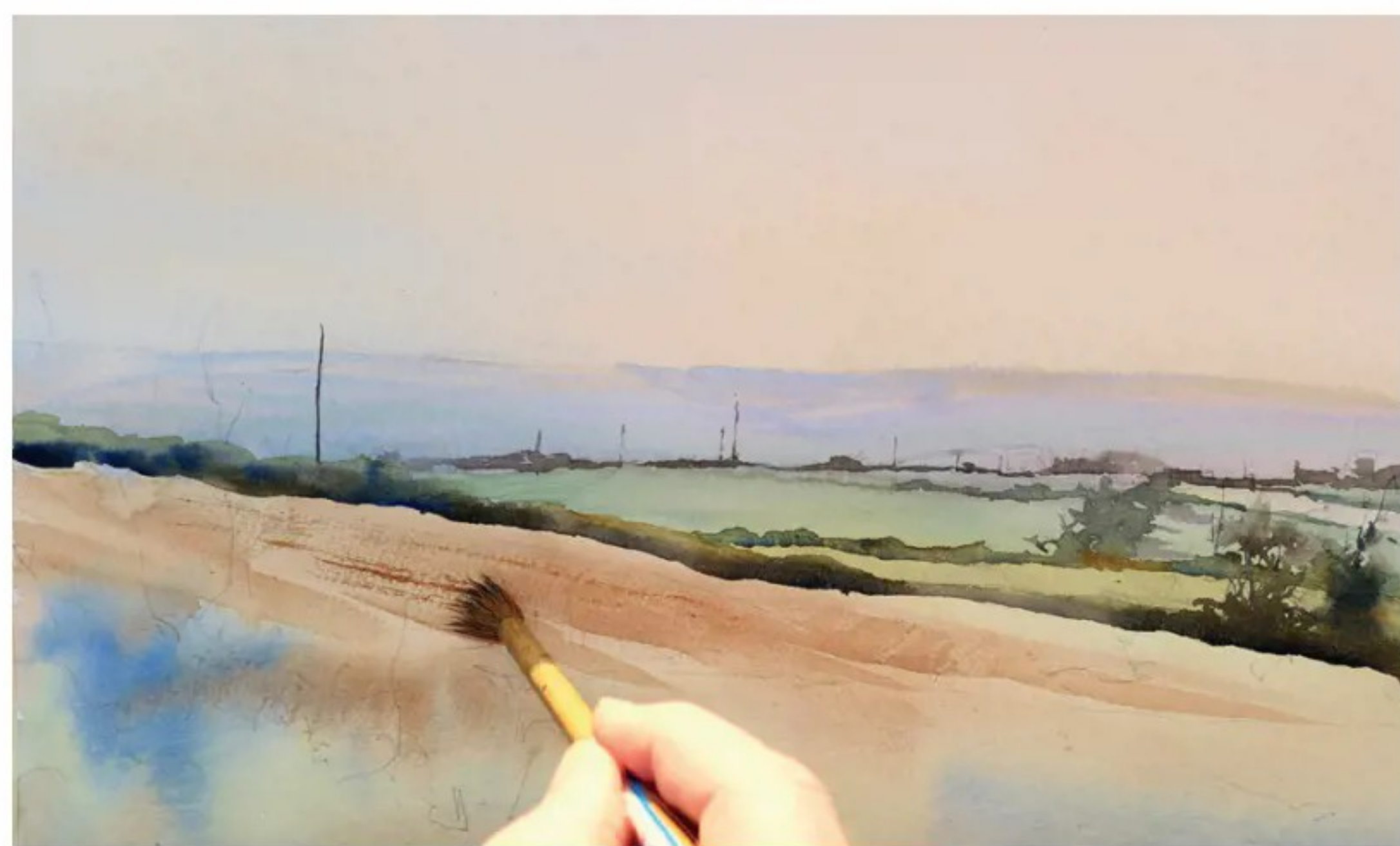
▲ 8 HEDGELINE SHADOWS

Drop in a strong mix of ultramarine and burnt sienna to the base of the closer hedges – this helps to give an impression of three dimensions as well as creating a strong dark/light counterchange with the field.

► 9 SIMPLE TREES

With a little more burnt sienna in the mix, create two simple trees to the right-hand side, allowing the marks and colours to soften into the surrounding fields a little, and then allow everything to dry (9A). The painting so far (9B).





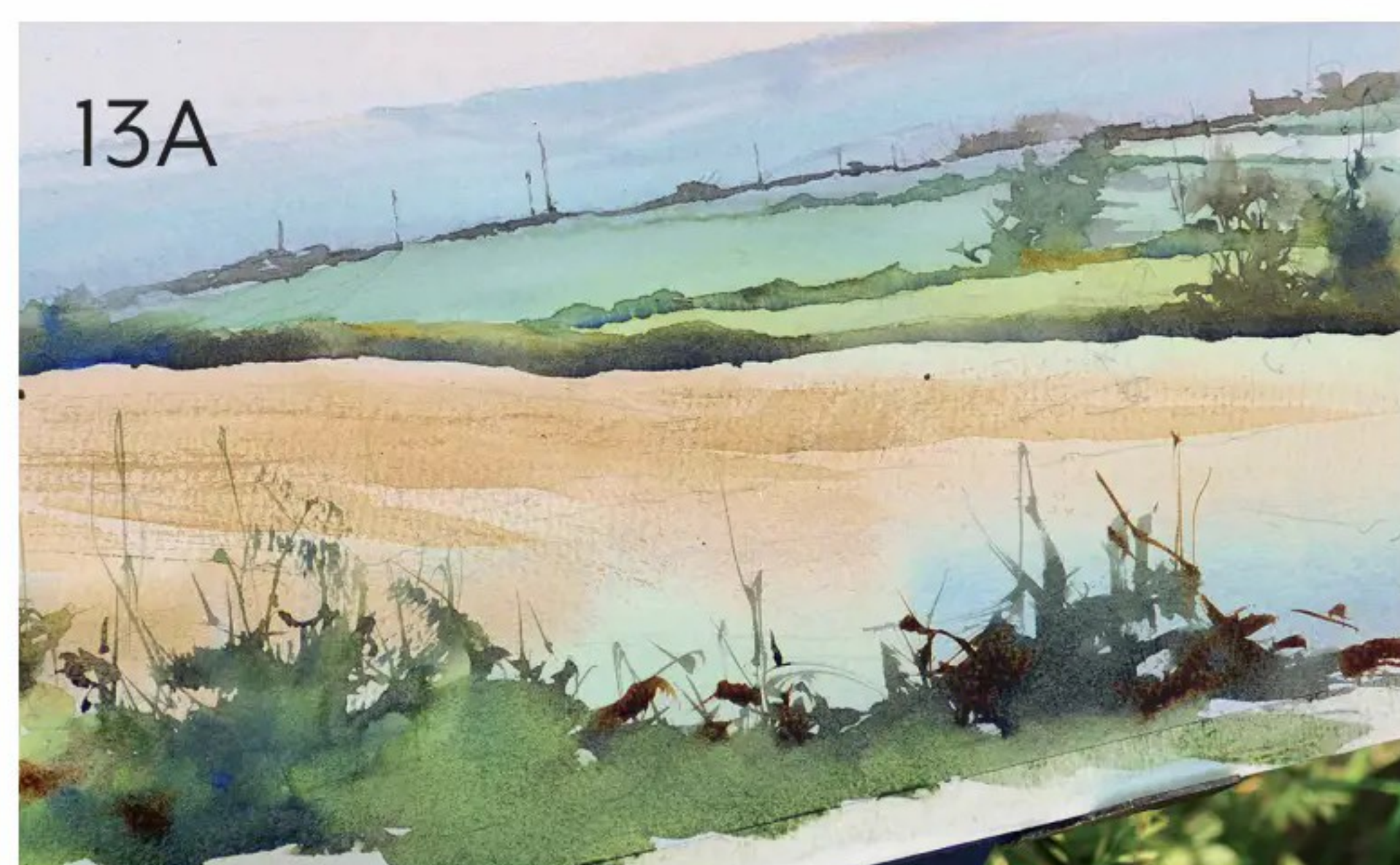
▲ 10 THE FIELD

To add a little more subtle definition in the golden field, create a few dry-brushed strokes, following the contours of the ground using the Chinese brush.



▲ 12 THE FOREGROUND

For the foreground, use a paler green mix, allowing it to soften into the base of the tree. Work it down to the bottom of the painting and then towards the right.



13 FOREGROUND GRASSES

Using those same varied mixes as in steps 11 and 12, continue along the bottom of the paper, suggesting grasses and little twigs as you go (13A). Use the dry Chinese brush to create some grassy shapes (13B).

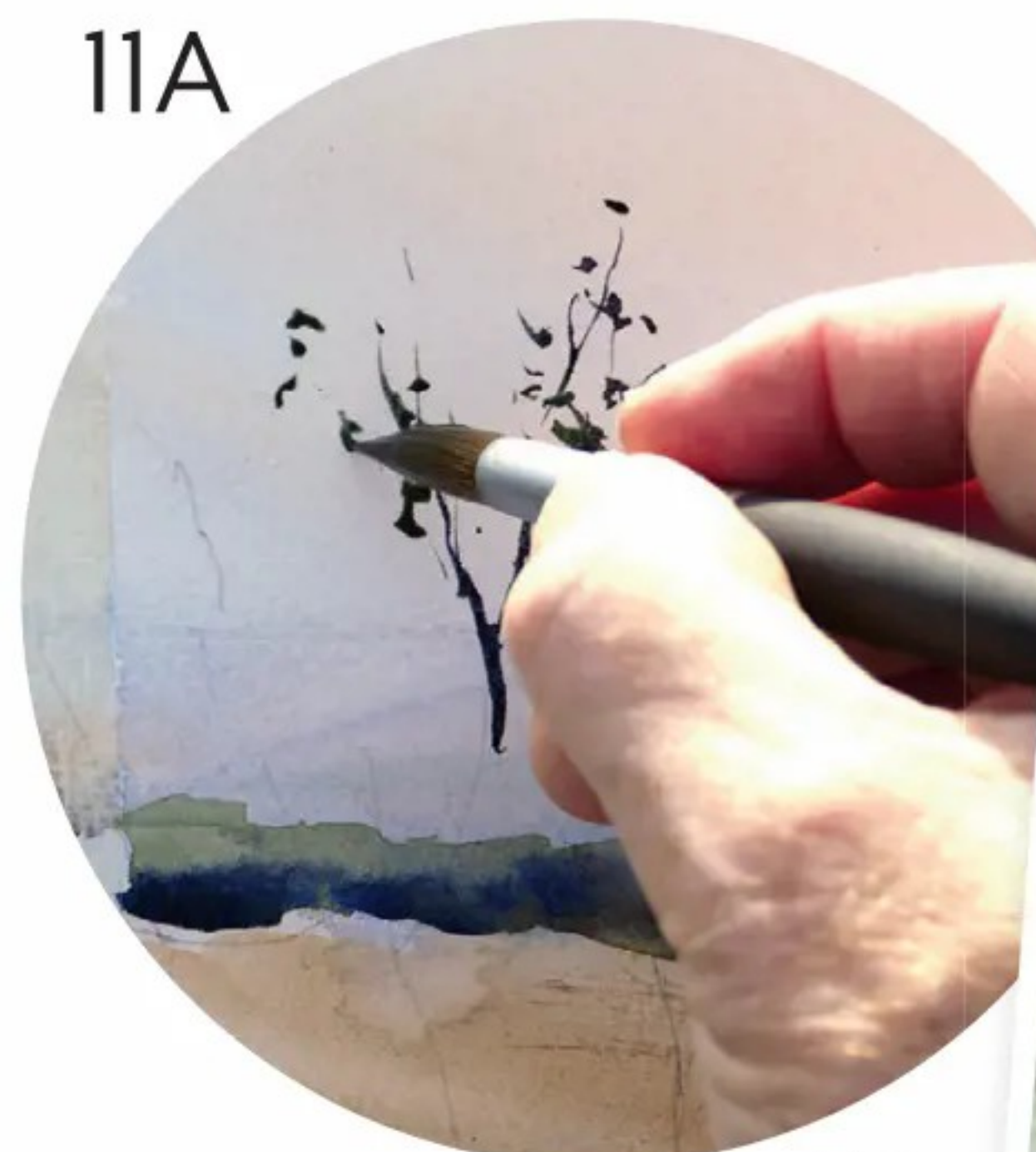


11 THE LEFT-HAND TREE

Start at the top of the tree: this may seem counterintuitive but beginning at the bottom and working up results in your fresh application of paint running down into the previously applied wash. Starting at the top and working down allows much more control.

Aim to produce lots of simple, varied brushstrokes and avoid any straight or rounded edges. Use a size 12 brush and various mixes of ultramarine and both warm and cool yellows to create the variety of greens needed (11A). Use ultramarine and burnt sienna to create the darkest areas. With trees it is very important to keep the edges as convoluted as possible. In reality, the bottom of the tree merged in with the grasses so I did exactly the same thing (11B).

11A



11B



‘I kept all the elements in front of me, but shifted hedgerows and trees slightly to make for the most pleasing composition’



▲ 14 FINAL DETAILS

Summer Landscape, watercolour, 11×15in (28×38cm)

If you want to add a few finishing touches, lift out a few light branches with a damp softening brush. Scrape out some light twigs from the wet wash with a palette knife and then add some darker marks to the field and hedgerow. Finish off with a few flying birds. It is important to vary the marks for the flying birds so that no two are the same.

I was happy enough with the final result, and what's not to like about a couple of hours in the countryside on a beautiful summer's day?

Drawing with paint

Classically trained artist, **Luca Indraccolo**, paints a figure portrait using a photo from the reference image collection provided by Raw Umber Studios and demonstrates his method of drawing directly onto the canvas with paint

I am a classically trained painter and have worked professionally as an artist for nearly two decades. My preferred medium is oil paint, and I approach any subject matter in a direct painting manner. This practice stems from my early training in life drawing, where we, as students, were asked to observe and render the human figure from sustained poses lasting days or even weeks. That rigorous training instilled in me a lasting confidence in my drawing abilities – abilities that I see as the essential foundation for any successful painting.

The ideal environment offered by such traditional schools or ateliers is, however, not accessible to everyone. For this reason, working from photographic reference becomes a necessary and useful tool, particularly when one cannot work from life. In this demonstration, I will be working from a photo, and I'd like to highlight one of my favourite resources for such material: the reference image collection provided by Raw Umber Studios. The studio behind this collection is run by fellow artists, which contributes to the thoughtful curation of its resources; tailored specifically with students and professionals in mind. Beyond the extensive online image archive, the studio also hosts in-person workshops in a beautifully appointed space located in Stroud, Gloucestershire. Moreover, they offer an expansive video library where regular instructors, including myself, present one-hour drawing and painting demonstrations.

Working from photos

After selecting a suitable reference image, the first thing I do is consider the composition. In this case, I felt the space



▲ Original photographic reference from Raw Umber Studios

around the figure, particularly above the model's head, was a bit too tight. To address this, I experimented with different cropping options using small thumbnail sketches (above right). This step is crucial in determining how the figure will sit within the frame. It's important that the final composition maintains the same proportions as the canvas I will eventually paint on. A simple way to ensure this is to measure the dimensions of the thumbnail sketch and multiply them proportionally – for example, by a factor of ten. It's also worth considering whether the image



▲ Creative adjustments to the reference

When working with a photo reference, it's helpful to plan adjustments to elements such as the background and lighting in order to enhance contrast and add interpretive strength to the image

might benefit from alterations in the final painting. For this piece, I decided to introduce a cooler (bluer) background to heighten the contrast with the model's warm skin tones. That decision, in turn, inspired me to increase the sense of illumination on the figure by pushing the highlights further than they appeared in the reference. These choices are part of the interpretive freedom that painting allows and should be embraced to create a more compelling image.

