

An abstract painting featuring thick, expressive brushstrokes in various shades of green. The strokes are layered and curved, creating a sense of movement and depth. The colors range from a pale, almost white-green to a deep, dark forest green. The overall effect is a dense, textured composition that suggests organic forms and natural elements.

Drawing into Landscape
Contemporary British Painting

Curated by Marco Cali



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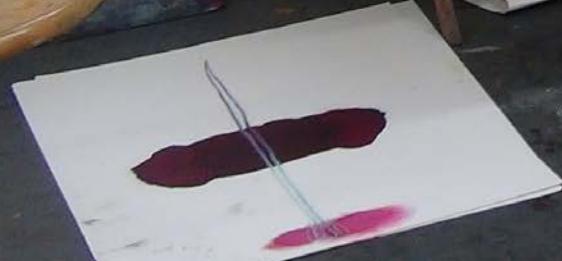
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Cover image. Soothed Grooves, 2017 by Amanda Ansell. Photograph by Doug Atfield

Page 6. Simon Carter's studio, Essex. Photograph by Simon Carter

Page 8. Amanda Ansell's studio, Suffolk. Photograph by Simon Carter

Page 10. Emily Ball's studio, West Sussex. Photograph by John Skinner

Page 12. Keith Murdoch's studio, Northumberland. Photograph by Keith Murdoch

Drawing into Landscape

Marco Cali

Four artists brought together by something similar in the methodology of their working practice, each one spends time outdoors, sketching directly from the landscape. And yet, there is something of a contradiction between these artist's quest for a direct experience with the land, and the making and viewing of their work in an indoor environment, distant from the land.

On first impression, I'm struck at the casual play, the sense of fun that each seems to be having with their work. They are all serious in what they do, but I don't see the beat-your-head-against-a-wall effort of a photo-realist say. They all seem to share that childhood wish of prolonging the game as much as possible, not wanting the fun to stop, of being somewhere new, that instant when we feel joy, this moment on this winter day say, and we want it to never end. But also that

feeling of wanting others to join in, to revel in it, to share with them and see it as they see it.

Here, drawing is the basic tool, with paper as the experimental surface. The ephemeral disposability of this medium is liberating, even if in the end, it's worth keeping really. Every scrap is part of a never ending series of visual try-outs. One way of understanding this could be as one continuous process punctuated by individual paintings that act as waymarkers. Like most artists, they are on a journey which combines a very personal existence within a wider experience. The traditional aim of only showing the completed work, painting in this instance, is what we normally expect. However, by sharing these more ephemeral pieces, ones which are not usually intended for display, they are being very generous in giving a warts-and-all view of their practice.

What can be gleaned from seeing all this? What might be conjured up from walking into their studios and being allowed to root around their desk-space so to speak?

Simon's studio. Piles of sketch books, many opened, scrawled black line drawings cast adrift grouped here and there, tumbling off tables leaving a path. The same landscape drawn and redrawn. Finished paintings stacked to one side, unfinished ones on walls, egging-on the view from the large windows that make up the opposite side. We're high up and the day streams in. Walking the dog along the cliff-top maybe, seeing the

same tide pulled in by the aged moon, and that light of a fading Sun. It's just a coincidence that this was once an undertaker's building and this room was where coffins were made.

Amanda, in her quiet space with its small window a rectangle of green and water. Creaking floorboards damp walls that are so solid and silent with years. The room is so neat and tidy, everything in its place, or is it just because she knew we'd look in? An image, a retracing of a gesture, wanting to find the moment, to catch the fleeting mood. Finding the line that says more than the sum of its simplicity. Going outside, close to, because even on tiptoes it's had to really see through the glass pane. The colour is so much more out here, so intense, so many ways to be green.

Emily, in a wide white space, painting large, on the floor or the wall, dabbing, scraping, smudging, retracing something. It's difficult to put into words but the results speak for themselves. Visceral is too strong, but of the body as much as of the head. I can feel the loam beneath bare feet. I can feel the chill of the earth that sucks through the air. It's there in the texture of the charcoal, soot crumbs that cling onto paper fibre. Strange to think that her final paintings come from such a clinical place, small high-up windows over bare walls at one end, and a framed glazed-off garden at the other. Outdoors she spreads the material on the ground, plastic tarpaulin and she reaches over the paper with a seemingly messy control of the medium. It's something akin to making mud pies, or spreading

clay water over a stone. She works surrounded by the damp landscape, time, fragility, motherhood.

Keith's paintings, small and somehow precise, simple awkward shapes in straight-out-of-the-box colours. A bank holiday trip to the countryside, drawing in the backseat waiting to arrive expecting the adventure to come, fizzy pop and ice lolly, then the view after the long climb and being left mouth wide with the wonder of it all. His studio is a boys den. A chair here, a small box-bookcase crammed full from the last 'tidy-your-room' order, CDs and a drummer's chrome stool. The retreat from the world where it's possible to re-assemble it. And the many fat sketchbooks, gorged with paint, stuffed in between the paper like pressed tree leaves.

These paintings and sketches are all emotive responses. Adults being children, playing with paint. Guided feelings, allowed to flow freely but that in the end must work within the boundaries of the frame. They exist as paintings in their own right and not optical equivalents, and must satisfy the unwritten rules that make such pieces successful. They might be completed in a process of continuously returning to the painting over days, months or even years, or maybe in that fortuitous moment in time when they are done and dusted in one sitting. In each case, Amanda, Emily, Keith or Simon are completing a painting, wanting to wish out of thin-air that something they experienced whilst outdoors. And in each case, the painting must satisfy both this wish and that need to work within

the logic of the surface it sits on. And of course, since they are not aiming for strict visual representation, then they are not like postcards of the place that act as tokens of ownership.

Or perhaps they are. As John Berger put it in *Ways of Seeing*: 'Oil painting depicts things that are...buyable... This analogy between possessing and the way of seeing which is incorporated in oil painting, is a factor usually ignored...

To paint is to own. To paint something is not unlike buying it and putting it into your house. If you buy a painting you buy also the look of the thing it represents.'

But what these artists want to own is not the acreage but that moment of wonder, the ecstasy of seeing, of being at this point at this time feeling this way.

This is the unintended consequence of a painting tradition; Plein-air. Like many pleasures or moments beyond words, in English we like to hide behind the skirts of another language. And in this instant it's wanting to own that moment that is out-and-out marvel and yes, play.

So how do we get there? How do these artists stay within this frame-of-mind? How do they stop it becoming a mannered exercise?

They return each time to where the experience is. To where they can rekindle the moment.

This is where the adult within guides the child. Each has come to understand how their own internal clock mechanism works. Through persistence and open-minded curiosity, they have each made this individual discovery, a journey that continues, a life-long obsession because even as the adult understands, the person within moves on.

An intricate circularity then. The painter returns to sketch the land, to renew the feeling for it as time passes and the season moves on.

So what is at the root of our fascination with landscape painting anyway?

It is a long tradition, although not so very long within the story of Western art as a whole. But for us, here and now, we can take one painting and one painter from the past and frame it all to suit our current world view.

The painter I am referring to is Nicolas Poussin and specifically his work *Et in Arcadia Ego*, now in the Louvre. This depicts a pastoral idyll, of pure, free, rural existence into which our own mortality comes into question. Like Poussin's complex painting, full of symbolism as it is, the works in this exhibition seem to say that paint itself can offer some solace to this fact of our own transience. Just as we are aware that these fleeting moments must pass, we wish them not to and in some way, they do not. They continue to exist as paintings.

