

Statement

I attempt to use colour to capture more than the purely visual, because that is only one element of the whole experience. Therefore, I am not always interested in reproducing what we might think of as the real colours of the landscape, but often seek to engender a heightened sense of the place through the use of an unexpected palette with strong contrasts and juxtapositions. The subject of these paintings tends to be mountainous, tough, un-moving, weather-beaten.

Some subjects, particularly coastal scenes, seem to call for a different approach. Where the sky dominates, I do not seek to interpret the colour, although I may intensify it. The true colour of the sky is one of the most miraculous elements in nature and I would not presume to alter it.

The process starts with a photograph, taken when I am out walking in the mountains or by the sea. This is an important part of the sequence because something has made me stop and record that view. Something about colours, forms, light and shade, distance, perspective, juxtapositions. This photograph is then used as an aid to composition on the canvas.

Rapid-drying acrylics allow me to place colours quickly so I can see how they work together, and add layer upon layer. Sometimes I am hard on the paint, applying it thickly, moving and scraping it so that it has a tactile as well as a visual quality. For most paintings, therefore, I prefer to work on board rather than stretched canvas, because I enjoy the resistance of the tougher surface, which allows me to scrape and scratch. The use of brush or knife is a subconscious choice, perhaps driven by the subject-matter.

I am thinking about the essential nature of the scene, not the details. I am interested in how we know what we are looking at, how we understand the shape of the landscape, for example, even though it is a long way off. How do I know that there is a dip there, a mound there, and a wall that follows the contours over there? We interpret visual signs into a whole solid world, more or less successfully, and I want to see if I can put those visual signs down on the canvas in a way that is interesting, or beautiful, or mood-filled.