Once the reference was finalised, I began my process by applying a thin, transparent

THE PAINTING



MATERIALS

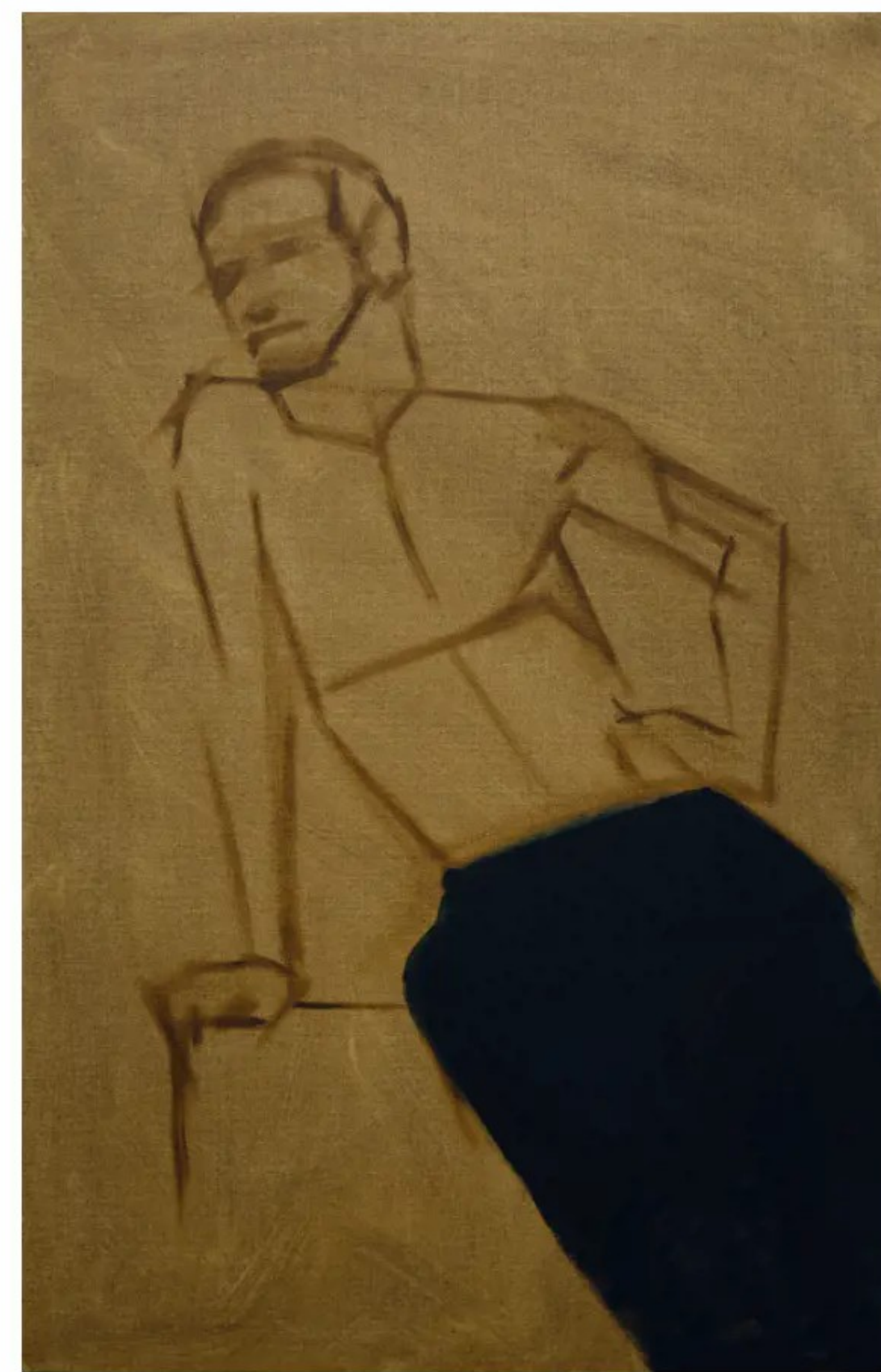
- **Old Holland oils** Titanium white; ivory black; raw sienna deep; vermillion; alizarin crimson; cobalt blue; and raw umber
- **Brushes** A variety of brushes from different brands – mainly hog bristles for covering large areas and synthetic ones for finer details
- **Medium** cold-pressed linseed oil
- **Solvent** Winsor & Newton Sansodor

◀ Blocking in the drawing

Basic lines in raw umber established the figure's placement using straight, simplified marks

▶ Establishing the darkest darks

Laying down the darkest values early provided a tonal anchor for the rest of the painting

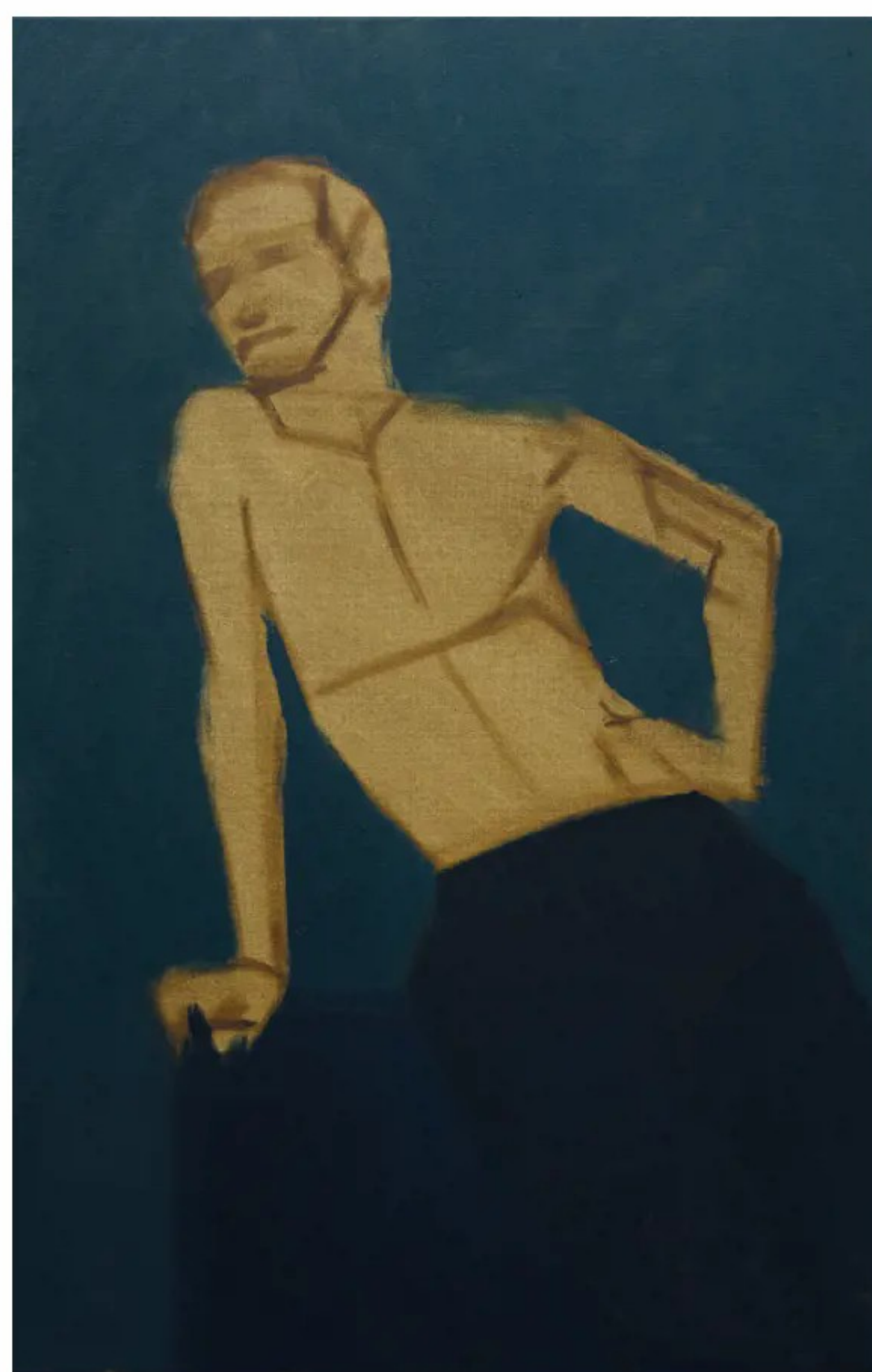


layer of raw umber oil paint mixed with an odourless solvent. This underlayer, or *imprimatura*, neutralises the stark whiteness of the canvas, making it easier to judge tonal values in the subsequent layers. I allowed this layer to dry overnight before proceeding.

As mentioned earlier, I generally don't begin a painting with a detailed drawing. Instead, I establish the foundational lines of the composition directly on the canvas using raw umber (above). My goal at this stage was not to create a finished contour but to place the figure accurately within the frame. I began by identifying the outermost points of the torso, referencing my initial thumbnail sketch to judge the distance between the figure and the canvas edges. The lines I laid down were straight and simple, deliberately avoiding the distraction of the body's subtle and often confusing curves.

Once I was satisfied with the placement of the figure, I began to block in large areas of flat colour (top right). Typically, I start with the darkest value I observe in the image. Dark tones, especially those approaching black, are easier to assess accurately than lighter ones, which can be misleading if not viewed in context. Establishing the darkest darks first provides a tonal anchor for everything that follows.

Next I applied a flat layer of paint to the background, keeping the colour consistent and intentionally omitting the minor tonal shifts that may exist in the photo (above left). I treated this background as

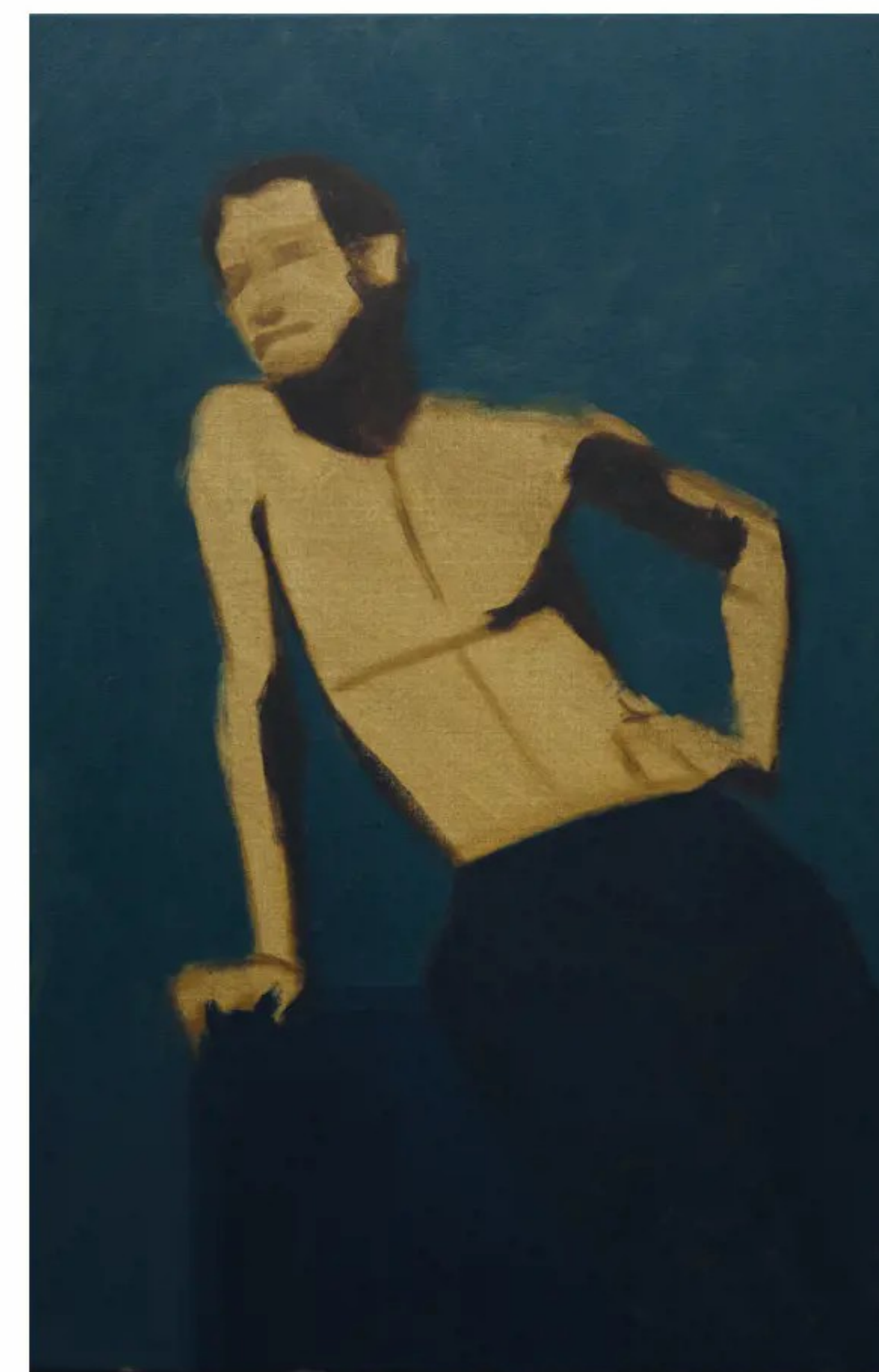


▲ Background underpainting

A flat background layer refined the silhouette and acted as a base for future adjustments

an underpainting, a foundation on which I would later build more nuanced colour and value. Since my initial drawing was relatively loose, I used the edges of these painted shapes to refine the figure's outline gradually. The act of adjusting these edges became, in effect, a drawing process.

With the background fully covered, I moved on to the next darkest area: the



▲ Painting the shadows

Cast shadows were mapped in to define form and support future layering of mid-tones and highlights

cast shadows on the figure. Again, I aimed for accuracy in the design of these shapes, knowing I would continue to tweak and refine them as the painting evolved. At this stage, the painting was still quite schematic, but it provided a clear framework for the next layer (above right).

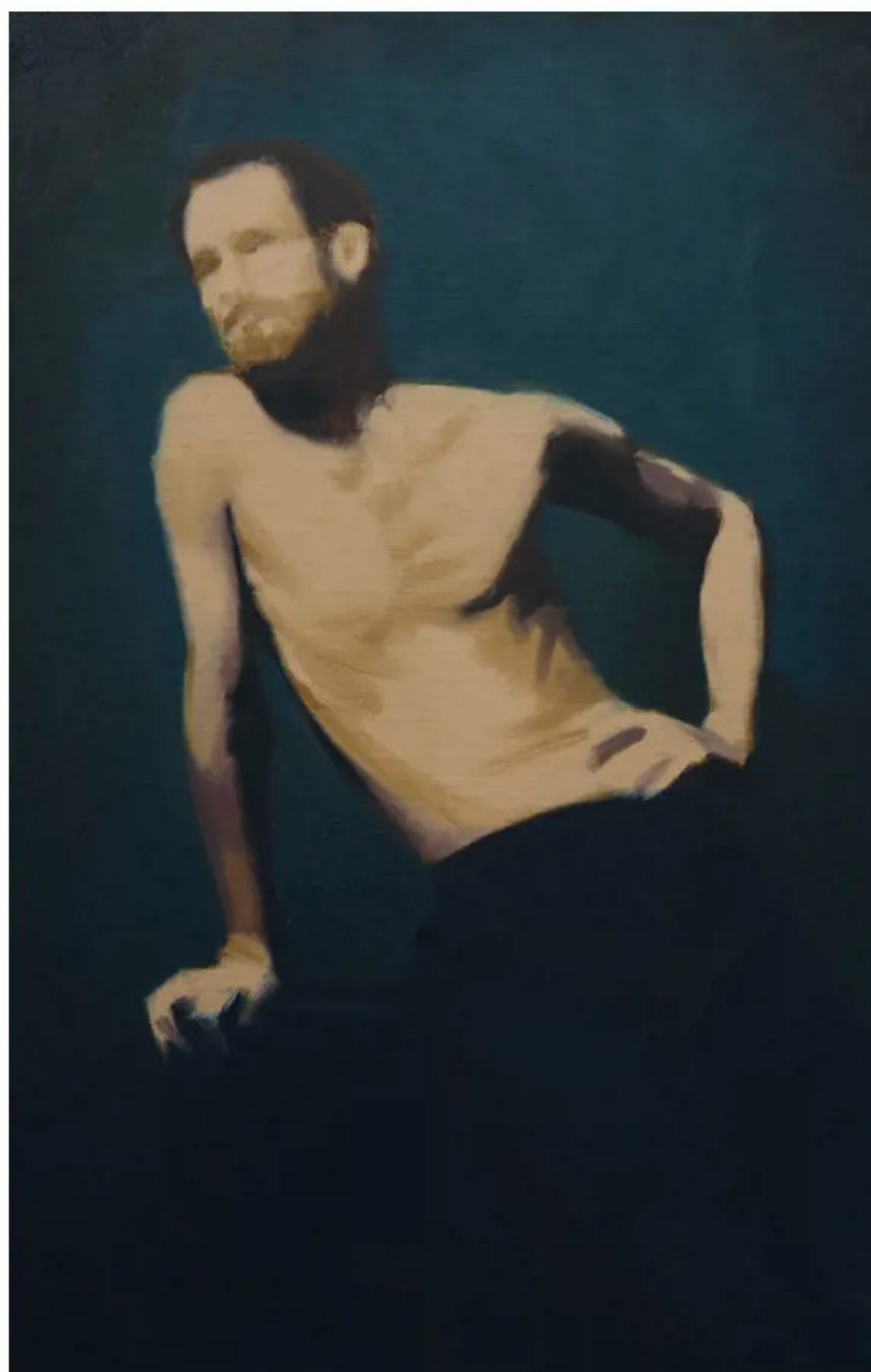
Once the shadows were in place, I introduced an average skin tone over the

OILS



▲ Introducing base skin tone

A mid-range flesh tone covered the *imprimatura* and prepared the surface for modelling form



▲ Adding dark mid-tones

These values deepened form, built variety, and helped refine the figure's contour



▲ Placing the light planes

Lighter values clarified form and expanded the painting's value structure without reaching full highlights

LUCA'S TOP TIPS

Start with strong composition

Use thumbnail sketches to refine cropping and ensure proportions match your canvas before painting.

Adapt the reference

Don't copy the photo; adjust elements like background colour and lighting to enhance contrast and mood.

Build tonal structure carefully

Begin with an *imprimatura*, block in darks first, and gradually establish a clear value range to ground your painting.

Refine with edges and colour shifts

Use blended edges and subtle warm/cool skin tones to suggest form, anatomy, and bring the figure to life.



rest of the figure. This colour isn't intended to be exact; rather, it served as a mid-range value that covered the *imprimatura* and created a base upon which lighter and darker notes could be layered. For this foundational skin tone, I typically use a mix of titanium white, vermilion, raw sienna deep, and a small amount of black. I prefer to keep this base tone slightly darker than the final intended colour. It's easier to add highlights to the central forms later than to darken the edges effectively to create depth (top left).