And here we are again with that painter's paradox. Because as they continue to leave the studio to return to the land and work anew, they are back to the moment of bliss, when they can themselves settle back into that fleeting-for-ever. This escape to Eden of sorts, is a running back to a lost golden age, that wish within us all to go back to the place we were happiest, where eternal youth and the endless future reign. A never ending summer-long school holiday perhaps.

There is something about wanting to unlock this mystery, how to return to that distant past. It seems that there is some alchemy at work here in front of these pictures. Pigment is caked onto some surface and it is itself off the land, dead and inert as it sits there, but it can evoke a deeply emotive response. Perhaps, by spying over the artist's shoulder, it is possible to unlock this mystery. By seeing the drawings, the scraps of notes and by peering into their studios, we are looking at the odd monastic devotion to a subject matter. A way of being where these adults with their serious intent, play with paint, smudge and scribble to get at the moment of not thinking.

There is something immediately playful about each artist's work, with a vivid energy in each of Emily, Keith and Simon's works whereas Amanda seems more thoughtful. Was she such a child I wonder. And is there something in Keith and Simon, both male artists, that can be read in their work? Both seem to sit distant from the landscape, ascertaining it from afar, observing, taking a measure, perhaps

in thrall to the view, light, sublime... Or is this just masculine stereotype, surely they are not conquering or surveying with these streaks and daubs.

But maybe it's Emily and Amanda that show how they are a counter to this. Both sit within the landscape, in a close-to encounter with it. Theirs seems to be a much more intimate and internal journey.

Is this a coincidence? After all, a sample of four to stand for all humanity is no sample at all.



Simon Carter

My studio is on the Essex coast: A landscape of beaches, promenades and low cliffs, of golf courses and remnants of grazing marsh, of seawalls, saltings, mudflats, creeks and quays. In summer the towns are populated with day-trippers heading for the beach. By the end of the summer the marshes are refilling with wintering ducks and geese.

I make drawings in the landscape. I carry with me an A4 pad and a tin of graphite sticks, pencils and oil pastels. I am not very interested in the idea of selecting a subject or of setting up to paint. I just respond to things seen with rapid drawings, usually returning to the same spot month after month.



Drawing, 5 April 2017
21 x 30 cm

Drawing, 12 April 2017
21 x 30 cm





In the studio I use these drawings to find a subject for the paintings. I want something that maintains my interest and that I do not use up too quickly. The subject is important and I would hope the paintings end up being honest, expressing something truthful about the initial subject; but it is not the subject that makes the painting. Subject, if not irrelevant, is mainly a matter of personal choice. Painting exists in the dialogue between subject and its means of expression. I would hope that in the studio the drawings, that is the subject, are transfigured into paint. The thing on the wall existing only and entirely as paint.

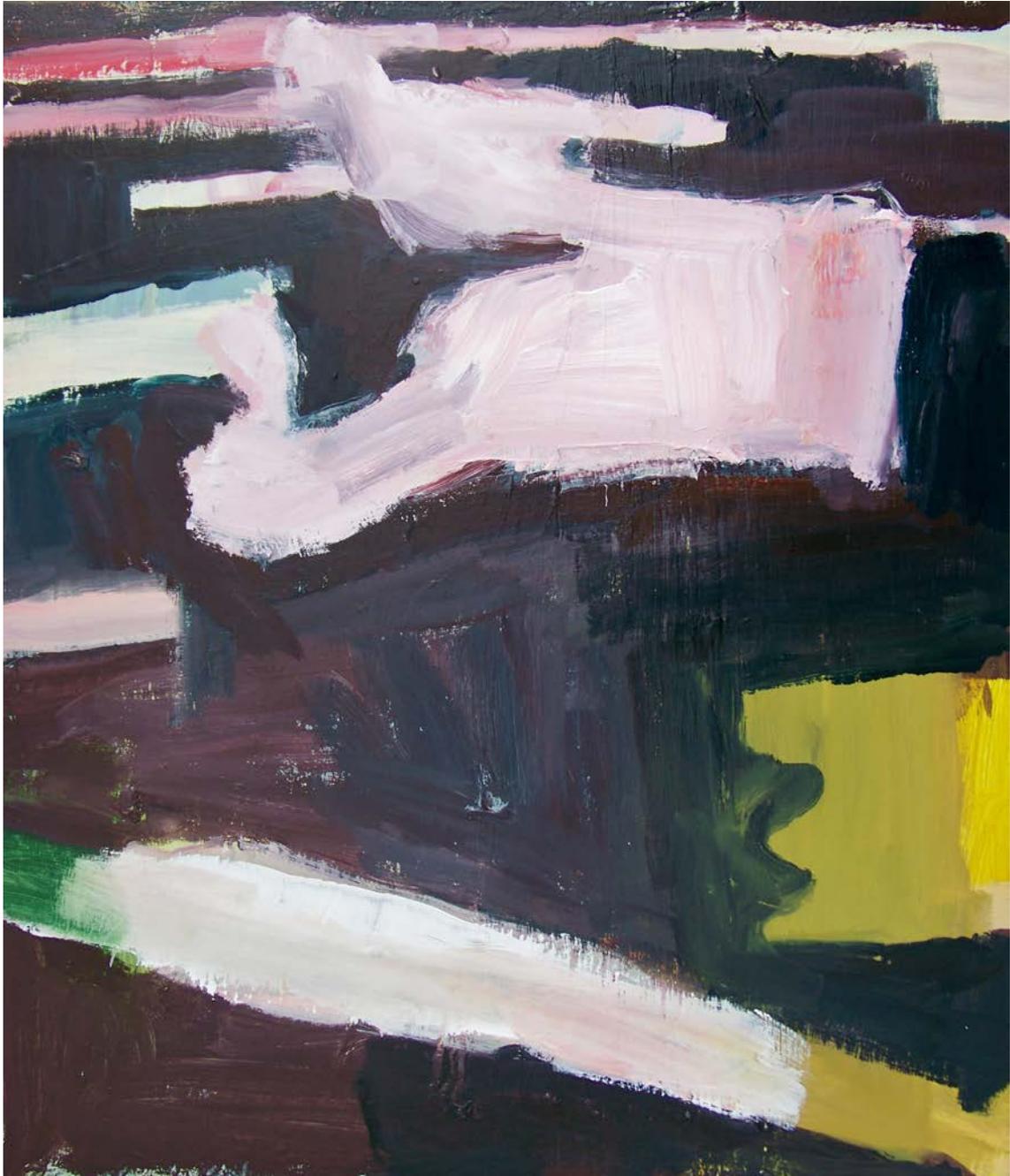
I am not sure why I choose to paint landscape. Anything could be a source for painting but my landscape sustains me in some way and acts as a library of possibilities. The landscape feeds unexpected and uncontrolled information into the process. There is always the strong possibility that things are not going to be as you envisaged.

And it is pleasingly unfashionable, as ever, to paint the landscape.