Having established the average flesh tone, I proceeded by adding darker mid-tones

▲ Colour variance and edge softening

Warm and cool colour shifts across the figure suggested anatomy and brought vitality to it. Edges between masses of paint of different tones were blended to enhance volume and the illusion of three-dimensionality.

(top middle). These intermediate values served multiple purposes: they began to articulate the form more clearly, added variety to the painting, and helped me assess whether the contours I originally placed

needed adjusting. The transition from one tonal area to another becomes a powerful drawing tool in itself. At this point, I paid close attention to the negative space – the background – as it helped me sculpt the figure more accurately. By having the background colour already in place, I could 'cut' into the figure where necessary, refining the profile and silhouette with greater ease and precision.

Once the mid-tones were in, I began to introduce lighter values (top right); but not the brightest highlights just yet. Instead, I targeted the lighter planes that caught a moderate amount of light. These areas helped expand the value range of the figure and prepared the surface for the final highlights that would come later. Establishing this value structure was critical; it gave the painting its visual coherence and depth. With this structural groundwork in place, I then focused on creating smooth, believable transitions between the different tonal regions (above left). This process was achieved by working carefully at the edges of each painted area. These soft and sharp transitions not only improved the realism of the painting but also enhanced the sense of three-dimensionality. The edge handling, whether sharp, soft, or lost, is a major contributor to the illusion of volume and space in a figure.

Once the transitions were well established, I began introducing subtle variations in colour, particularly in the skin. Human

skin is rarely a uniform tone; it reflects the complexities of our anatomy and the environment around us. Some areas, such as the ears or hands, often appear warmer, showing more red or orange tones, while others may take on cooler hues, like blues or greens. These temperature shifts help to suggest underlying structures such as bones, veins, or blood vessels, and they lend life to the painting.

This stage – refining the colour variations – might appear to be only a subtle change from the previous one, but it was one of the most time-consuming and meticulous parts of the painting process. Here, I paid particular attention to the features of the portrait, the rendering of the hands, and any area that still looked unresolved. Additionally, I revisited the background to ensure it held up compositionally and tonally. I might introduce more variety here – soft gradations, colour shifts, or textural contrasts – to enhance the interplay between figure and setting.

As the painting neared completion, the adjustments became more delicate and intuitive. I stepped back frequently to assess the overall balance, checking that all the components – form, colour, value, and composition – were working together harmoniously. Final highlights and accent colours were placed with care, always in service of the whole (right). Throughout this process, my aim was not simply to replicate the reference image, but to use it as a springboard for interpretation and expression. The photo provided information, but the painting must go beyond that – to capture a sense of life, mood, and structure that transcended the static image.

The approach I've shared in this demonstration reflects my working method: direct, layered, and deeply rooted in drawing. Whether working from life or from a photograph, the principles remain the same. With careful observation, structured value organisation and a commitment to refining the drawing throughout, even a simple image can become a compelling painting.

TA



- To see a video of Luca painting this life study, scan the QR code or go to bit.ly/DRAW-WITH-PAINT
- Find out more about Raw UMBER Studios at rawumberstudios.com or by emailing info@rawumberstudios.com



▲ Finished painting

Figure Study, oil on canvas, 28×18in (71×46cm)

Final adjustments focused on precision in key features such as the portrait and hands, as well as achieving balance between the figure and background

Luca Indraccolo

is an Italian-born artist celebrated for his skilful, realistic oil paintings, with a focus on figurative and narrative art. After a 15-year career as an art director for major advertising agencies across several countries, he transitioned fully into fine art. His journey began with a year studying artistic anatomy in New York, followed by classical training in drawing and painting at the Florence Academy of Art, and later, advanced studies in London. His work has been exhibited internationally in galleries and art fairs across the UK, the US, and beyond.



In the footsteps of Tunnickliffe

In her final article in her series painting *plein-air* through the seasons inspired by the artist and illustrator, Charles Tunnickliffe, **Becky Thorley-Fox** paints summer coastal birds



▲ **Precious Cargo on Cemlyn Lake**, oil on linen, 5×9in (13×23cm)

Islands have long held a particular draw for me. I love exploring that wild edge where two worlds collide and create a dynamic environment that supports a rich biodiversity. Being able to follow the light around the water's edge over the course of a day offers endless painting opportunities. It is often an advantage to paint with the sun to one side of you or to paint into the light *contre jour*. Both light situations create stronger tonal contrast and greater colour variation. Over the winter and spring, I spent long days out along the south of Anglesey where I would start at dawn along the east side of the Menai, working my way westwards and ending the day at Malltraeth, which was Tunnickliffe's home area along the Cefni estuary.

It has been interesting to explore Anglesey through the eyes of a great artist. Tunnickliffe's summer and winter diaries,

amongst many of his books, have served as a guide for finding Anglesey's numerous wildlife hotspots. Cemlyn Bay, on the North of Anglesey, has become a favourite summer and autumn haunt as it is now a wildlife haven that has kept me occupied with painting from dawn until dusk. Cemlyn has an unusual topography with a long sweeping shingle ridge that separates the sea bay from the lagoon. The lagoon, with its small islands, now hosts one of the largest Tern colonies in the UK during the summer breeding season, making it a wildlife spectacle.

Cemlyn Bay has been a conservation success story that began with just a handful of birds compared with numbers found today. The development of its sea defences prevents the lagoon from flooding during the high tides in spring and summer, enabling the Terns and other bird species to



Becky Thorley-Fox SWLA

is a landscape and wildlife painter working *en plein air*, capturing the light, atmosphere and essence of her subject through direct observation. She is based in mid Wales near the coast where she finds an endless source of inspiration. Becky is a member of the Society of Wildlife Artists, and her work can be seen in the annual exhibition *The Natural Eye* at the Mall Galleries in London each autumn. Her online gallery showcases her latest work
beckythorley-fox.co.uk

nest successfully on the lagoon islands each year.

Capturing the moment

Ringed Plover Chicks at Sunset (right) was painted on the beach one evening at a distance looking through the fieldscope. The small chicks ventured out towards the tideline as the sun lowered. I painted in their small fuzzy forms, adding a few extra textural details later to describe their soft fluffy plumage. Whilst Tunnickliffe had his own wonderful personal library of field sketches and measured drawings of deceased specimens, today search engines can provide a whole library of imagery which can be useful for checking my work against after a new or brief encounter!

Ringed Plover Family at Cemlyn (above right) was painted in the soft late afternoon light. The chicks were darting back and forth



▲ **Ringed Plover Family at Cemlyn, oil on linen, 12×18in (30.5×46cm)**



▲ Ringed Plover chick sketches in one of Charles Tunnicliffe's sketchbooks in the archives at Oriel Ynys Mon. Charles Tunnicliffe produced vast volumes of sketchbooks filled with carefully rendered studies and observations that served as reference material for his paintings.



▲ Sketch of a Ringed Plover chick



▲ **Ringed Plover Chicks at Sunset, oil on board, 6×18in (15×45.5cm)**

as they emerged from the foliage and slowly made their way to the beach. The parent stood still watching for predators as the young chicks explored. I enjoyed painting the textures and colour nuances in the dried summer foliage and the brilliant yellow lichen covered pebbles. Working through a scope gives a wonderful opportunity to observe a bird's world up close without disturbing them.

These *Black Headed Gulls* (right) were painted on a late summer evening as the sun was sinking into the horizon. Their plumage glowed a cool blue-white against the yellow glowing lagoon reflecting the hazy sky. Reflections in the water can be confusing to paint: the values are compressed to the mid tones, dark colours appear to reflect lighter and light colours appear darker in the water. The tone of the water itself will effect the tone of the reflection too. The ripples of the water break up the reflection and details and edges are softened.



▲ **Black Headed Gulls at Dusk on the Lagoon, oil on linen, 7×9in (18×23cm)**



▲ *Terns Flying Back and Forth, Cemlyn*, oil on linen, 12×24in (30.5×61cm)

Late evening provides that magical golden hour in summer. Though the light effects are speeding by, birds are winding down for the night, providing serene moments that allow for a longer period of study under a warm light with cool shadows.

In Tunncliffe's instructional book, *Bird Portraiture*, he writes, 'I am sure that, sooner or later, you will become engrossed in the study of the flying bird, and be filled with wonder at the beauty of its shape as it soars, glides, swoops or speeds by on its way. And once again you will note how very individual each kind of bird is, no two

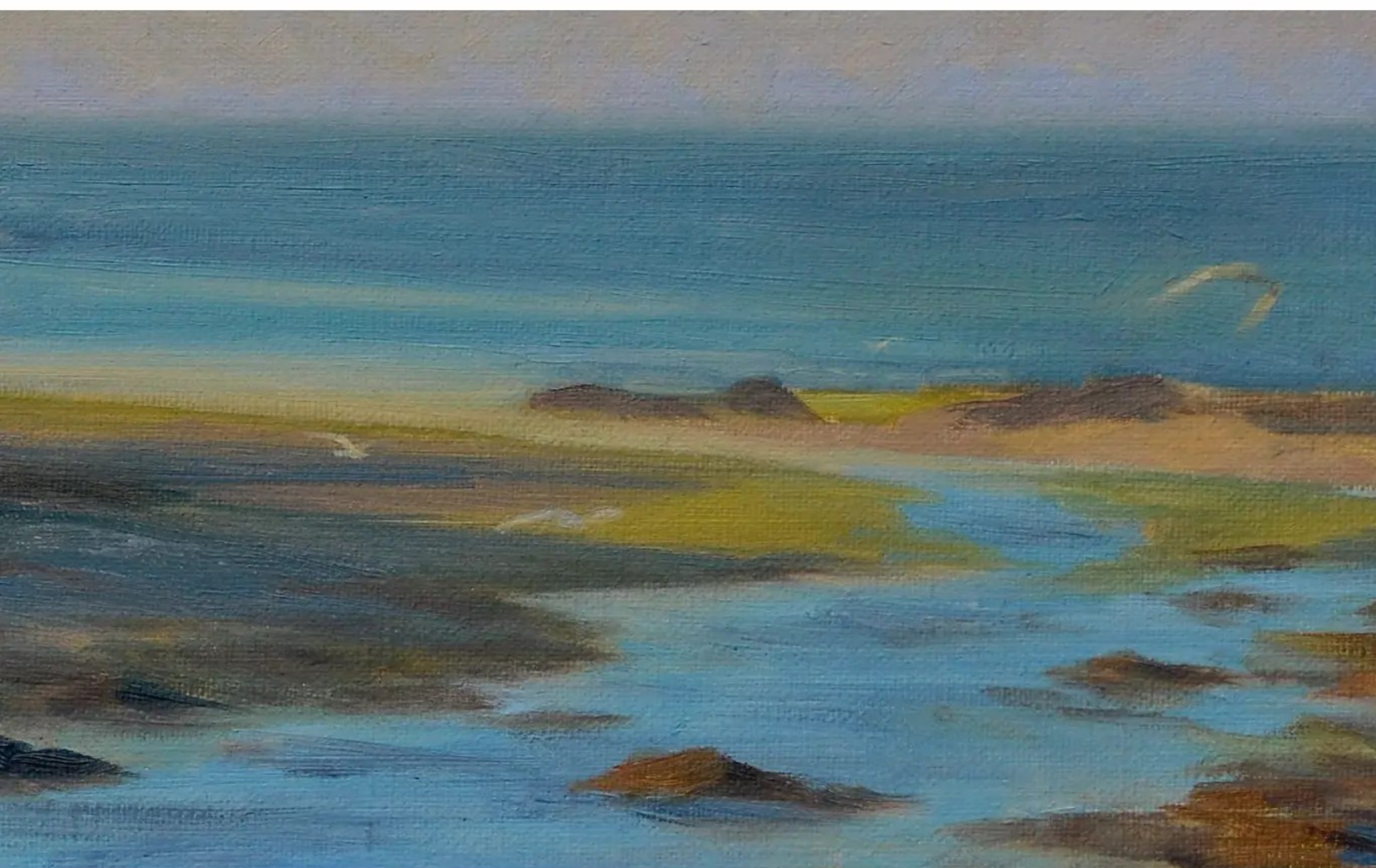
specimens being quite identical in their manner of movement'. Tunncliffe takes the reader by the hand and guides them to view nature through his eyes, sharing his sense of wonder, knowledge and careful observations.

This larger piece, *Terns Flying Back and Forth, Cemlyn* (above) was painted over the course of the afternoon/evening, whereupon I attacked the painting with the long shadows and warm highlights, enjoying the dramatic effects of the late evening light. There were a constant stream of Terns flying back and forth that provided an opportunity for continuous study as I painted them into my scene. In those last rays of sunshine, they appeared bright yellow-orange! TA



▲ Warm-up sketch before painting

▼ Close-up of Terns in flight



● *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. The exhibition is inspired by the Ladybird *What to Look For* series, illustrated by C. Tunncliffe, and can be seen at Oriel Ynys Mon, Anglesey until October 12. For more information visit orielmon.org

DEMONSTRATION *Gull in the Petrified Forest*



▲ STAGE ONE

I had seen this Gull poised amongst the petrified forest in the lowering sunlight. There was a striking contrast between the round white glowing bird against the angular dark tree stumps. I began with the area most likely to move first – the Gull itself! I worked fast to sketch in the shape and key features before it moved or flew away. I then worked in the form, colour and light effects. I continued to sketch in the surrounding area, trying to balance my composition with variety and rhythm of line and shape. The stump behind the Gull served to block the eye from leaving the canvas.



▲ STAGE TWO

At this stage I worked quickly to paint the value and colour relationships cast by the evening light. When working *plein-air*, the best approach is to simplify shapes and values first. I sketched in the darkest darks and blocked in the ground plains as they receded into the background. I lowered the tone and chroma with titanium white and a touch of ultramarine blue and alizarin claret to cool the colour temperature as it receded. If I got something down for each area I would have a road map for completing my painting even if the light changed.

Becky's top tips

- Spring and summer are wonderful times to study birds as conditions are usually more favourable and coastal birds in particular are numerous in their breeding colonies, allowing for repeat observations.
- Be patient when studying a new subject; with every study, you will gradually build up your knowledge of a species and get quicker at capturing it.

MATERIALS

- **Support** Belle Arti and Claessens oil primed linen cut and glued to 3.6mm ply board
- **Michael Harding oil paint:** 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

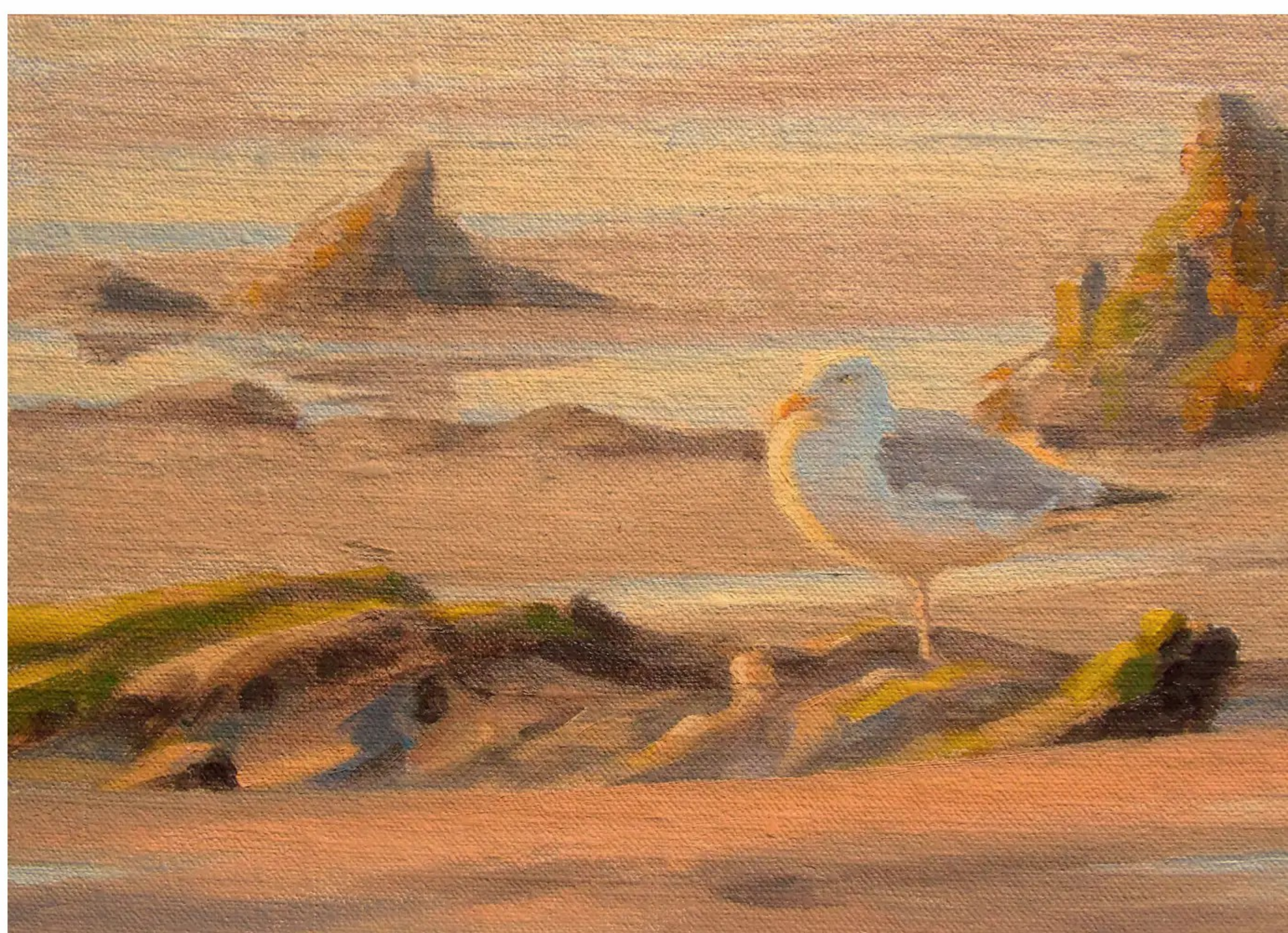
I recently expanded my yellows palette in order to increase my mixing range and capabilities for capturing light effects and I haven't looked back!

- **Brushes** Mainly synthetic ivory brushes for drawing and detailed work and hog filberts for larger areas as they are more robust

► FINISHED PAINTING

***Gull in the Petrified Forest*, oil on linen, 7×9in (18×23cm)**

I worked in the colour and form that was bathed in the soft golden light coming from the rear left. I built up the colour saturation and brightness as I worked forwards, increasing my use of yellow, orange and naphthol red. Although there were a lot of horizontal lines, their angles varied slightly and were broken up by the tree stumps. I enjoyed capturing the reflected colour in the Gull's plumage, the bright cool blue from the sky and the warm reflected sand colours on the underside of the Gull. The backlit edge of the Gull was my focal point – it was the brightest area capturing the light before it turned around the form. On the terminator line (the area that separates light and dark) I could see the yellow light colouring the Gull. Gulls, with their white plumage, make for great subjects for studying the behaviour of colour and light.



Simplification

Take the easy route by following **Nicholas Poullis's** advice on simplifying your landscape subject



Simplifying makes a chosen subject more digestible and allows you to capture it in a form that communicates something about it. But it's a profound challenge when painting in an impressionist way and not easy to simplify your chosen view while simultaneously describing and retaining the character of the various elements. When simplifying we often say much more about the subject in terms of atmosphere, depth and light than a more arbitrary approach to details can ever achieve.

How we go about simplification depends on the objectives and there is no simple formula for how to achieve this. Whereas each element and each painting has to be considered carefully, by and large, simplification can be achieved by considering a number of factors. Through editing and detail selection we can begin to keep things simple. Observation can also allow us to use pattern when describing a larger area, such as with a tree or reflections in water.

The choice and application of a technique will help us to simplify an area and concentrate on volumes. Using techniques including wet-in-wet, wet against wet, and broad areas of flat wash can also help us achieve this.

Observation and editing

Observation is important and so exploring

a subject through drawing helps to identify the key content of a scene. It may seem obvious, but most of the time spent on a painting is not the act of putting brush to paper, but rather a culmination of decisions. What we see in a painting is the execution of those choices.

The process of simplification really begins with the choice of subject and our view of it. While it's important to identify features that are interesting and defining, it's even more important to disregard content that will distract. What we include should ideally contribute to the painting in some way and so even at an early stage these decisions are important but highly subjective.

Simplifying and scale

Another important factor when assessing how much to simplify relates to the scale at which we are working. Small paintings can be much simpler, yet still 'work' and have enough content. Content, picture size and subject are all aspects that work hand in hand. An obvious example is a subject that looks 'empty' at 15×22in (38×56cm) but works well at a much smaller size. An effective way of exploring this aspect is by varying the scale at which we work. This will help us evaluate content with regards to scale which is crucial to simplification.

Another aspect of how to simplify is where to simplify. Different areas of a painting have different roles to play in

▲ **Margon, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 140lb (300gsm) rough paper, 3×7in (7.5×28cm)**

Here is an example of where working on a small scale suits the level of content provided by the subject and the level of simplification allows a simplistic approach to work without seeming empty. Because of the way simplification works, I could concentrate on volumes and lighting. The background landscape and sky were simplified using a wet-in-wet graduated wash.

creating a picture. Sometimes an area is used to provide depth, contrast or volume. A background is often best treated with a broad wet-in-wet approach as we want that area to recede and create depth. This can be seen in the background of the painting of Margon (above). We should be aware, when assessing a painting, that details will draw the eye and can reduce depth. A way of drawing attention to one area of a painting can be to simplify surrounding areas drastically. This can be a very effective method of pushing the eye to the desired place on the paper but carries the risk of 'floating' objects or elements.

Using the silhouette of an object to describe it is another useful simplifying method. Typical examples might be the outline of a tree or a figure. This method can be used for other objects too providing



▲ **Caux Looking into the Sunlight, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 140lb (300gsm) rough paper, 3½×5½in (9×14cm)**

The simple theme of the painting and the lighting enabled me to simplify to the max while retaining forms and, crucially, the lighting that is the objective of the painting. While simplifying is important, we must balance this with the need to include interesting elements.

all that is needed in the description is in the outline.

For simplification to work best we must use it as a means of description. Once we have decided what to paint, the choice of technique to apply to the subject is very important. This is where many difficulties begin. The most effective ways are not arbitrary but require a little thought so what we do corresponds with what we wish to achieve. Simplification is partly down to what role an area of paint or an object has in the picture. Using this demonstration painting of the *Mill at Bessan* (over the page), for example, the faraway trees form the background and as such I wanted them to recede while providing contrast. By using wet-in-wet and wet against wet I was able to express general form and depth.

The buildings of the mill and other structures required a little more definition and less simplification as they needed interest and so I used a range of wet-on-dry washes. Working light to dark, I allowed the first layer to dry completely before adding the second so that the edges were crisp. Details were chosen to help add interest and define the subject.

The water needed to be simple as all the interest was in the buildings and structures but it had to convince and be descriptive in simplistic terms. To do this I used a simple

graduated wash then added reflections to capture the nature of the water once the wash was dry. The reflections were added with smaller areas of washes, with areas of stronger tones put in wet-in-wet that helped with depth and interest and very much formed part of the design.

Avoid overworking

The volumes are all established with the first washes, but as a painting progresses, we paint more details, and so the choice and selection of elements in the scene before us become a crucial aspect that works hand in hand with observation. Identifying these key features is important and it is also at this later stage where the risk of overworking increases. With every addition it is important to ask ourselves whether it will help or

▲ **Nezignan L'Évêque, watercolour on Hahnemühle Andaluçia 230lb (500gsm) rough paper, 6¼×9¾in (16×25cm)**

I used a few key shapes painted in silhouette to create the form of the church tower which helped me simplify the scene. Simple washes in the first stage, the underpainting, allowed me to simplify and establish the volumes and depth of the various elements.

distract. Another aspect of overworking is that it will potentially muddy what we have done and the painting will get worse. It's often the case that the time to stop was one stage ago! A difficult aspect of watercolour is that the late, but crucial decisions, are made when we are too 'close' to the painting and tired for that reason. It is always better to stop than risk overworking. ▷



▲ **Weymouth, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 140lb (300gsm) rough paper, 6×8½in (15×22cm)**

In this large watercolour I could include a little more detail or content while still keeping to a broad impressionistic approach to capture atmosphere. I edited the scene to include defining details and contrasts.

WATERCOLOUR

DEMONSTRATION *The Mill at Bessan*

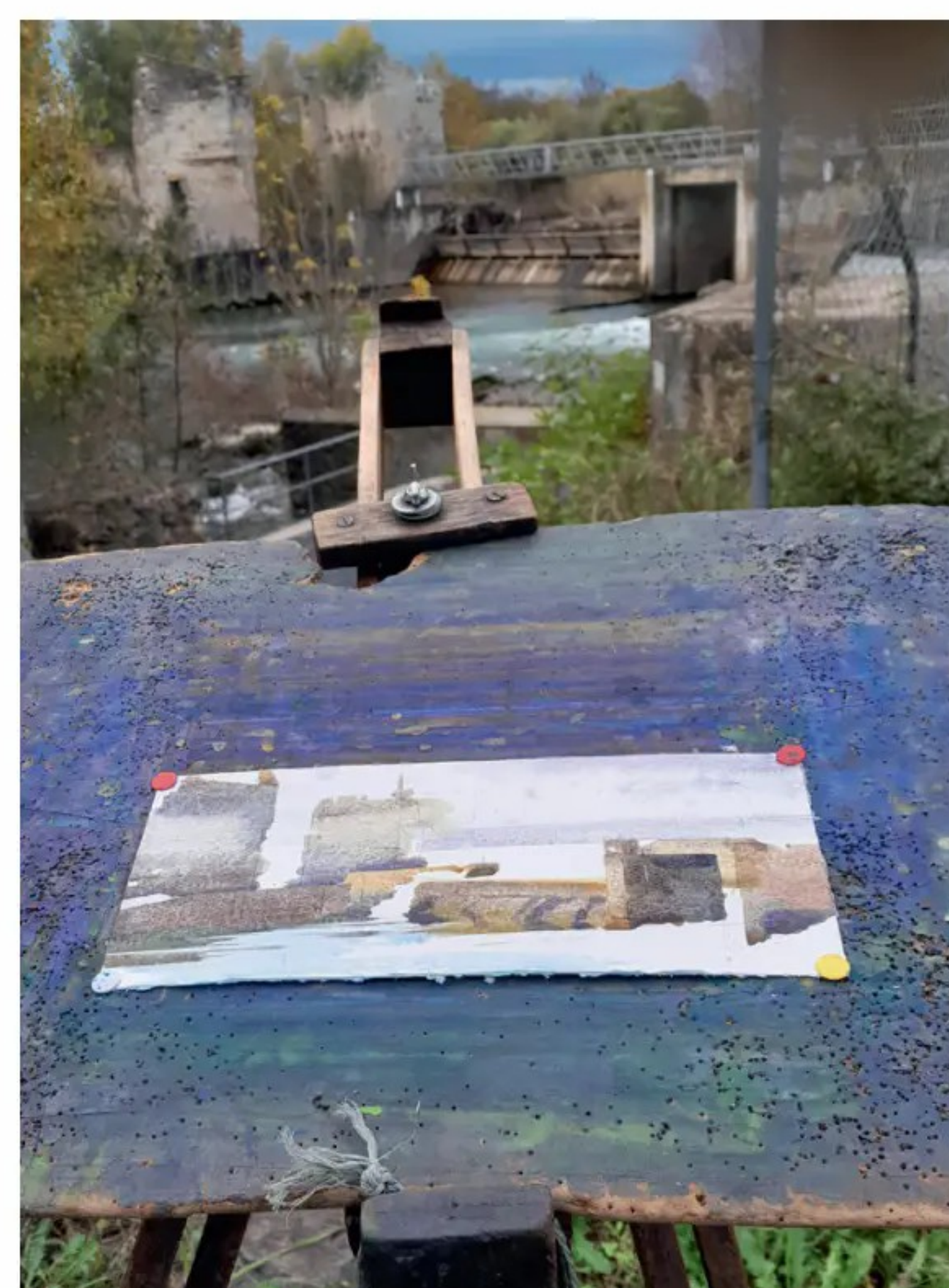
This subject has a combination of contrasting elements of sky, water, buildings and trees that worked well within a natural design and suited a wide landscape format of paper.

I positioned myself where I could see, with an unobstructed view, all the elements I wished to include.

While exploring any subject matter I find it best to work in sessions of about four hours and on the spot is always preferable as you can make observations that are impossible from a photo. It's very important that we try to capture the subject in its setting and

so lighting is crucial, particularly light direction – and this is best observed from life.

Only a small part of painting is the act of putting brush to paper; by far the larger amount of time is spent on observation and mixing paint. I never, or very rarely, carry out prep work. It can help, but too much can lead to a stale painting, which is often a potential problem with studio work. Work done from life has the advantage; although sometimes it can be a little crude or raw, it has what I would describe as authenticity and connection with the subject.



Set up for *The Mill*



MATERIALS

- **Support** Hahnemühle Andalucia 230lb (500gsm) rough paper, 4¼x9½in (11x24cm)
- **Watercolours** Potter's pink; cadmium red and yellow; light red; raw sienna; brown madder; Naples yellow; cobalt blue deep; French ultramarine blue; ivory black; and manganese blue
- **Brushes** A large round brush, plus a Size 8 round and a size 6 round; and a size 4 rigger
- **Miscellaneous** Pencil and soft rubber

▲ STAGE ONE

I kept the drawing very simple but accurate. I used a 2B pencil to position the various elements. I placed the mill first, drawing it to a size where the structure on the right would be in the right place too. For the first painting stage I worked light to dark, large areas to small. I began with the sky and lighter shades in the water, which I applied as washes with a large round brush and wet-in-wet for the clouds in the sky. Once dry I started to place in the other lights that I wanted to preserve and eventually paint around. For this stage I used the large round brush for the larger areas of wash and a number 8 round for the medium-sized areas, such as the mill.

▼ STAGE TWO

To avoid bleeding, I made sure that the first layer was dry, before adding the buildings and structures with graduated washes of differing shades and colour. Washes were used to paint objects and their reflections in one go. Wet-in-wet was applied for the shadows and their reflections with attention paid to the form of the reflections on the water. The lighter shade of the foot bridge was also added.





▲ STAGE THREE

I started to add form to the structures with darker washes on the shaded sides and painted some of the features, such as the shaded sides of windows. The form of the bridge was created using the stronger tones of the background trees, and I picked out little shapes defining the bridge with a small round size six brush.

▼ FINISHED PAINTING

The Mill at Bessan, watercolour on Hahnemühle Andaluia 230lb (500gsm) rough paper 4¼×9½in (11×24cm)

In the final stage I added some of the branches using a size four rigger. I continued to add in details that helped to define the subject, and created interest and balance using a size six round.

I stopped when I felt I had expressed what I wanted to about the subject. Once complete I removed some of the pencil marks with a very soft rubber.



Nicholas Poullis

is an award-winning watercolourist and author of *Atmospheric Buildings in Watercolour* published by Search Press available from our bookshop at painters-online.co.uk/ArtSupplies

Nicholas runs an exciting range of painting holidays in the south of France. For more information visit vineyardpaintingexperience.com or email him directly poullisnicholas@yahoo.fr



● Read Sally Bulgin's interview with Nicholas in the April 2025 issue of *Leisure Painter & The Artist*. Studio members have access to all back issues of the magazine. Go to painters-online.co.uk to find out more.



Watercolour freed!

This landscape series encourages painters to think differently about the medium and 'supercharge' their watercolours by embracing abstract behaviours. Step away from your brush! Abandon your hair dryer! Be brave. Trust the movement of water and use the power of suggestion to force viewers to 'lean in' closer.

In the third of six articles on unlocking the potential of watercolour, **Catherine Beale** encourages you to embrace the drips as she explores the technique of pouring paint



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 next solo exhibition is in October in Bath. Keep in touch @catherinebealeart via Instagram and Facebook or view her paintings on her website catherinebeale.com

DEMONSTRATION *Passing Through the Dales*

DRIPPING PAINT TECHNIQUE

Pre-wetting a tilted surface enables a painter to drop in diluted pigment and run it loosely within the water across a painting to create complex elongated shapes. This technique can also be done on top of dried pigment that has already been applied. Cradling a wet, flat wash brush (for example with hairs of equal length) helps to stroke on clean water lightly without moving existing dried pigment. Further diluted colour can then be dropped into this water layer. Turning the surface diagonally can create drips that resemble rain, waves, crops and similar scenarios.



▲ REFERENCE PHOTO

My photo shows a small hamlet nestling in the Yorkshire Dales in England. My inspiration was the sun catching on the stonework and slopes, contrasting with the dark storm cloud above. I chose a portrait orientation to emphasise the height of the sky above. I had all the information I needed from two photos – one landscape and one portrait, fitting the cottages

MATERIALS

- **Support** Daler-Rowney A4 watercolour Aquafine artboard
- **Professional watercolours in tubes** (I use Winsor & Newton and Daler-Rowney): Phthalo turquoise; permanent mauve; transparent yellow; indigo; permanent sap green; raw sienna; alizarin crimson; burnt umber; and cadmium yellow. I prepare my palette with a pea-sized blob of tubed colour in each well. I then pull the edge of each blob with my large, flat wet brush, pressing down to release water and form concentrated lakes of colour around the thick paint to access two very different tones
- **Brushes** Three watercolour brushes: one inch flat; a smaller flat; and a rigger
- **Miscellaneous** Drawing board support and prop (such as a block or tin); soft 2B pencil and acrylic eraser; kitchen roll; table and rock salt; palettes with deep wells; and a large water jar

into a narrower shape. The camera distorts the buildings' perspective and I kept their dramatic lean to suggest they were reaching up towards the sky. I raised them up from the bottom and increased the height of the dales for dramatic effect. I removed the property signs, lead flashing and pile of stones in the foreground as I felt that they detracted from the main subject.