Drawing, 18 April 2017
21 x 30 cm

Following page:
Creek, 2017
Acrylic on two canvases
Each 70 x 60 cm





CV

Born in Essex 1961

1980-81 Colchester Institute, Essex

1981-84 North East London Polytechnic

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2017 Approaching the Remote, The Minorities, Essex
- 2016 Simon Carter: Paintings, SEA Foundation, Tilburg, The Netherlands
- 2015 The Series Paintings, Messum's, London
- 2014 A Walk in the Park, Art Exchange, University of Essex
- 2014 The Crypt, Marylebone Church, London
- 2013 The Shapes of Light, Messum's, London
- 2011 Borderlines, Messum's, London
- 2010 Representation, The Cut, Halesworth, Suffolk
- 2010 Promenade, University of Essex
- 2010 7 New Paintings, Messum's, London

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2017 Contemporary Masters from Britain, touring to Yantai Art Museum, the Jiangsu Art & Craft Museum, Nanjing, Jiangsu Art Museum, Nanjing, and Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts, China
- 2017 Contemporary Masters from the East of England, The Cut, Halesworth, Suffolk
- 2017 Contemporary Watercolours, Royal Watercolour Society, Bankside Gallery, London. Prizewinner.
- 2017 Painting and History, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China
- 2016 Slippery & Amorphous, Bushwick International Exposition 2016, Art Helix, New York
- 2016 Messum's, Art Toronto, Canada
- 2016 The Tutors Show, The Atrium Gallery, Seawhites, West Sussex
- 2016 Colchester Art Society: celebrating 70 years, Firstsite, Essex
- 2016 Belrose Highlights, SEA Foundation, Tilburg, The Netherlands
- 2016 Slippery & Amorphous, The Crypt, Marylebone, London
- 2015 Art Toronto with Messum's
- 2015 Contemporary British Watercolours, Maidstone Museum, Kent and tour
- 2015 Contemporary Watercolours, Royal Watercolour Society, Bankside Gallery, London. Prizewinner.
- 2015 The Brentwood Stations of the Cross, Brentwood Cathedral, Essex
- 2014 Contemporary British Painting, Huddersfield Art Gallery
- 2014 @PaintBritain, Ipswich Art School Gallery, Suffolk
- 2014 Easterlies, Abbey Walk Gallery, Grimsby, Lincs
- 2014 Art Toronto with Messum's
- 2014 Contemporary Watercolours, Royal Watercolour Society, Bankside Gallery, London
- 2014 Action: Abstract Painting, Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
- 2013 Art Toronto with Messum's
- 2013 East Contemporary Art, Waterfront Gallery, UCS, Ipswich
- 2012 Marmite Prize IV, exhibition touring nationally
- 2012 New East Anglian Painting, Ipswich Art School Gallery, Suffolk
- 2012 Toronto International Art Fair with Messum's
- 2012 Bacon to Rego: Great Artists, Abbot Hall, Cumbria
- 2011 Toronto International Art Fair with Messum's
- 2011 Sketch 2011, Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire
- 2011 Contemporary Perspectives on Watercolour, Mall Galleries, London

- 2010 Threadneedle prize exhibition, Mall Galleries, London
- 2010 Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts, London
- 2010 Toronto International Art Fair with Messum's
- 2010 East Coast Influences, Messum's, London

Curating

- 2015 Contemporary British Watercolours, Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery, Kent
- 2015 The Brentwood Stations of the Cross, Brentwood Cathedral, Essex
- 2014 @PaintBritain, Ipswich Art School Gallery, Suffolk
- 2012 New East Anglian Painting, Ipswich Art School Gallery, Suffolk

Collections

Abbot Hall, Cumbria
 Angel Hotel, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk
 Astro Lighting, Harlow, Essex
 Colchester Art Society Permanent Collection
 East Contemporary Art, UCS, Ipswich
 Epping Forest District Museum
 Falmouth Art Gallery
 Ipswich Borough Council
 King Edward VI School, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk
 Komechak Art Gallery, Chicago, USA
 Madison Museum of Fine Arts, Georgia, USA
 New Hall School, Chelmsford, Essex
 Priseman Seabrook Collection
 Rugby Art Gallery and Museum
 Salthouse Harbour Hotel, Ipswich, Suffolk
 St. Edmundsbury Borough Council
 Swindon Museum and Art Gallery
 University of Essex