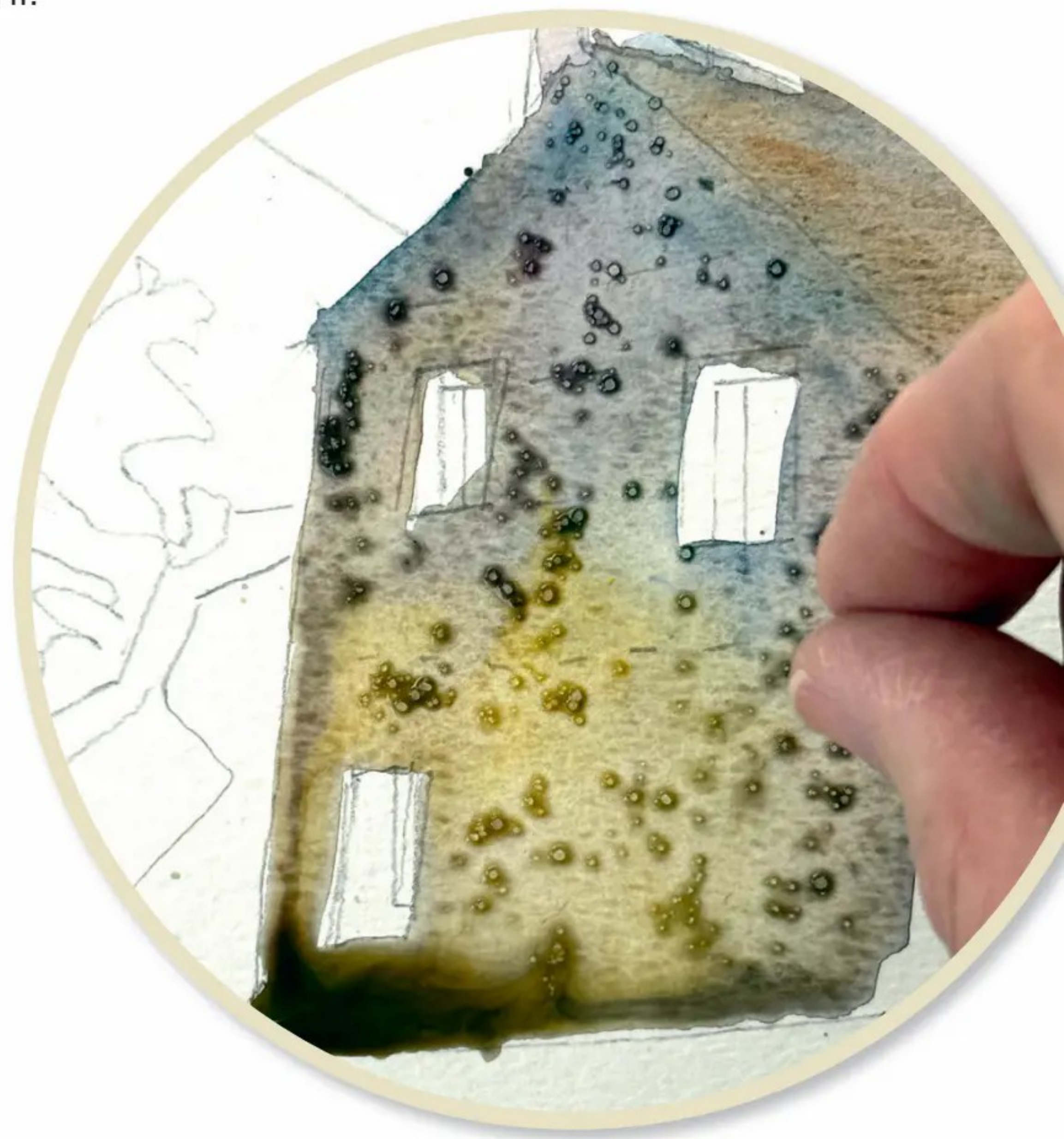


COLOUR SCHEME

I loved the pairing of the deep purple, brown and black storm clouds against the sunlit green-gold uplands – a beautifully complementary colour pairing. I mixed these complementary colours for the buildings to form greys and neutral shades and to unify the colour scheme.

STAGE TWO

Each house was formed from soft, semi-abstract colour mixes placed by the turned brush, and bounded by crisp edges against the dry paper. I scattered table salt crystals in to the mix to soak up the paint creating interesting holes of lighter tone to suggest a stippled stone wall. I then left the salt to dry.



STAGE THREE

I wetted the dales above and puddle in a light mix of permanent sap green and raw sienna, using a little alizarin crimson on the left. I pulled the mix down the houses on the right-hand side to create a verge, then painted in the foreground grass triangle.

STAGE FOUR

I used similar colours for the house in the background but this time added raw sienna to merge it with the hillside. I left its front wall dry and 'white' for now. Adding more indigo darkened the shadowed gable end, and burnt umber, which is opaque, deepened the tone. I scattered larger rock salt to suggest large structural stones and spread excess colour on the ground to create its shadow.



WATERCOLOUR

▼ STAGE FIVE

My workshop participants usually feel comfortable creating detail. But, for detail to appear sharp, the line must be applied on dry paint, so I waited here for the walls and roofs to dry. I filled the rigger brush with thick indigo and then burnt umber



and drew in the window openings and chimney details. Next, I drew in the shadow beneath the overhanging roofs, taking care to trace the bumpy shape of the tile edge to suggest the roof material. These features added 'finish'. Pressing down on the brush to widen it, I included the stone steps and panes of glass and ran raw sienna around the windows and door to create the stone surrounds.



▲ I dampened my smaller flat brush and washed paint from the rear roof in horizontal lines to match the tiles, then added a little cadmium yellow to suggest lichen or moss. I added individual stones to the white façade and ran a thin wash of raw sienna across it.

► STAGE SIX

All the details were now in except for the trees which were darker so could be placed on top of the rain clouds once dry.



▲ STAGE SEVEN

I dusted off the dried salt and rubbed out any visible pencil lines except for those in the sky. Changing the water in my jar I made my one-inch flat brush dripping wet, then, cradling it on the horizontal (to take its weight), I lightly stroked water across the whole sky leaving dry gaps where I didn't want the paint to run. The dry turquoise sky remained undisturbed beneath. I turned the painting diagonally and propped it at an even higher angle to encourage individual, linear drips to form within the first wash of indigo.



◀ I next added streaks of diluted permanent mauve, transparent yellow and burnt umber to the indigo layer. They flowed and mixed in varying amounts to resemble falling precipitation. Most paint dropped to the bottom, darkening the sky to contrast against the hills below.



◀ Edges appearing in the sky were softened and reduced with the damp one-inch flat brush.

▲ STAGE EIGHT

Here you can see how I mopped up unwanted paint, using kitchen towel to soak up the wash.

► FINISHED PAINTING

Passing Through the Dales,
watercolour on Aquafine
artboard, 11¾×8¼in
(30×21cm)

I stepped back to take a 'helicopter' view of my painting. I added a flash of transparent yellow to the top of the dales and to one of the windows. I also lifted a little paint out of the sky above the left-hand house with the corner of my small flat brush and painted in a forgotten chimney. I included the fir tree but decided not to include the winter tree in the centre of the picture as I felt it interrupted the clean shape of the buildings.



Next edition, Catherine will be looking at whip lines and showing you how these strong and fluid lines can be used to suggest movement within your watercolour paintings.



LEARN FROM THE MASTERS: 9TH OF 12



Sarah Edmonds

is a painter, art historian and lecturer. She studied Italian and History of Art at UCL and a short course at the Slade School of Fine Art. She works as a communications consultant and as a history of art lecturer in the Cotswolds; sarah-middleton.co.uk

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 work by the Bloomsbury Group artist, **Vanessa Bell**

Henrietta by Vanessa Bell



The collection at the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol is home to some incredible artworks, including a handful of works by one of our most notable British painters, **Vanessa Bell**.

Henrietta was acquired in 1961 from the private collection of Henrietta Garnett, the granddaughter of Vanessa Bell. Vanessa would have been 76 when she painted the ten-year-old girl at Charleston farmhouse, her home in West Sussex. Henrietta is a beauty with her bee-stung lips and symmetrical features, right on the cusp of womanhood. The innocent gaze and prim yellow dress hide the many complications of her unconventional family upbringing, with the added pathos of knowing the somewhat tragic life that followed. Shockingly, within seven years of this painting, Henrietta would be a teenage widow with a tiny baby to care for.

The life of Vanessa Bell and her sister Virginia Woolf is well documented in their novels, artworks, biographies, films and at her family home of Charleston. But less is known about the generations that followed the famous Bloomsbury Group – those who

◀ Vanessa Bell **Henrietta**, 1955, oil on canvas, 26½×20½in (67.5×52.5cm). RWA (Royal West of England Academy) permanent collection



◀ Vanessa Bell **Henrietta Garnett, 1955, oil on canvas, 21½×15¼in (54.5×39cm).**
Charleston – estate of Vanessa Bell

▼ Duncan Grant **Vanessa Bell, Painting at La Souco, 1960, oil on canvas, 18×15in (46×38cm).**
Charleston – estate of Vanessa Bell



were brought up in the shadows of these trailblazers found it hard to carve out their own identity.

Who is Henrietta?

Henrietta was no exception. She was born in 1945, one of two daughters of Angelica and David Garnett, the former lover of Duncan Grant. Grant lived with Vanessa at Charleston for over 40 years and fathered Angelica illegitimately. It was only at the age of 18 that Angelica learnt of her true parentage, always believing her father to be Clive Bell. Despite their 20-year age

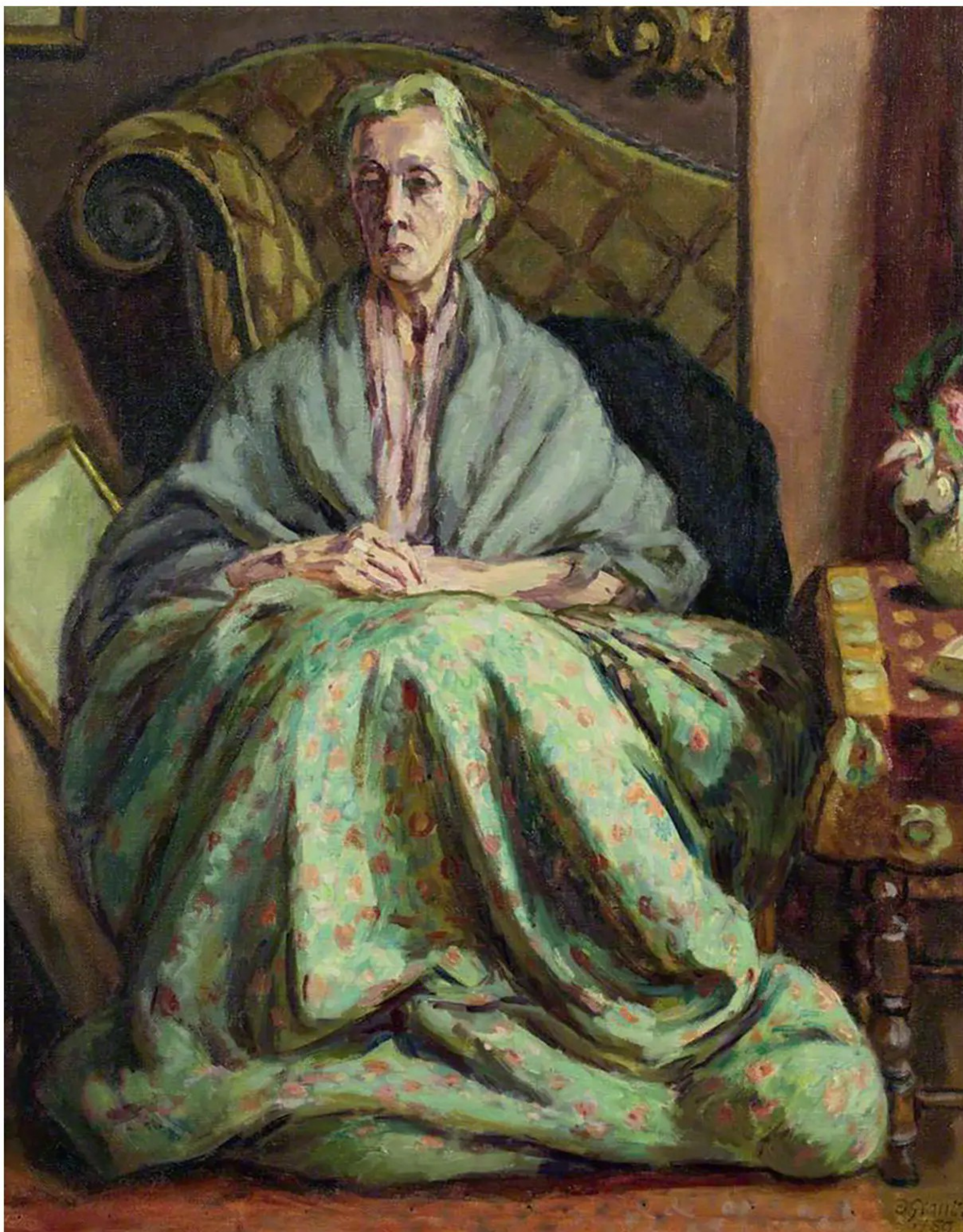
gap, and Garnett having once been in love with Grant, Angelica and Garnett parented Henrietta and Amaryllis. It was amid these complex affairs that life began and continued throughout her adult life. It is no exaggeration to say that suicide, early death, homosexuality, open marriages and extra marital affairs touched the lives of every member of this family.

Although brought up at Hilton Hall, a cold Jacobean house, Henrietta spent many holidays at colourful Charleston where she sat for several portraits. This one shows her in more formal dress than

in others, but often in the same interior setting. Bell experimented with complete abstraction in 1914/15 but continued to paint with a figurative element after moving to Charleston in 1916. She often drew inspiration from her domestic life, and family members, which particularly suited her in old age as she rarely left Charleston.

Henrietta was 'the apple of her grandmother's eye,' and described being painted by Bell with incredible detail: 'Mixing the colours on the palette, glancing first at me and then at the portrait, gently stabbing the canvas...the glances she sent across

The composition of this painting is simple and the colours bold. Even though she has flattened the pictorial space, there is definitely a feeling of movement as if Henrietta might stand up and walk away at any moment.



◀ Duncan Grant **Portrait of a Lady, 1959, oil on canvas, 29¼×23½in (74.5×59.5cm).** RWA (Royal West of England Academy) permanent collection

mother, *Deceived with Kindness* (1984) just as she herself was about to get married. At only 17 years old Henrietta married Bruno Partridge, the son of Ralph and Frances (the sister of David Garnett's first wife, Ray Marshall) ten years her senior and family friends of her parents. A year later, their daughter Sophie was born and in the same year Bruno suffered an aortic aneurysm and died instantaneously.

The shock of his death led to a decade of debauchery and hedonism in the swinging '60s. Henrietta led a nightclub life in Marbella and then drifted around Cumbria and Ireland in a gypsy caravan convoy in search of peace and love. Her life took many twists and turns, sadly resulting in an attempted suicide which left her in persistent pain. She married again, twice, before finally settling down with Mark Divall who had once been a gardener at Charleston. In the '80s she lived in France, Normandy and Provence, and then discovered her creative oeuvre with the successful romance novel *Family Skeletons* (1996) – not unaware of the title's resonance. It had taken until middle age to become a success in her own right.

Quiet courage

She died in 2019 aged 74 years old, whilst living in Sussex, closer than ever to her literary and artistic lineage. When I look at her portrait now, I see a stoic and feisty girl. Her grandmother had a 'lifelong reputation for defying social conventions,' and it seems Henrietta did too. James Beechey, journalist for *The Guardian* writes in her obituary, 'None of life's vicissitudes could dent Henrietta's bewitching beauty. She was droll, mischievous and uninhibited. She could be exasperating, a menace even, but she was also deeply affectionate and deeply loyal. Quiet courage was perhaps her most impressive quality, a stoical refusal to succumb to self-pity which she maintained till the end.'

TA

the room were extraordinarily intimate and reassuring: an observant nod, an amused smile.' (Taken from an excerpt written by Virginia Nicholson on the Charleston website charleston.org.uk)

Influences of the Post-Impressionists

The composition of this painting is simple and the colours bold. Even though she has flattened the pictorial space, there is definitely a feeling of movement as if Henrietta might stand up and walk away at any moment. One can certainly see the influence of the Post-Impressionists such as Cézanne and Gauguin in her colour choices and expressive brushstrokes. Bell had travelled in Europe visiting Picasso's studio before spending time in Paris. She was present at the groundbreaking Post-Impressionist show curated by Roger Fry in 1910 and it influenced her work every day beyond.

Bells began using colour in a grey, post-war Britain (1916) which was totally unique

at the time and continued to explore a bold palette throughout her career. Some say this love of colour was a reaction to an early encounter with John Singer Sargent, her tutor at The Royal Academy who didn't agree with her 'overuse of grey'.

She took his advice literally and consequently painted objects, furniture, lampshades and textiles with colour. Her home was an eclectic mix of Indian textiles, books, sculptures; Matisse and Picasso's hung on the walls – even her gardens were planted with clashing borders. If you visit Charleston today, you will see the nude figures painted across the fireplace, walls, doors – colour and pattern on every surface. This is the bohemian world of Charleston that Henrietta would have experienced; 'It was an extraordinary treasure chest overflowing with familiar curiosities, beauty, ideas, people and jokes. It reeked of turpentine and toast, of apples, damp walls and garden flowers. The atmosphere was one of liberty and order.'