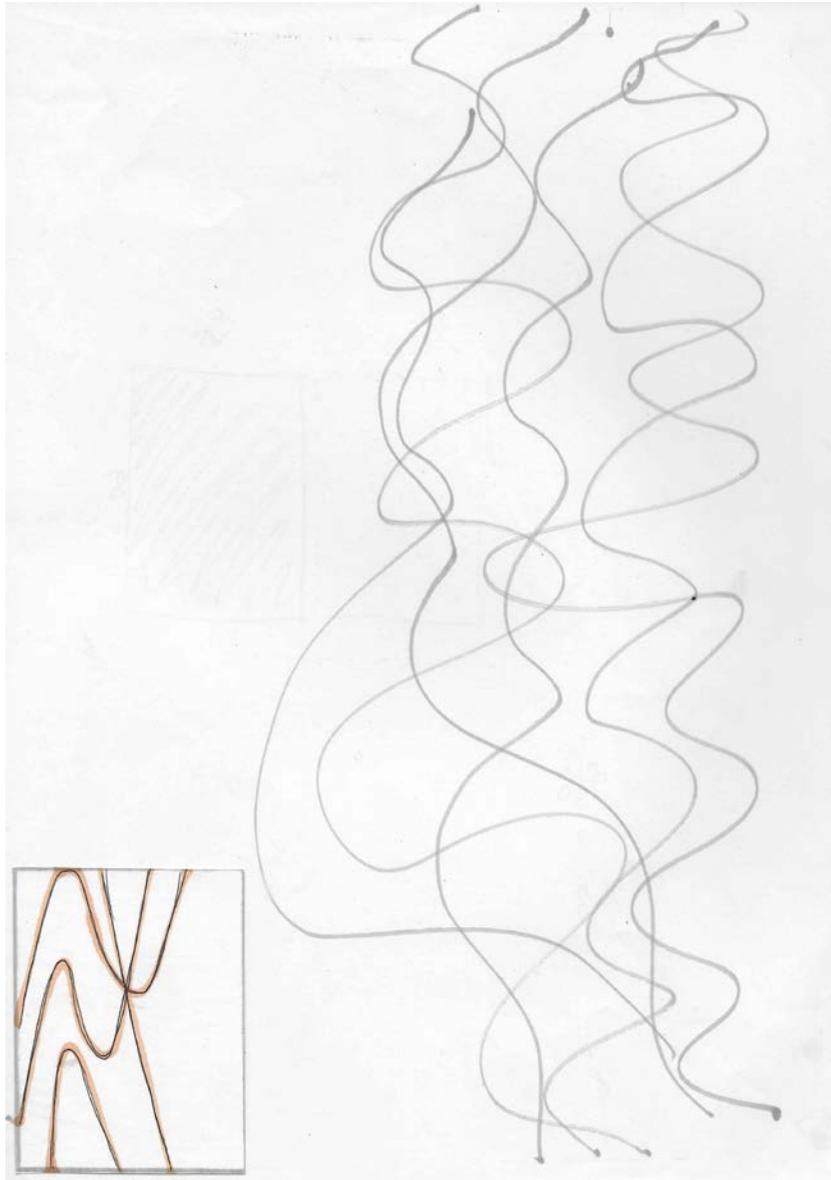




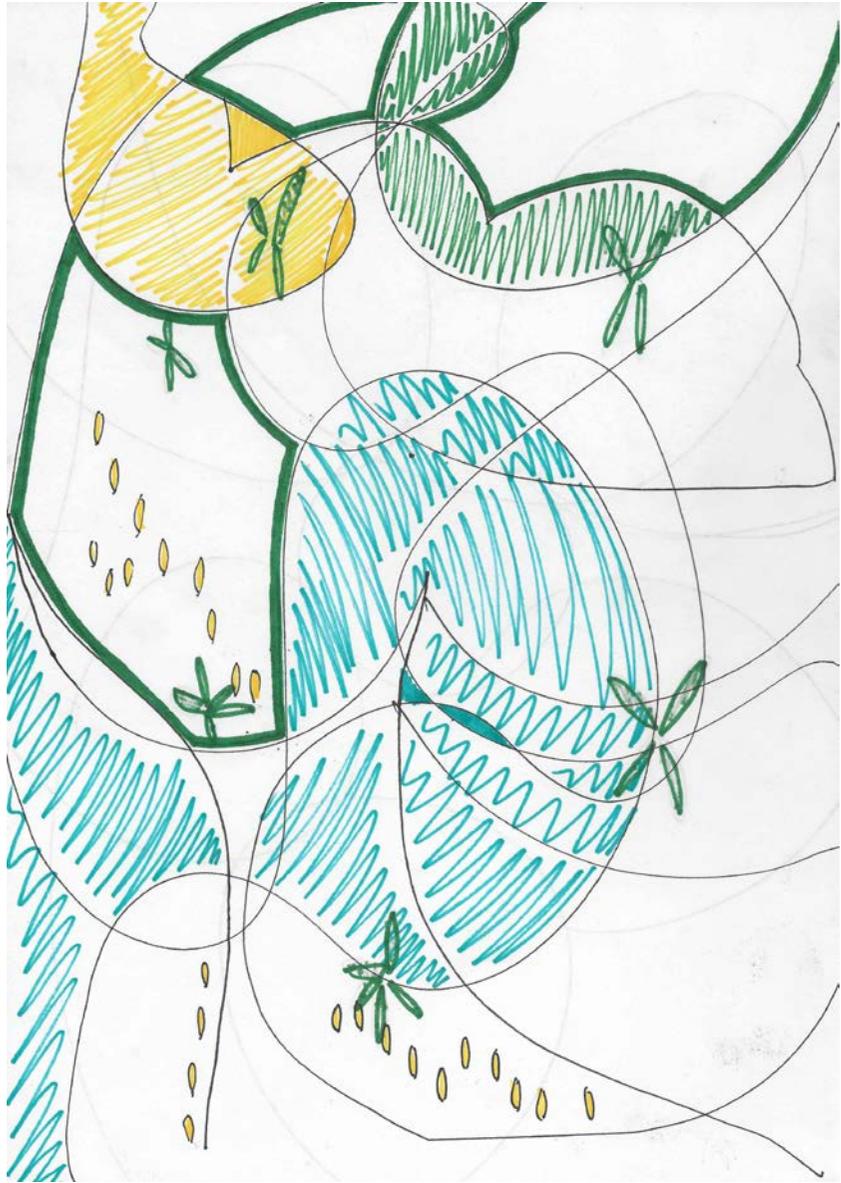
Amanda Ansell

A couple of years ago I moved into a new studio, which overlooks the river. Here, I have a constantly changing watery landscape outside my window.

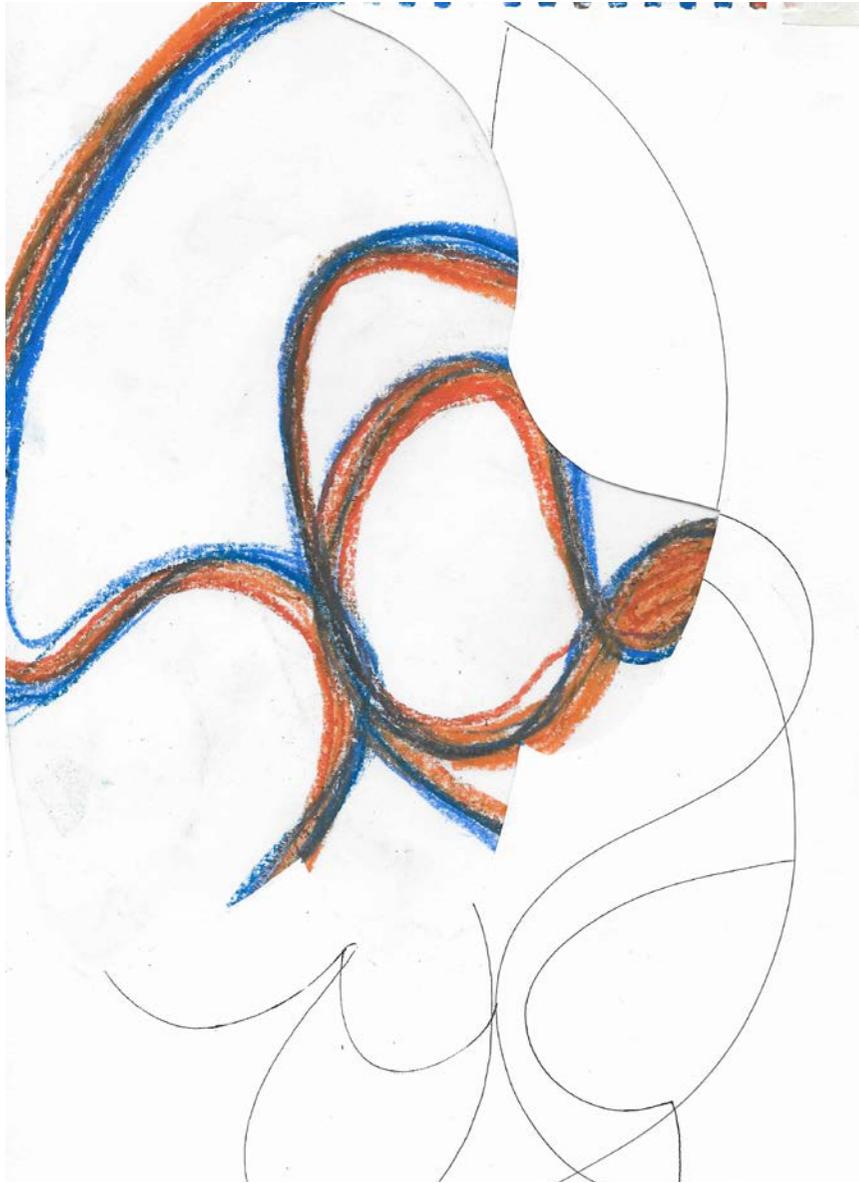
Every week, there is a process I go through: I engage with the water, the landscape around it and the space which surrounds me. I'll start to make pen or pencil doodles, create pastel drawings. Some are wiped away or discarded because I don't always think of these creations as final artworks. They are preparatory studies; part of a preliminary phase where I am inhabiting the space and information gathering. This ritual helps set me up for what is going to take place in the studio on that day, or supports my wider practice by generating ideas and experiences which can be used in the future. It helps me make early decisions about what I want to bring to a painting.