Henrietta only learnt of her complicated inheritance in a memoir written by her

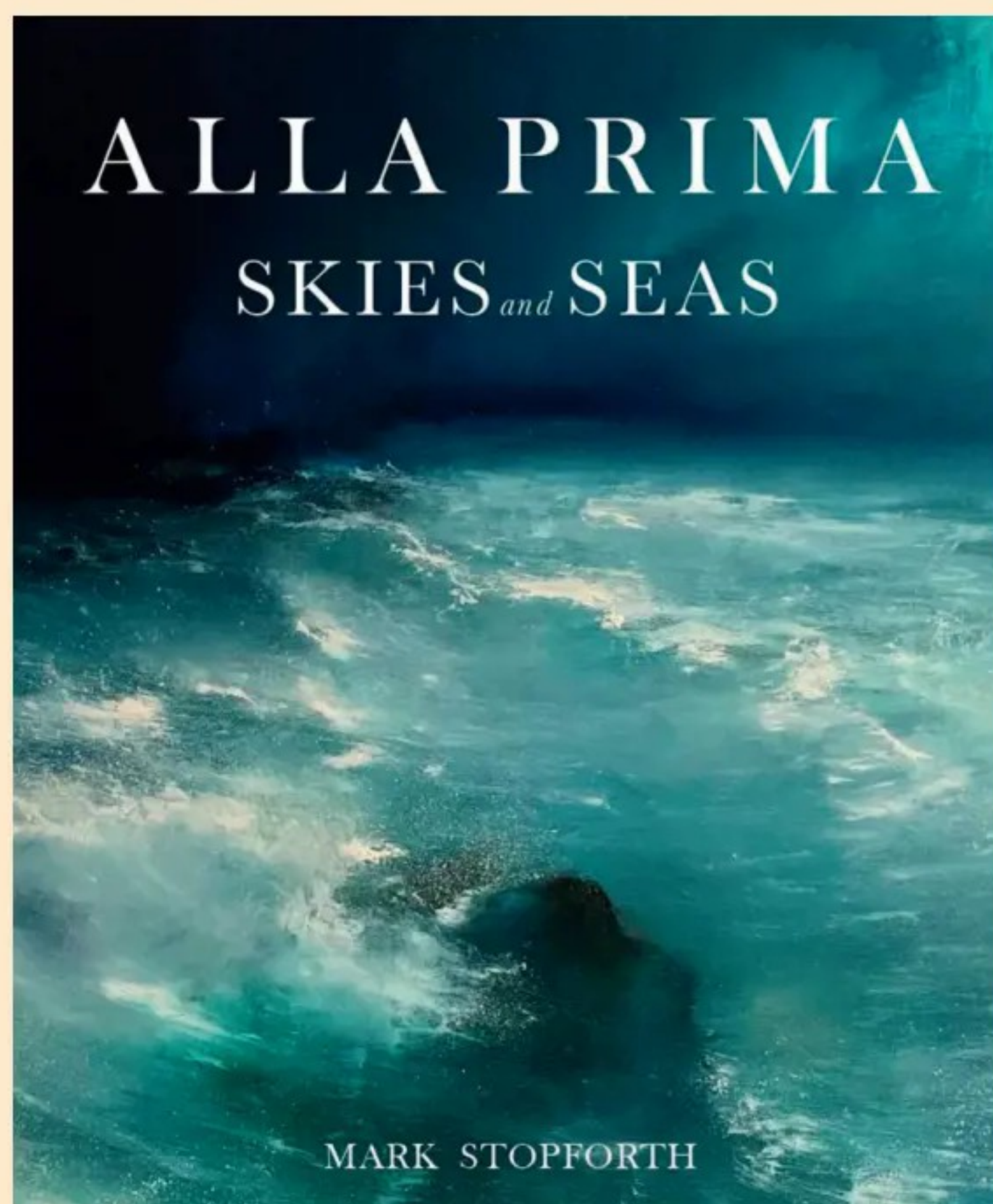


● Subscribers can watch an exclusive bonus video by Sarah to accompany this feature within their Studio Video area on painters-online.co.uk

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

ART BOOKS

Reviewed by Henry Malt



Alla Prima Skies and Seas

By Mark Stopforth

This is a difficult book to categorise. On the face of it, it's about painting seas in oils, but they are very specific seas – and definitely not seascapes. Skies are mostly devoid of character and foregrounds effectively non-existent. Foam-flecked waves swell and crash dramatically and one's thoughts are inevitably drawn to a particular sort of film genre, or to Romantic poetry. Wordsworth would be in his element, though I think Turner might have felt things had gone too far.

"Not for me", you're probably thinking, but I can also guarantee that you would have trouble putting this down. No, I don't think most artists would want to paint exactly like this, but the images are so strong and well-composed that they draw you in and you start to examine and admire the way Mark Stopforth deals with the sea's peculiar solidarity. You'll find there's a lot to be learned here.

Crowood Press, RRP £20, 144 pages (p/b), ISBN 9780719845123

Buy it!

For more insights than you were expecting

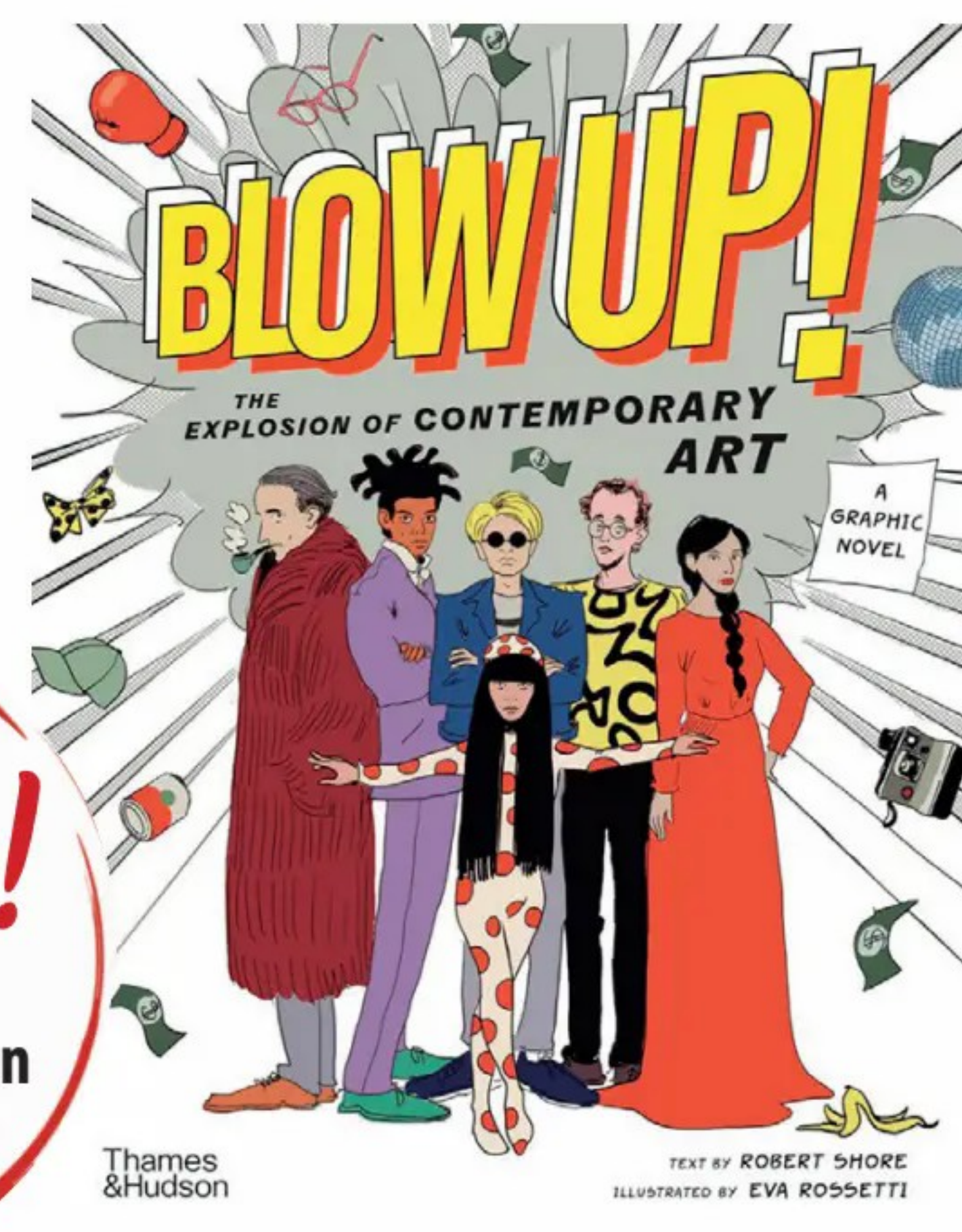
Blow Up! – the explosion of contemporary art

By Robert Shore and Eva Rossetti

You would be forgiven for thinking that you don't need a graphic novel about contemporary art because the fact is, you don't. However, if you want to have some fun watching mildly pretentious people talking about Art (note the capital), this is where your boots can be filled to overflowing. Questions of pure historical accuracy aside and the possibility that there is more than a little fiction here, this is just the most enormous fun.

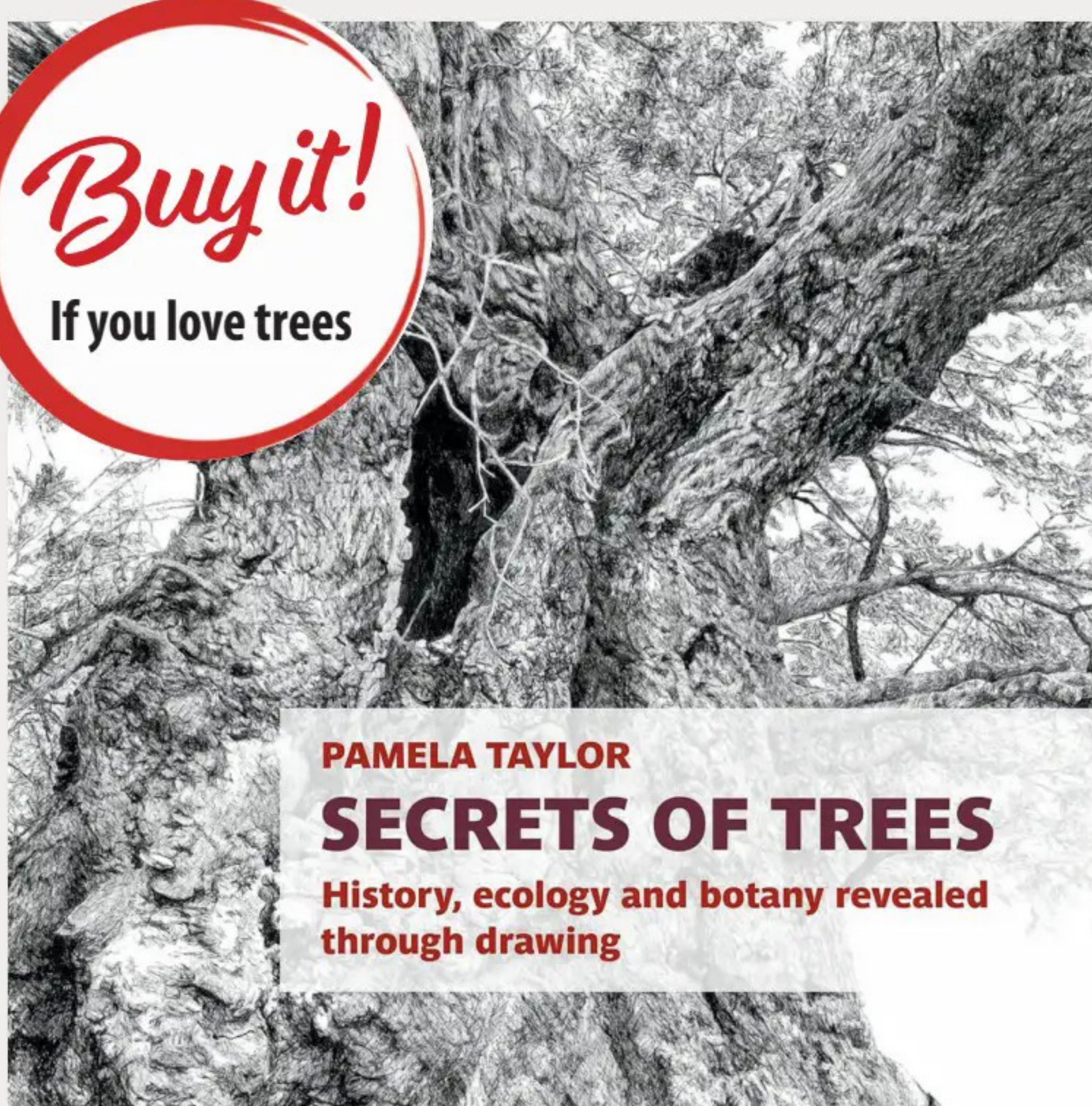
We should say that "contemporary" here refers to everything from about Marcel Duchamp onwards, taking in Dada, Warhol, Kusama, Street Art, globalisation and commercialism. And that's before Digital elbows its way in – if this wasn't such a hasty romp, it would be exhausting, but that's also the point. There are plenty of academic tomes available if you want them, some drier than others, but nothing else that gives you quite such a thrilling quadcopter overview.

Thames & Hudson, RRP £18.99, 232 pages (h/b), ISBN 9780500027981



Buy it!

For a lot of fun and an excellent overview



Secrets of Trees; History, ecology and botany revealed through drawing

By Pamela Taylor

This is not so much a book about trees as a book about the majesty of trees. Pamela Taylor is a botanical ecologist as well as an artist of no little skill; her love of trees extends from the distant prospect to the inner heartwood.

This is not, however, an academic discourse, but rather a reflection on and love letter to these major landscape features. Pamela's approach is to consider how varieties and specimens have become part of her life and to do this by analysing them by means of drawing. Although this is not an obviously instructional book, there is plenty of information on approaches and ways of looking and understanding – a chapter subtitled 'Conveying character in the details' will give you the idea.

This is a delight for any artist who is also a lover of landscape in general, and trees in particular, and conveys Pamela's infectious enthusiasm.

Two Rivers Press, RRP £17.99, 112 pages, ISBN 9781915048264

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

It is a relatively recent revelation to me that what I like to paint is the ‘everyday’. For many years I happily pushed paint around a palette and onto a canvas without a huge amount of consideration as to why I was painting what I was. I’ve always explored a variety of subjects including people, places and inanimate objects. The way in which light falls on a subject and creates a pleasing composition, often in an abstract way, is what drew me to paint it. That is still true but what I now also realise is that ‘everyday’ is a common denominator throughout my work.

A scroll through recent work on my Instagram feed is testament to that. Scenes of London life are followed by a portrait demo piece, a suburban high street and then a jar of Marmite. Someone recently commented on a display of my work which contained a similar variety of subjects: ‘Your paintings are incredibly contemporary even though you’re using such a traditional

medium in oils’. I don’t think her observation was based on the application of paint but rather the themes of the work.

It is perhaps obvious now that I think about it but before I realised I was interested in the ‘everyday’ I often wondered if I should commit to one subject matter: portraits, landscapes or still-life work. Becoming switched on to what inspires me has enabled me to lean into the ‘everyday’ as a subject and not concern myself with defining my work in other ways.

Painting the ‘everyday’

A recent visit to an art club to give a demonstration kickstarted a new series of still-life paintings of kitchen cupboard essentials. The club requested ‘one of your Marmite’ paintings in oils. I have painted Marmite jars a few times over the years and find it to be a good subject for demonstrations because of the challenging shape of the jar and the opportunity to reduce the detail in the label while maintaining a recognisable subject. The nature of art club demonstrations means there is always a race against the clock to finish the work. I enjoyed painting the Marmite jar while talking through my process so much that on the drive home I decided to spend some studio time painting another one but without the pressure of finishing in under two hours! The next day I did just that and the day after that I felt inspired to paint a jar of jam. Posting

For me and many others, going for a run is also an ‘everyday’ activity if not an every day activity! Last year I was fortunate enough to run the London Marathon. Watching the event on TV when I was in my teens is what inspired me to take up running in the first place and last year’s race was the fourth time I’d had the opportunity to take part. It is a truly special day with crowds lining the streets from start to finish; the feeling of crossing the line is hard to beat. I felt compelled to be involved this year even though I wouldn’t be lacing up my trainers this time. Instead, I got up early and headed to the capital with my painting box and a plan to capture something of the day.

It made sense to try to include a London landmark in my painting so I walked from Waterloo to Tower Bridge. Experience told me that wherever I set up there would be crowds of people, race stewards and police – meaning I might get moved on after starting a painting because of the trip hazard I could become. I decided to go for it and see what happened. I arrived at the barriers on the side of the road leading up to Tower Bridge early enough to secure a good spot. I immediately engaged in friendly chat with one of the Met police officers and shared my plan. I set up my painting box next to her and joked she may be in the painting, which didn’t seem to cause concern so I was good to go.

Plein-air painting doesn’t make me nervous anymore unlike the first few times

I did it years ago but I was definitely feeling a little anxious as I began this one because of the close proximity of lots

of people. It wasn’t long before crowds of supporters filtered into the spaces on the pavement and we all got to applaud and cheer as the leading wheelchair racers



▲ Working on a Marmite jar still life in the studio

‘They are simple subjects that form a connection to everyday life.’

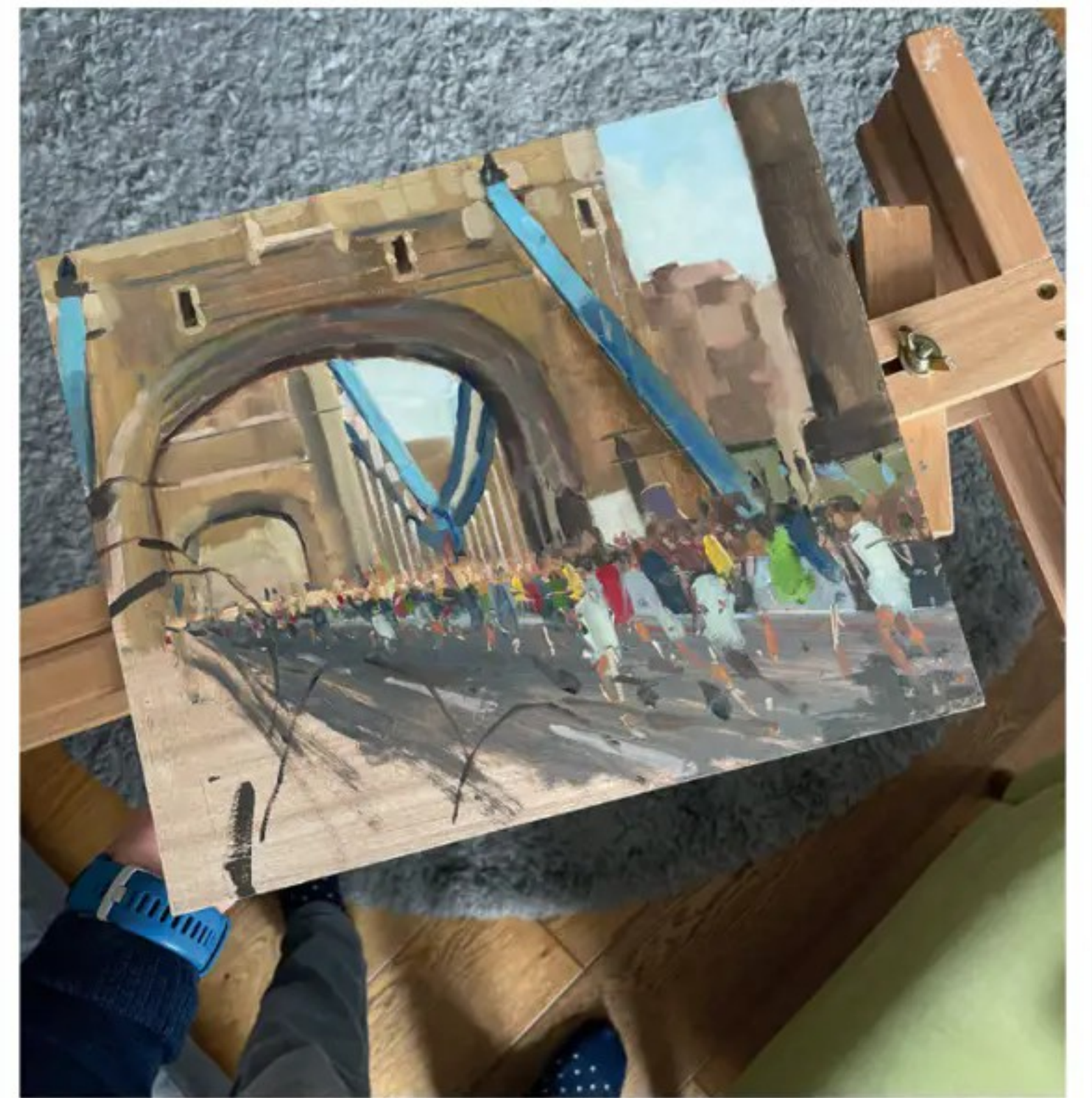
both paintings on social media triggered suggestions from followers of other kitchen cupboard essentials that I might like to paint and so it has continued.



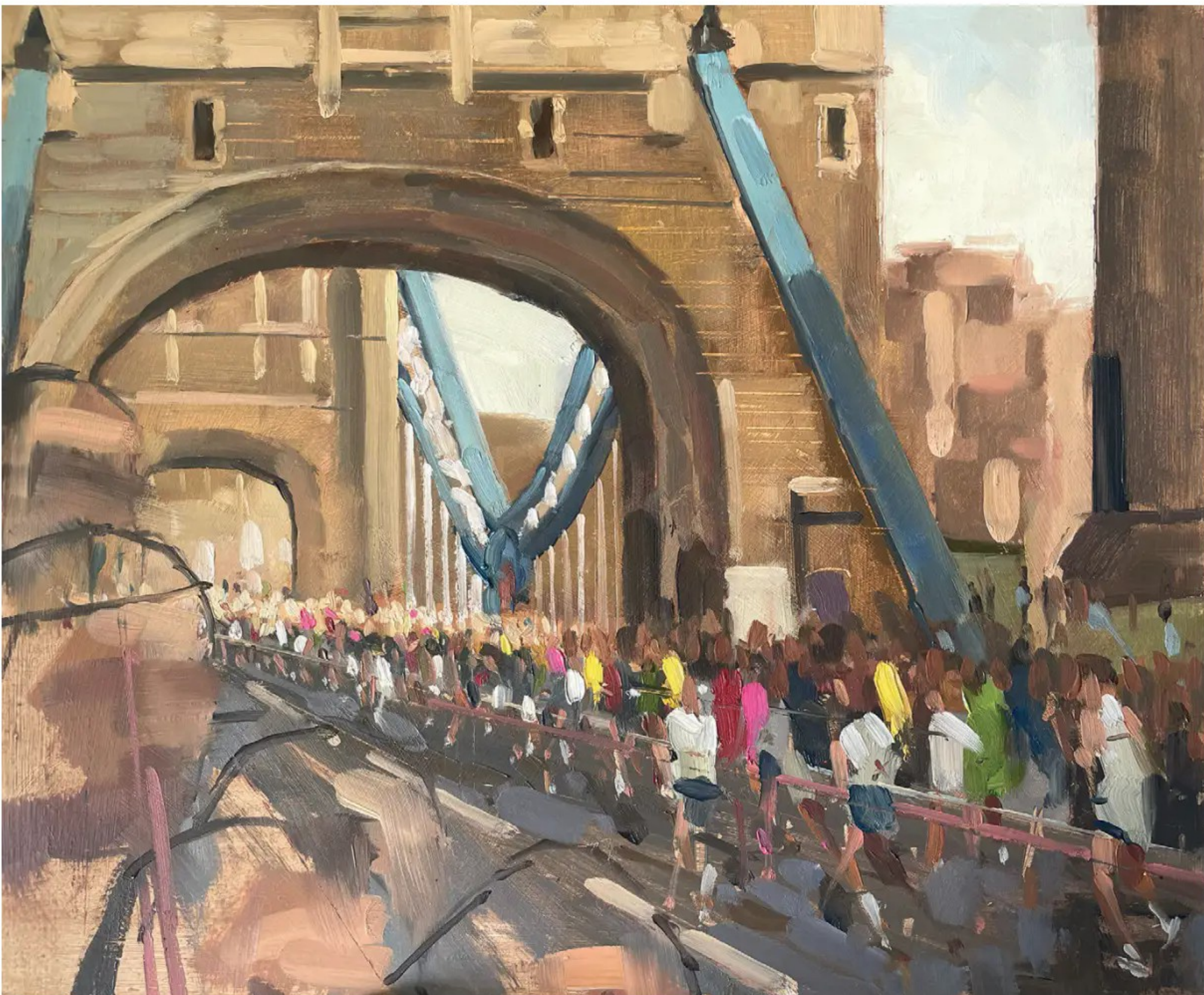
▲ Selfie as the number of supporters and runners grew



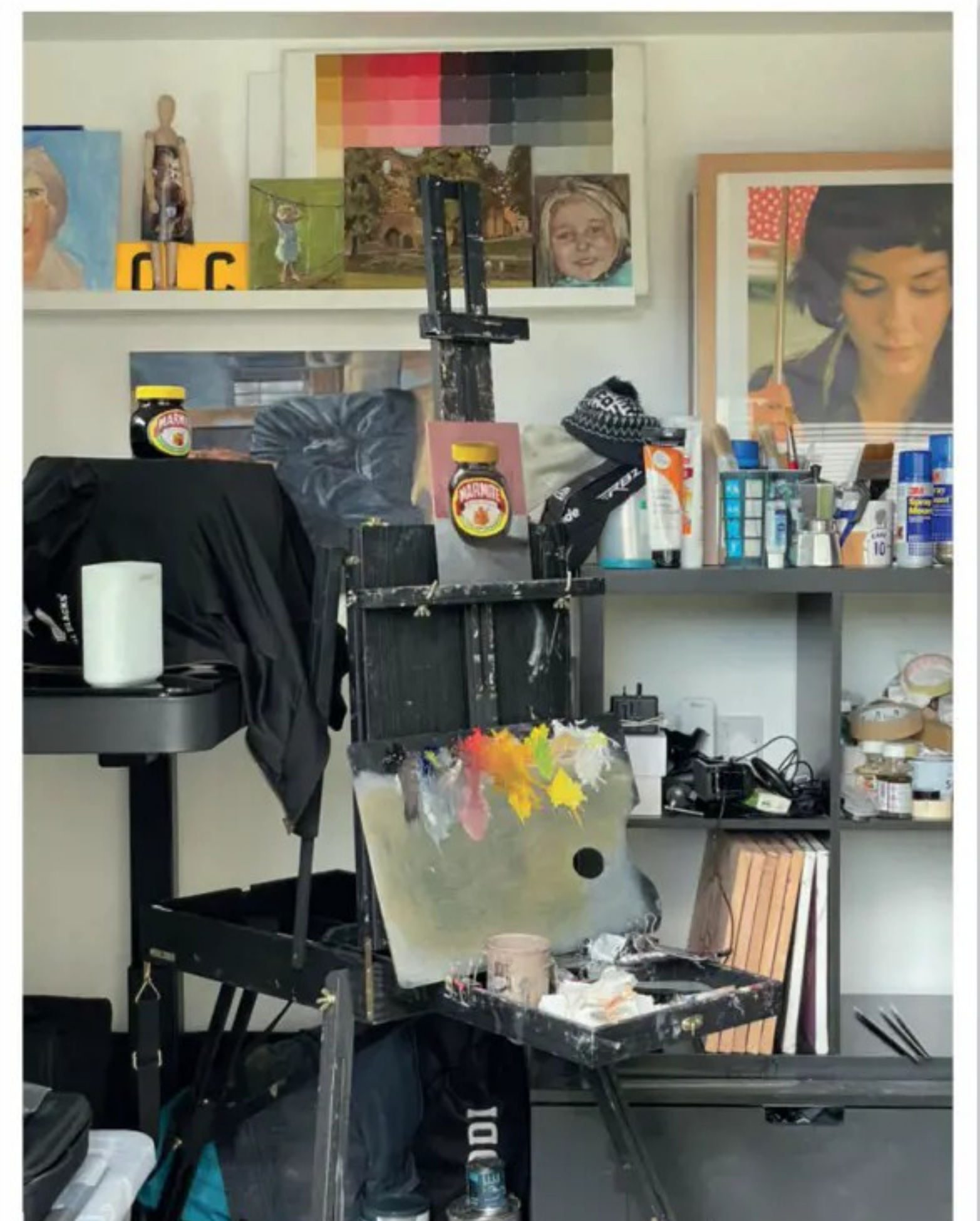
▲ Set up at Tower Bridge while it was still quiet



▲ The stage that my London Marathon *plein-air* painting got to before I escaped the crowds



▲ Finished Tower Bridge London Marathon painting



▲ Recent still-life series on the drying shelf in studio

sped by followed by the elite women and frontrunners from the men's race. I was making steady progress with my painting but also finding it more and more challenging as the crowds around me grew and people vied for positions at the barriers. Having my brushes knocked over onto the pavement and then been on the receiving end of a backpack repeatedly shoving me towards my painting box, I decided to pack up and finish the work in the studio. It was about 80-per-cent complete and I felt that supporters trying to spot their loved ones taking part in the marathon was a better use of the space I was currently occupying. I had a good couple of hours soaking up the atmosphere and attempting to capture something of the day but it was time to relinquish my prime location and head home.

Jumping from painting some kitchen

cupboard essentials in the comfort of my studio one day to taking on one of the most challenging *plein-air* paintings I've ever attempted is what inspires me to paint. At times in the past it felt wrong to work on such different subjects but now I'm aware of the link to the 'everyday' I feel empowered to embrace the variety of subject matter and celebrate it. In a couple of days, I'll be painting at a life-drawing session; the day after that perhaps I'll be painting a view of the Thames close to home. The world around me offers so much that I'm excited about what might grab my attention to be painted next.

One subject I know I return to time and again is anything to do with football and in the coming weeks I'll be embracing that passion full on with a weekend of painting scheduled in the city of Liverpool. At the time of writing, it's close to the end of the

Premier League season and Everton are about to play their final game at their Goodison Park ground. Three artist buddies and I are going to paint outside the stadium on the day of the final game as supporters arrive for the last time at the ground to cheer on The Toffees. We're making a weekend of it so will also paint Liverpool's Anfield and the new Everton stadium while we're there. I'll no doubt write about that experience in my next article. TA

Until next time, *thanks for reading!*



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

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 am running my first solo art exhibition next month and wondering who would you recommend I invite to the private view? I'm working towards becoming a full-time artist and with this in mind, strategically, who should I be thinking of inviting?

A Firstly, congratulations on your first solo exhibition and all the best of luck with it! Whilst it can be really tempting to turn the private view into a party and invite all your friends and family, let's remember that the aim of this event, and the exhibition itself, is to get some red dots on the wall! A big consideration is who your contacts are. If you have previous buyers, invite them. If you have a mailing list, invite them (or some of them). These are the people who have already invested in you if not monetarily yet, at least with their time. These are the customers, or potential customers, who already trust you, so you are halfway towards a sale already.

It is really about asking yourself what the private view is about for you. Sometimes it can be about honouring people who have previously bought from you, as above. Other times it could be about networking, in which case you could consider asking other local artists, local business owners or charities, as it can be a nice way to integrate yourself into the community

and to meet people. You could also invite prominent figures from your community, like the local MP, the mayor or local councillors; part of the remit of their job is to be aware of what is happening locally and show their support. With personal invites such as these, do not underestimate the power of a physical, named invitation, handwritten if possible. This will hold so much more weight than an email and really shows how much you value their attendance.

A good rule of thumb is that if over half the people you invite, attend, you'll be doing very well! So have this in mind and do not be afraid to over-invite; much better for the room to be packed to standing room only, than have just a few awkward, lingering people in the room and lots of un-drunk glasses still on the table. You want to create a real buzz and a sense of 'Wow, look how fantastic, successful and popular this artist is!'. In our experience, what also happens in that situation is that once one or two people start buying, it becomes a bit like a feeding-frenzy and everyone wants a piece of the action. I think that's the kind of thing you're trying to conjure up at a private view, so consider who you can invite to help nurture and facilitate that.

In terms of inviting family and friends, absolutely do invite them but think about the quantity and proportion; you don't want

the exhibition just to be filled with family and friends.

For an event like this to really take off, you need to make a little bit of noise in as many places as possible and it is as much about the build-up as the evening and the exhibition itself; people may not be able to make your private view for a variety of reasons but that doesn't mean to say they don't want to visit the exhibition, so how are they going to know about it? You have done 50-per-cent of the work by creating the art and hanging the exhibition; the other 50-per-cent of the work is yet to be done – marketing and getting people through the door. Have it on your website, have it on your social channels, write a press release for the local papers and magazines, advertise to your local art groups and put up posters, in addition to inviting your previous customers and your mailing list.

There's absolutely no harm in the private view being an event with a blend of all the different groups mentioned; with a little thought, you can get a really nice mix of people together and create an enjoyable and successful evening.

Q I have just had a successful exhibition during which I sold several works. However, it did make me think, what do I do with all the unsold paintings?



▲ A private view at the Mall Galleries in London

► Peter and Tom



▲ Work in storage

They are new to the public but not to me, as they were made over the past three years, and my work is developing and moving on. I know some people paint over work but that seems a little bit brutal! Are there any other options I could consider?

A This is a familiar problem that I know many artists face. There are always going to be paintings that take a little longer to find a home. There is a famous saying that there is a buyer for every single painting, or print, or work of art out there – the challenge is just trying to find where that buyer lives!

If the work really starts to build up, you may want to consider some sort of studio sale. Peter and Tom have both recently done a similar thing with a collection of unframed works. This could be online or perhaps in-person, particularly suited to something like an open-studio event or similar. However you do this, in order for it

not to affect your overall pricing structure, it's important to set limits – perhaps the sale only runs for a set period of time and is only on selected pieces, which all have something in common; for example maybe they are all works on paper, all created over two years ago, all initial sketches, unframed, and so on.

Following on from this, gifting work is always an option. Ask family and friends if they would like to take any off your hands. If they feel uncomfortable not paying you, perhaps say they are on 'long term loan' instead. Original art can also make great gifts – we often take our creativity for granted but an original piece of art that's been taking up space in your studio, might actually make the perfect, thoughtful gift for that wedding you have coming up!