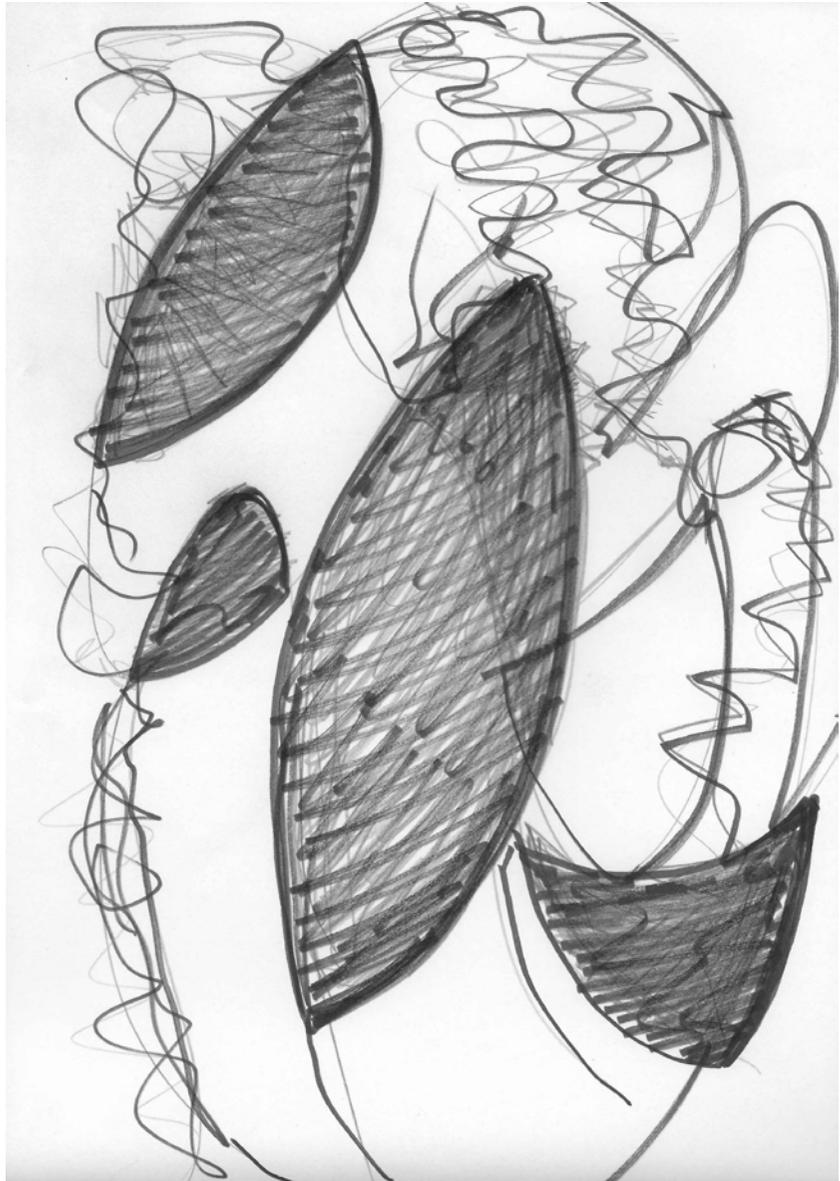
Drawing for
Soothed Grooves 1



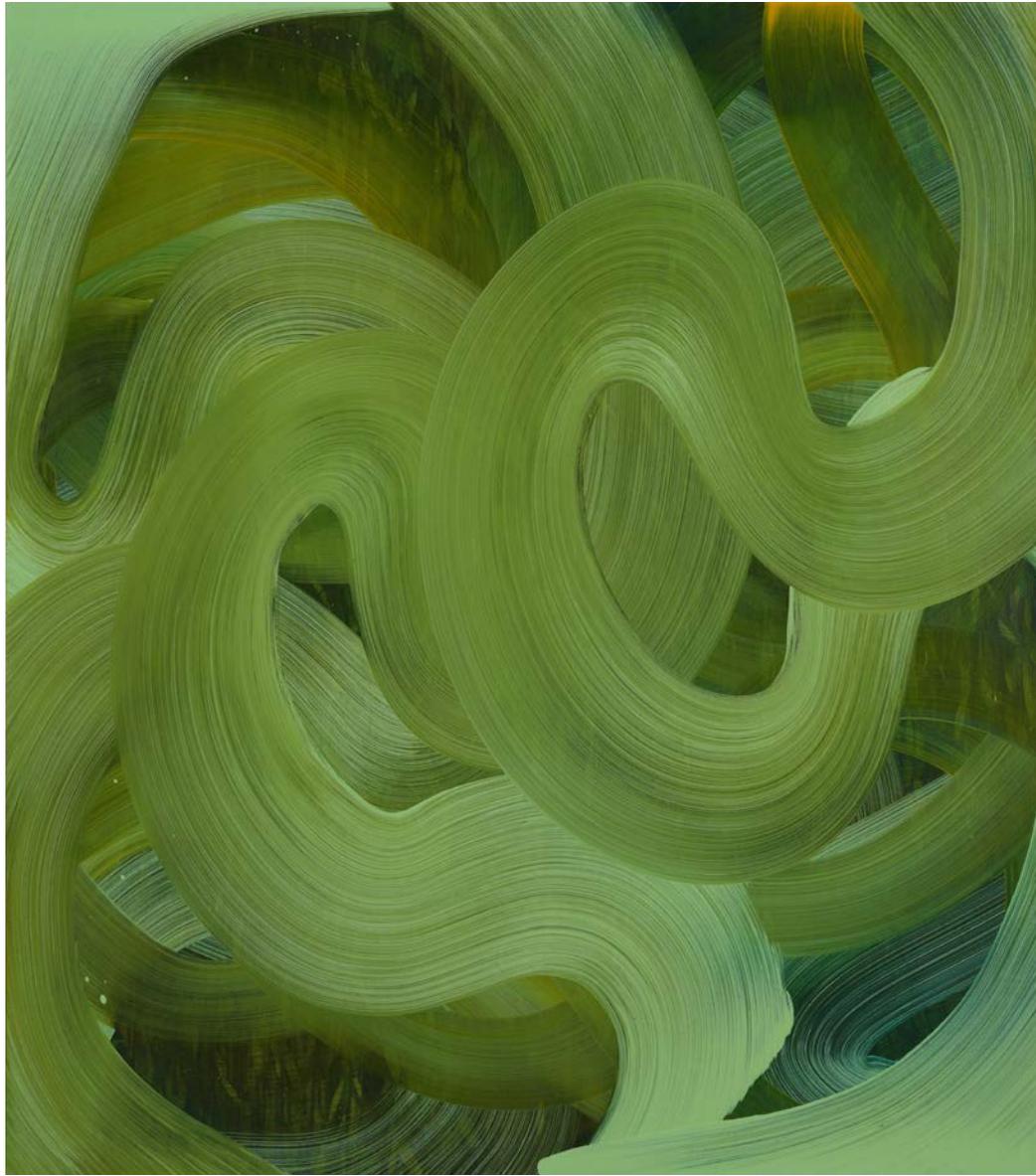
Drawing for
Soothed Grooves 2



Drawing for
Soothed Grooves 3

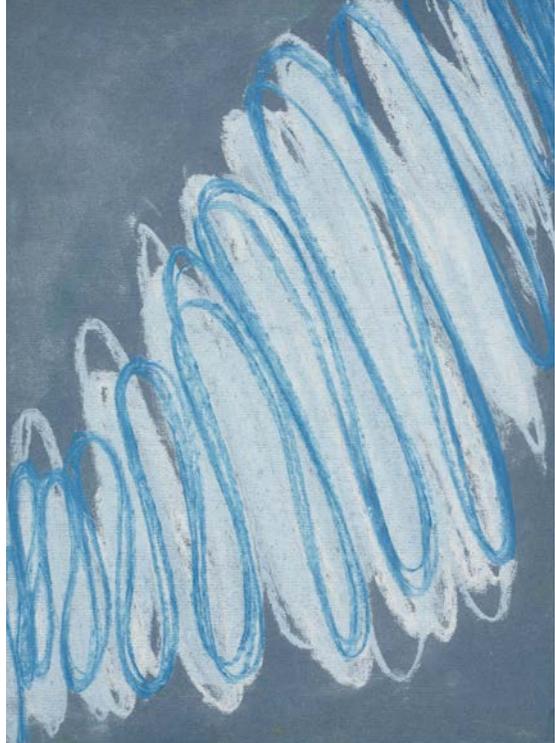


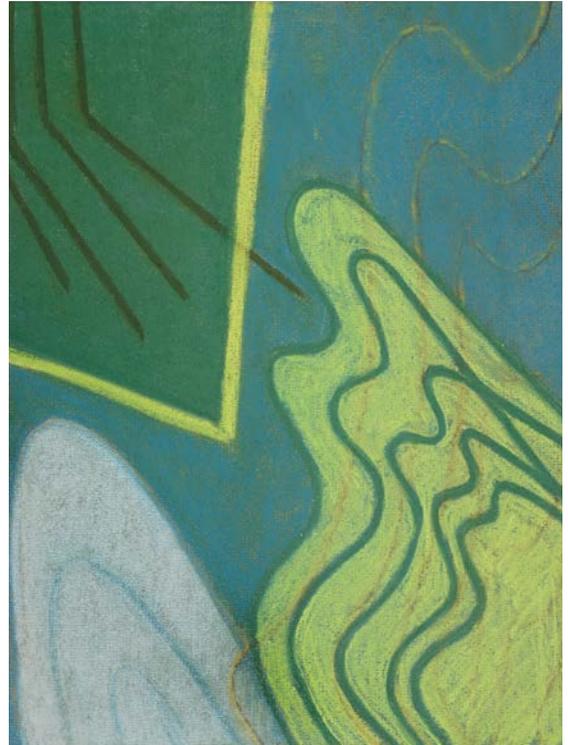
Drawing for
Soothed Grooves 4



Soothed Grooves, 2017
Oil on canvas
92.5 x 81.5 cm

Using this preparation, I paint repetitive marks and forms from the landscape and then combine these with rhythmical curved lines and gestural painting constructs. I am interested in a creative connectedness with natural surroundings. My work explores this interrelationship and emphasises how we can find play and wonder in the natural spaces around us, whilst also hinting that our survival fundamentally depends on nature existing.





Previous page:

Formation 1, 2017

Pastel on paper, 32 x 23.5 cm

Formation 2, 2017

Pastel on paper, 32 x 23.5 cm

Formation 3, 2017

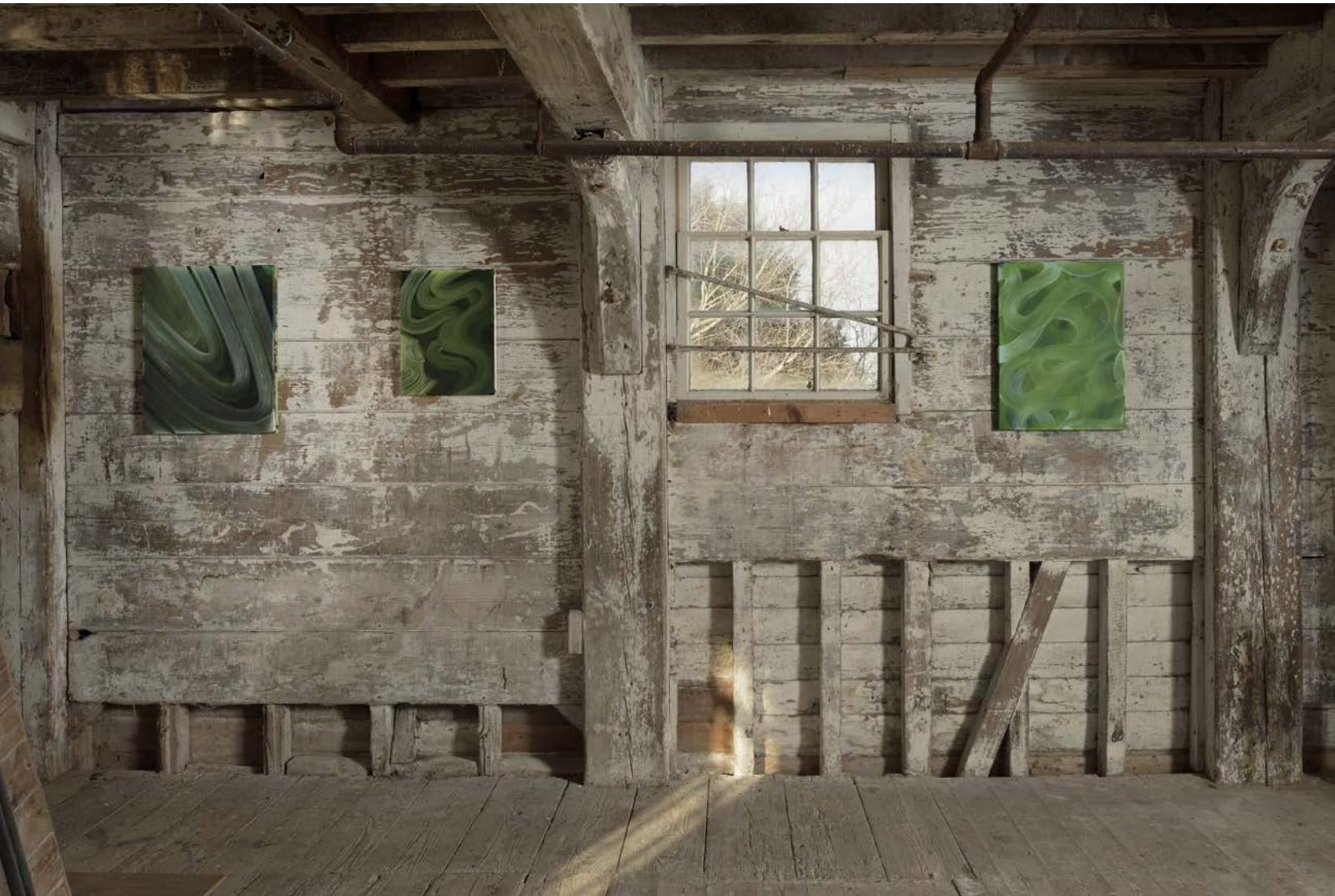
Pastel on paper, 32 x 23.5 cm

Formation 4, 2017

Pastel on paper, 32 x 23.5 cm



Clouds, 2017
Oil on canvas
35 x 45 cm



CV

Amanda Ansell was born 1976 in Sudbury, Suffolk and studied at the Norwich School of Art and Design (1995-1998) and The Slade School of Fine Art (1998-2000).