If space is an issue, then you could consider having a cull and throwing some work away, as brutal as that might sound. Every so often, take the time to really look

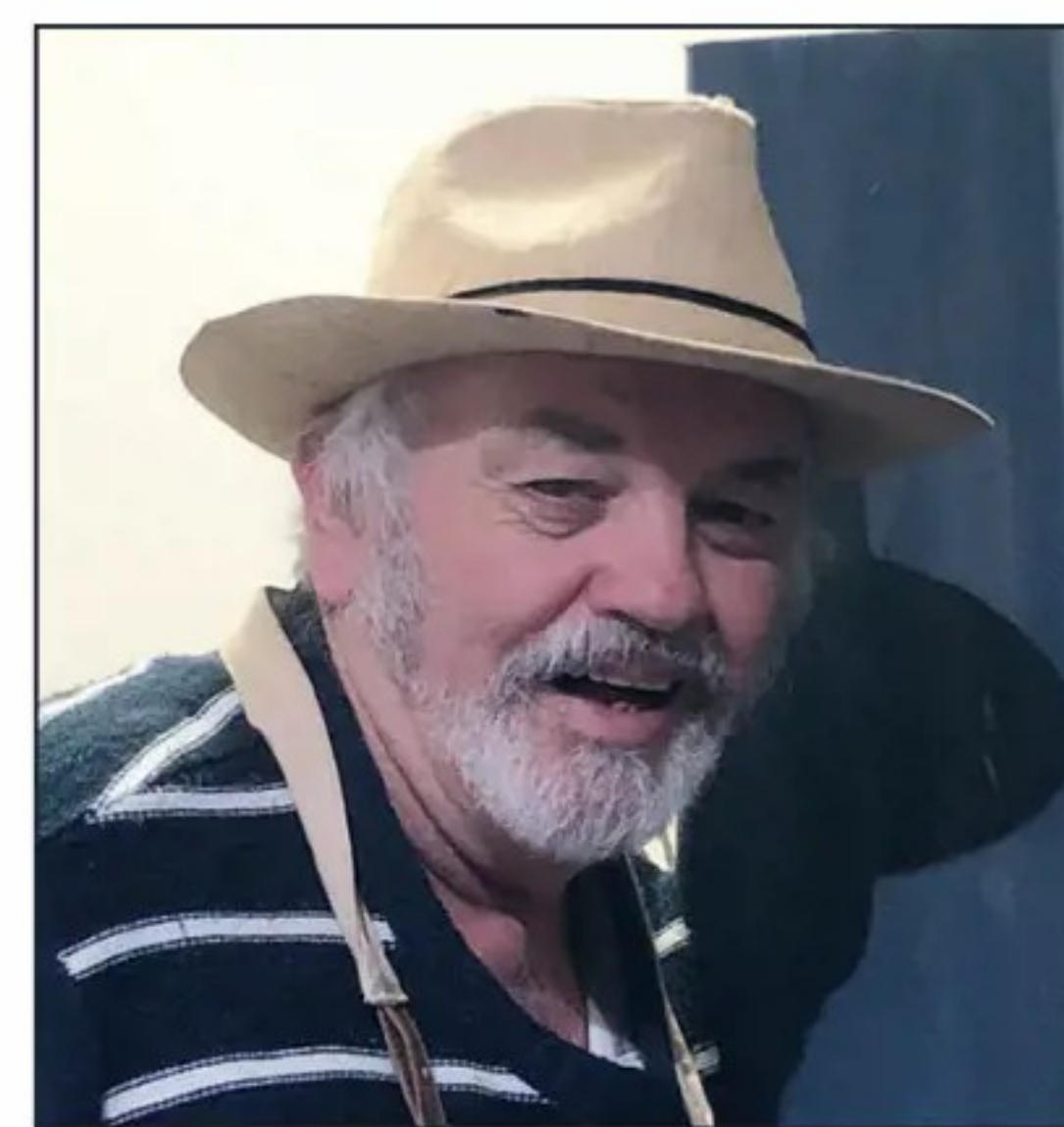
at your work and ask yourself, truthfully and honestly, is that piece subpar? Would I be doing someone a disservice selling them that, based on my current work? Think of it a bit like weeding your garden. Do not be scared to get rid of old paintings or paint over them but do be sensitive and considerate at the same time. This is not something to rush into just because a piece doesn't sell straight away. It may be that a certain piece just takes a little longer to find a buyer – sometimes years. It may come with you to several exhibitions and just as you think it's time for it to be painted over, low and behold, someone will buy it.

If you have the space to do so, there is something to be said for archiving your work. Peter has pieces that he did at university and in the early stages of his career – some that he would be somewhat embarrassed to show now – but nevertheless, it can be quite important from a personal perspective for him to keep them and look back at his own artistic development; he is building up a history and a timeline. It doesn't mean you have to keep everything but keeping some key pieces should be considered.

A final suggestion for those artists who are framing work: work to standard sizes. Have two or three pieces of work that you get framed and then if they don't sell, you can take the piece out of the frame and reuse the frame for something else.

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 26 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

◀ **Home-time Rain, oil on canvas, 23½×23½in (60×60cm)**

A limited palette doesn't mean limited drama

artist at all. Many artists tend to have overloaded palettes of 20 colours or more. It may look impressive but it's never the key to painting impressive paintings. Having a limited core palette of about eight or so colours and a group of colours mainly for highlights is a good way to go. It will allow you to learn to mix any colour you need and having such a limited palette will tend to unify the whole painting; it really does work. Also, while colour charts are interesting things and good fillers in art books, if you find yourself referring to them continually, it will ruin your painting flow completely. Learn to mix colours and it will become intuitive and a part of you as an artist – always having to refer to charts will stunt your growth and enjoyment.

It pays to have different palettes for different subjects. My rainy-day painting palette, for example, consists of black, white, yellow ochre or burnt sienna, ultramarine and alizarin with highlight colours of veridian, cadmium orange, and cadmium yellow. In contrast a seascape palette may consist of white, cobalt blue, viridian, yellow ochre, and red with some highlight colours.

There are always questions about brands of paint. The answer is simple: use the best you can afford. Most of the more expensive brands are good and over time you will choose a favourite. Try comparing the cheaper and the dearer makes and you will see the difference for yourself. Colour is a wonderful thing, but it's not the pinnacle of the painting process; that belongs to tone. Once we get tone right, we can paint wonderful things in just one colour!

TA

Is your palette overloaded?

Having too many colours on your palette can limit your success, warns Mike Barr

Every artist I can think of has their own style, even though they may not recognise it themselves. If we have been around the local art scene for several years, then artists' work is often very recognisable to us; their style becomes a signature. As well as signature styles, there is also a signature use of colour that many seem to have. It's all a part of how we develop over time. Some artists regard themselves as colourists and tend to use lots of colours, whereas others limit colour; using it more as an accent than it being the main focus.

There is no doubt that there are colours that have certain effects on us: some colours or combinations thereof will not allow you to rest; they demand attention. A good, red-based painting will draw attention every time at a show of mixed works but may be difficult to live with once we get it home. On the other hand, a calming almost, monotone work may be easy to ignore in a gallery, but will calm your living area.

Of course, paint manufacturers would love us to purchase all 100 colours in their extensive ranges, but it doesn't help the

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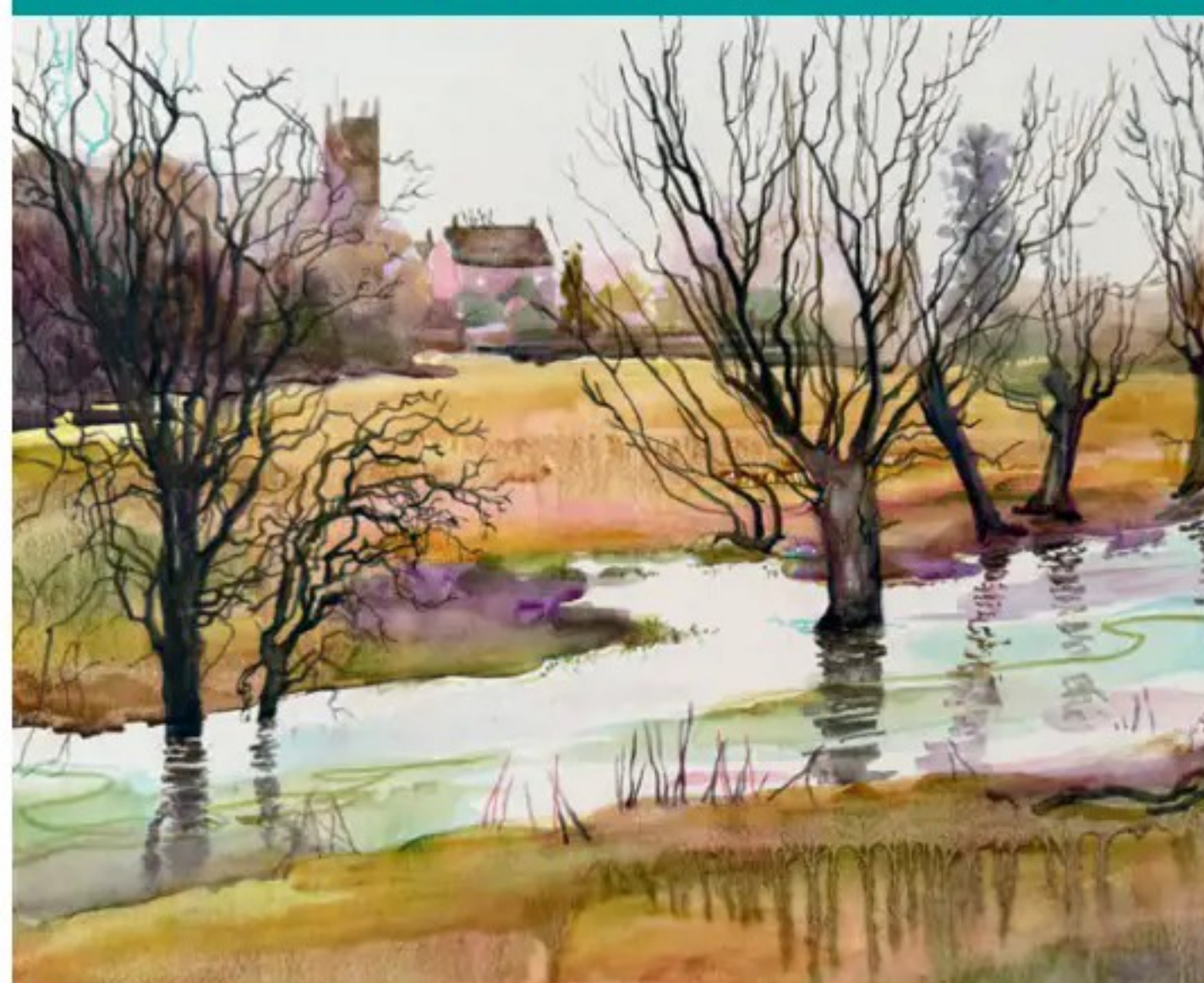
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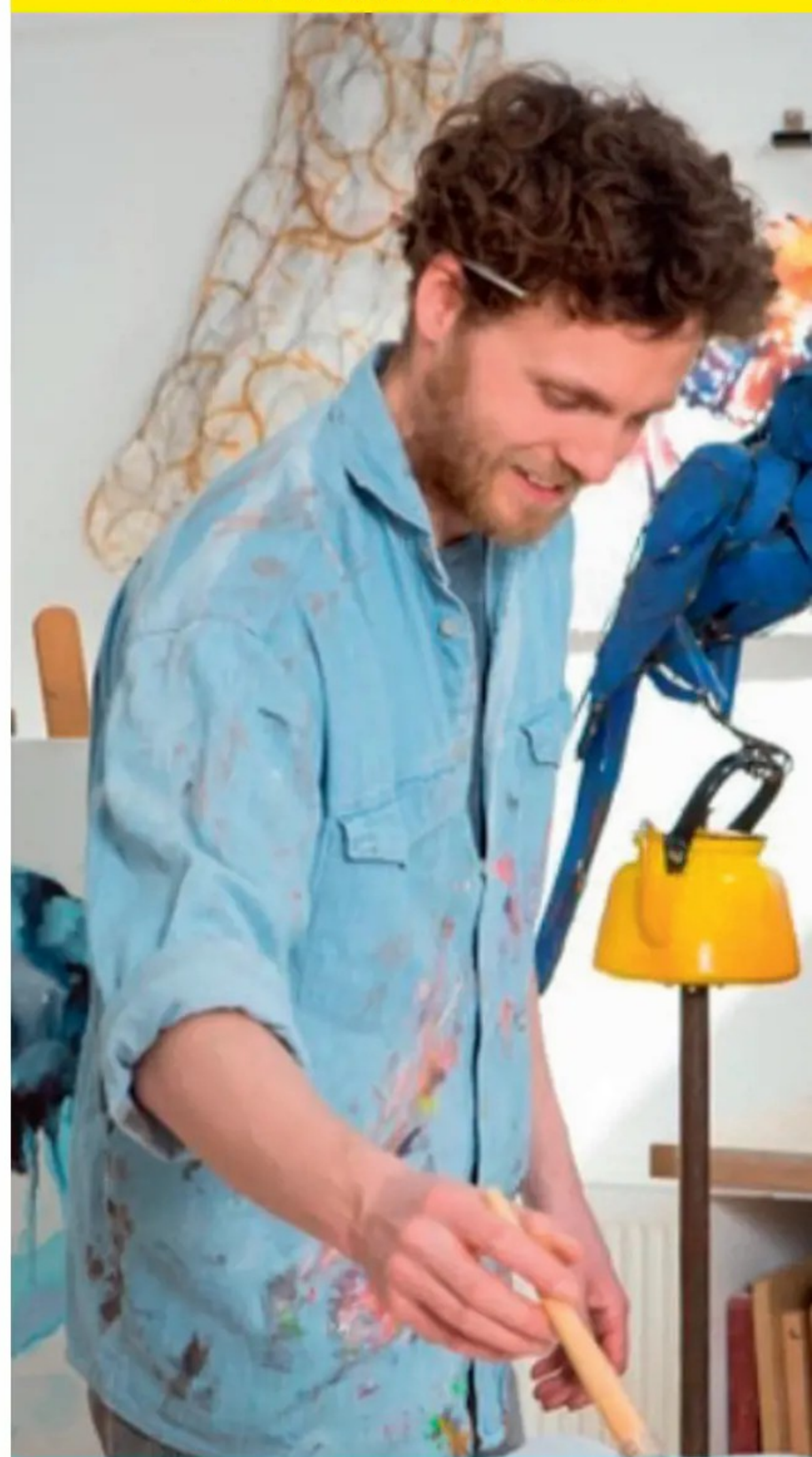
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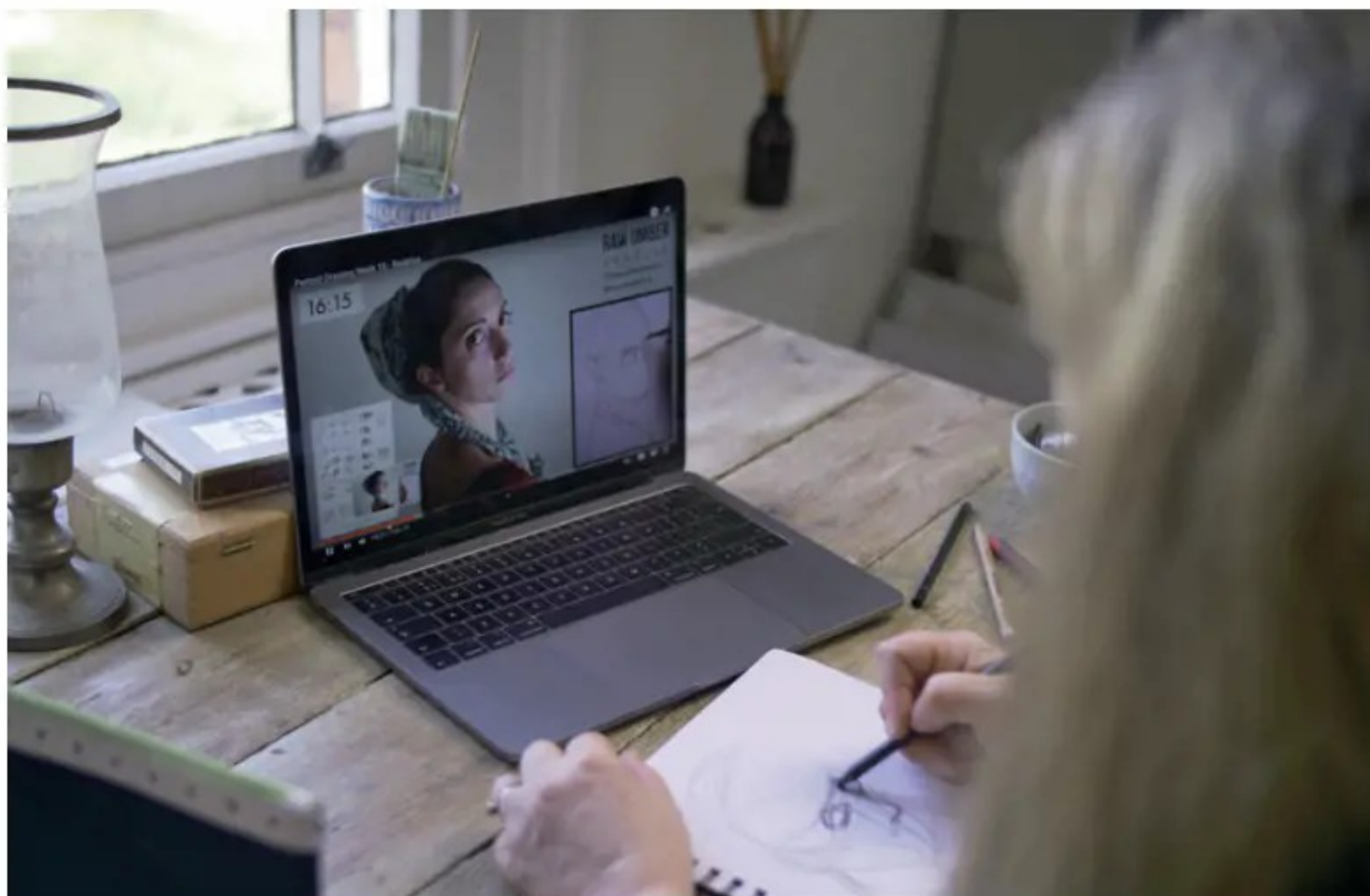
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