Recent exhibitions include: 'Rearranging Curves', Arts Library Gallery, London; 'PING', The Minories Galleries, Essex; 'Present Tense', Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, Wiltshire; 'Contemporary British Painting', Huddersfield Art Gallery, West Yorkshire; 'Easterlies', Abbey Walk Gallery, Lincolnshire.

Amanda Ansell has also been an exhibitor at: The Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition; Artsway, Hampshire; Firstsite, Essex and Kettle's Yard, Cambridge.



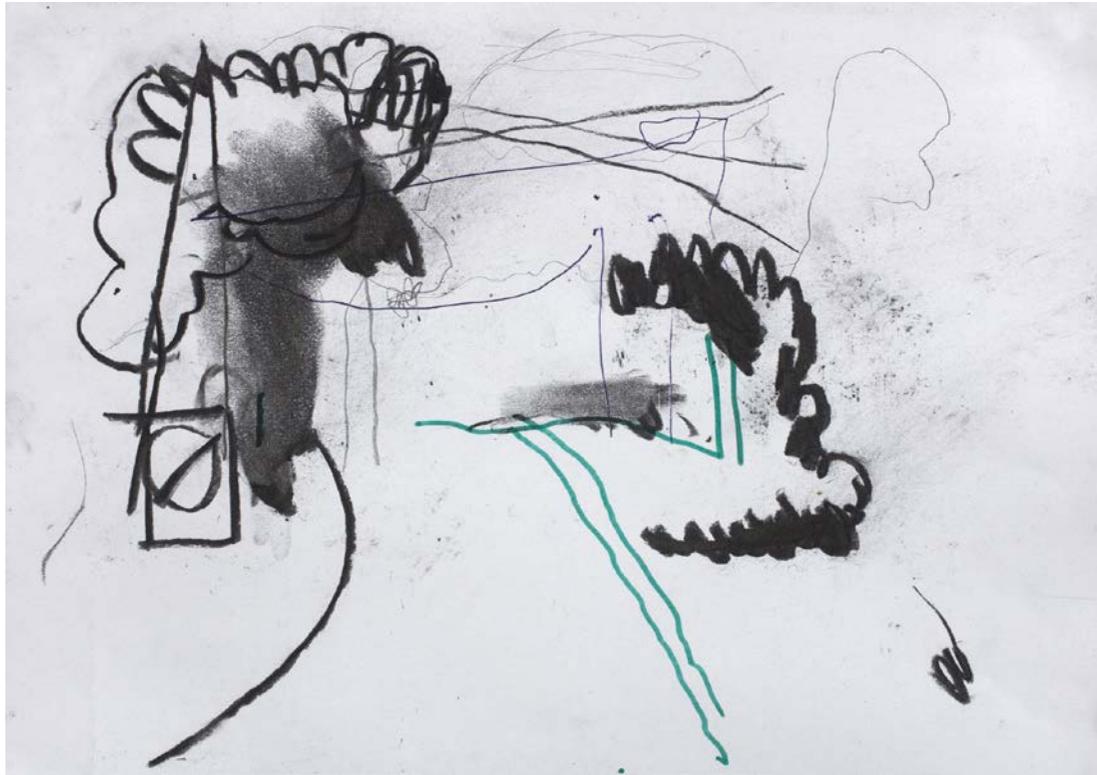




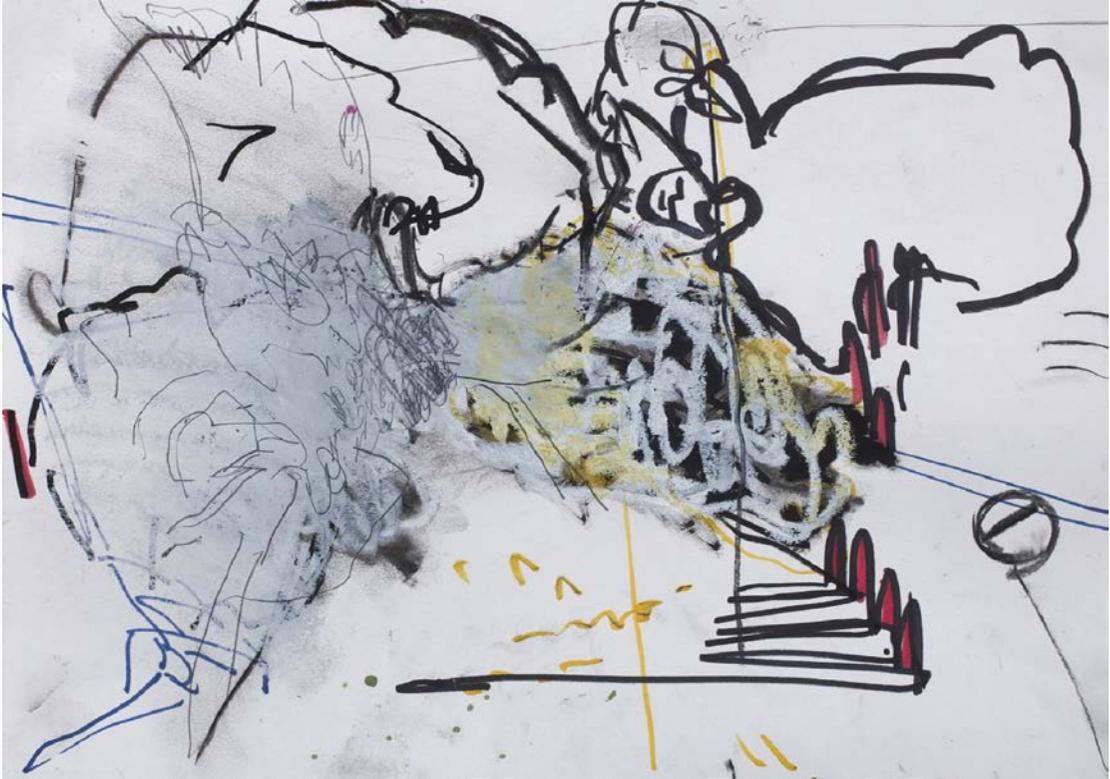
Emily Ball

My paintings are images of my experiences of daily life. Fleeting sensations are made tangible and celebrated using rich and varied marks and the tactility of the materials that I use. The work is a combination of observation, sensation and invention to create a language that creates a palpable equivalent to my sensations.

My current work is about my drive to work; the road, shadows, light, road signs, pylons, wires, the trees, spaces between and movement through the space. Whilst being driven I make drawings. They are urgent, layered, surprising and strive to create movement and a fresh engagement with the landscape. My paintings become improvisations using this theme. Colours are heightened and motifs repeated. These then converse with each other in surprising combinations to create the tension, mood and movement of my experience.



Roadscape Study 1, 2016
Charcoal and pen
29 x 42 cm



Roadscape Study 4, 2016
Mixed media
29 x 42 cm



Roadscape Study 5, 2016
Charcoal and pen
29 x 42 cm

The Road

Glaring yellow blinds me, fine lines divide
Accelerate forward, gathering pace
A shot of fat, flat red glows, colours thrive

The windscreen eye watches nature, alive
Shimmering green, lining the open space
Glaring yellow blinds me, fine lines divide

Hanging pressed threads of blue cling and guide
Scuffing grey shadows gather in the race
A shot of fat, flat red glows, colours thrive

A kiss of soft pink smothers sweetly as I drive
Fragmented light zigzags a tree line trace
Glaring yellow blinds me, fine lines divide

Turn left, drive straight while the road is wide
Full skirts of emerald define, encase
A shot of fat, flat red glows, colours thrive

Sentries of grey make the distant view hide
Slow round corners, mirrored white arrows chase
Glaring yellow blinds me, fine lines divide
A shot of fat, flat red glows, colours thrive

Emily Ball, May 2017



Roadscape 2, 2017
Oil on paper
60 x 100 cm



Roadscape 3, 2017
Oil on paper
60 x 100 cm



Roadscape 4, 2017
Oil on paper
60 x 100 cm



CV

Emily Ball was born in 1967 in Colchester Essex. She went to Exeter College of Art where she gained a BA in Fine Art Painting in 1989. She continued developing her painting, doing residencies, undertaking public commissions and exhibiting in the South East for the next 10 years. Alongside her painting she established privately run courses in Contemporary Painting and Drawing in West Sussex.

In 1999 Emily gained an MA in painting from The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, Farnham. She had her first child in 2001 and second in 2004 and during this period produced ambitious and successful paintings. She has exhibited at the RA Summer Exhibition and been a prize winner at the Chichester Contemporary Open, judged by Maurice Cockrill RA, Jennifer Durrant RA and Nicholas Usherwood, art critic.



In August 2005, in recognition of her reputation and talent as a painter and teacher, Seawhite of Brighton (supplier's of art materials) gave Emily a large space in which to paint and teach within their premises. In 2009 she published her first book 'Drawing and Painting People – A Fresh Approach (reviewed by Matthew Collings and now in its eighth edition). In 2012 her second book was published 'Emily Ball – Painting'. This book is a 25 year retrospective look at her own work.

Now, in 2017, she is director of her Painting School 'Emily Ball at Seawhite', and has a team of 9 artist tutors running courses. Simon Carter is one those artists. The school has grown as has its international reputation. Early in 2019 her next book will be published. 'Working from Nature' explores working from the landscape and will feature work by herself, Simon Carter and John Skinner amongst other artists.







Keith Murdoch

I paint the memory of place. I visit and revisit a place many times to collect memories - making watercolour drawings and acrylic studies that capture moments in a landscape. These sketches become integral to my experience of a Place - the results are sometimes awkward, but they have an honesty and purity that is essential if I'm to be able to draw upon the experience in the studio.

My preferred format for these outdoor studies is small (5"x7"), intensely coloured acrylic paintings on very smooth 'Hot Pressed' watercolour paper. The fast drying nature of the acrylic allows me to react to the landscape in an almost knee-jerk fashion; the size is portable and at this scale even small brush gestures can have a big impact.



Nord Øst Kyst 63, 2017
Acrylic on paper
12.5 x 18 cm



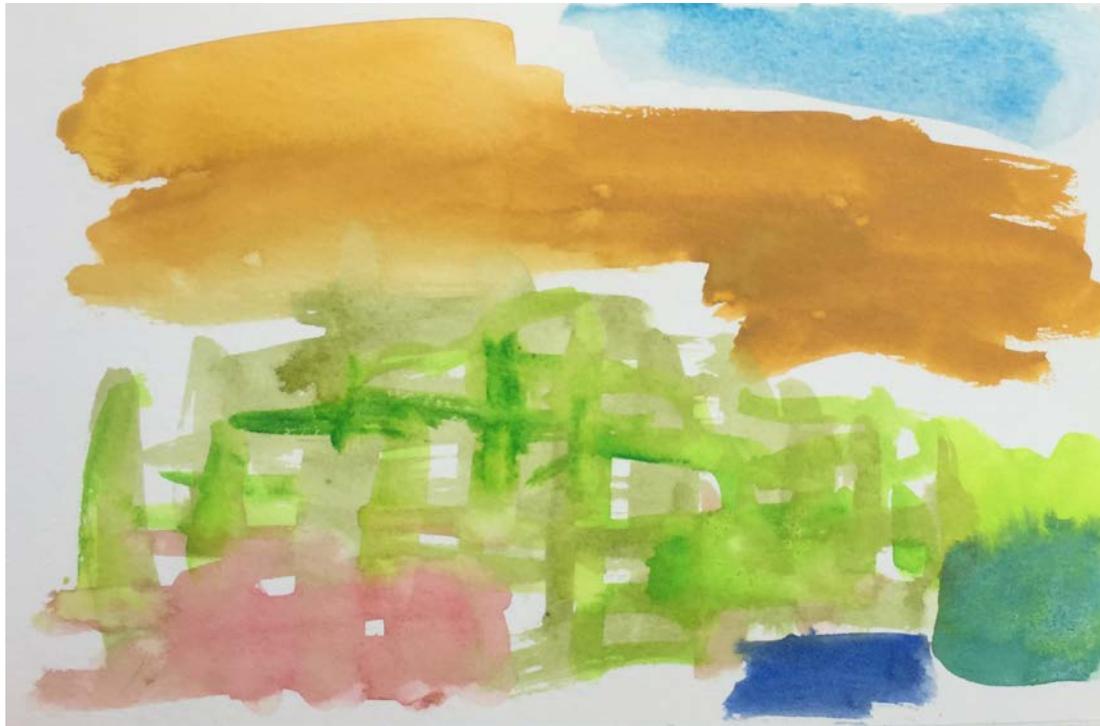
Refleksjonskisse 47, 2016
Acrylic on paper
12.5 x 18 cm



Nord Øst Kyst 46, 2017
Acrylic on paper
12.5 x 18 cm

I revisit the place in watercolour. Working in hard-bound sketchbooks proves to be a very portable method and I can work as I walk. I attack the surface with the watercolour - battling against the medium results in a rawness that would otherwise be impossible to generate.

In the studio, works are being developed in tandem with the forging of landscape experiences. The relationship between the outdoor studies and the studio process is however, non-linear. I do not usually refer directly to the outdoor studies, but to their memory. I call on both recent and longer-term memories to move a studio session forward. The goal is to distil these myriad reactionary experiences of place and the memories that linger, to produce something contemplative and profound. Studio works are 'lived-with' until I'm satisfied they communicate something more than a mere moment.



Cambois 27, 2017
Watercolour on paper
13 x 20 cm



Cambois 33, 2017
Watercolour on paper
13 x 20 cm

Refleksjoner, 2017
Oil on canvas
25 x 20 cm





CV

Born in Liverpool in 1972, Keith studied Foundation Diploma in Art & Design at City College, Liverpool 1991-92, BA Fine Art at University of Central Lancashire 1992-95 and MA Multimedia Art at Liverpool JMU in 2003.





Photograph credits

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All photographs by Simon Carter
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All photographs by Doug Atfield
Except page 42 by Simon Carter and page 56 by Simon Carter
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All photographs of works by Colin Mills
Page 58 by William Stuart
Page 68 by Alan Padbury
Page 70 by Simon Carter
Page 72 by John Skinner
- 75 **Keith Murdoch**
All photographs by Keith Murdoch

