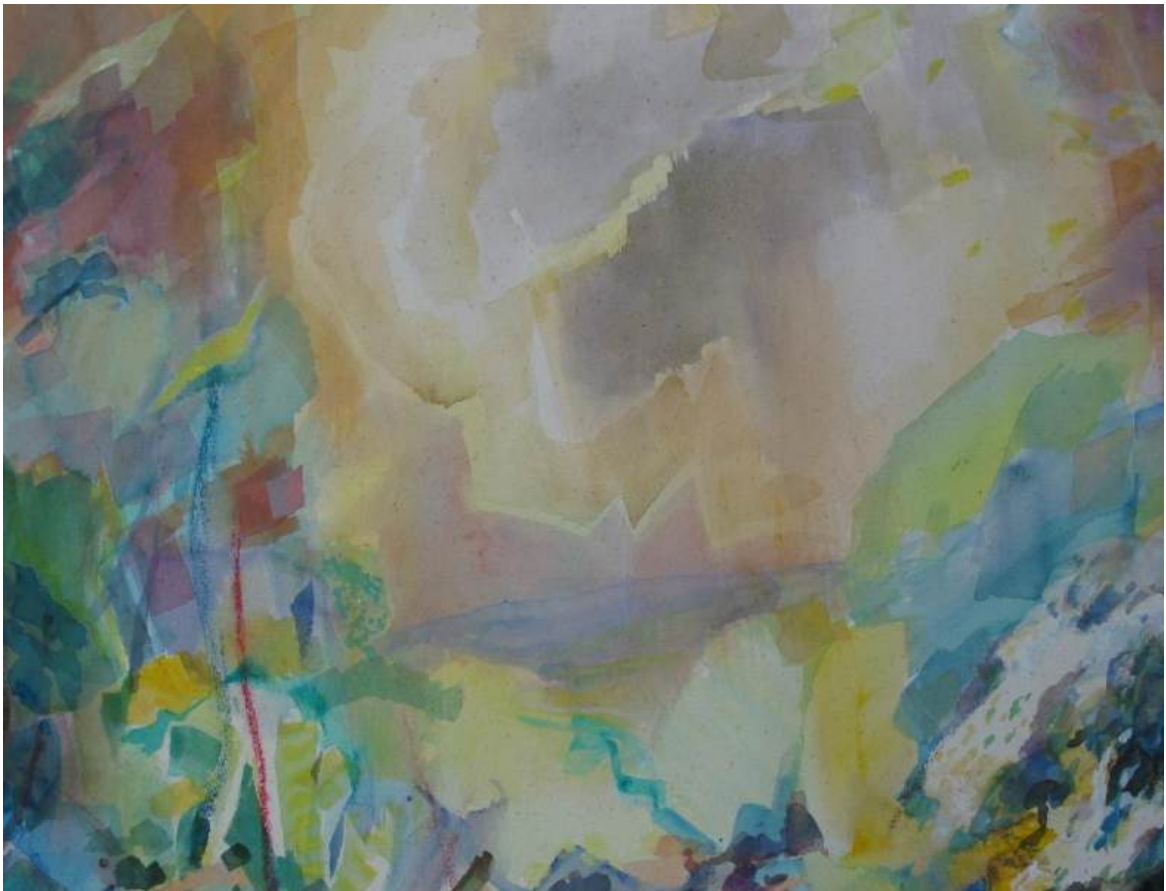


A MANUAL OF PAINTING

anthony.bamber@gmail.com <https://www.paintingsanthonybamber.com>

- (i) This essay should be read as additional thoughts to what **Miriam Elia** wrote recently for the **Telegraph** apropos of the **Turner prize** and its abandonment of painting, and to ask why. (I make a proposal for a **Constable prize** (this is "his" year!) for 11- 19 year olds. for paintings done outside. Period).
- (ii) The booklet **looks at the sorry understanding of painting**. Ernst Gombrich:" **Poor art theory makes for poor art**" – Any art should interpret/illuminate experience. Hermetic art is just hocus pocus.
- (iii) Briefly, an agent was selling well some paintings; but to stay alive, my wife and I (and children), taught English to nearly 3000 foreign teenagers in 3 x 3 weeks in the summers for 47 years. Many returned 2 or 3 times and though 20+ kids was work (!), it allowed me to paint in the year. It was a sort of tribal, communal life, the lack of which lies at the heart of much modern youths' anxious unease at something missing. Or as Ella Al Shamahi entitled a TV program. "Humans are not evolved for modern life"! Ha! Tell me about it!
- (iv) This booklet of paintings is also an introductory **essay on Representation-imitation** and their inevitable companion, "**Abstraction**" (when properly described), see - p. 40), with 62 illustrations.
- (v) I'll use these comments as voice-over for the film that I will make during the **walk of the Pennine way**, with tent and watercolours – which I'll do in April or September; (if age 84 doesn't strike me down first! – such adventures are more easily planned than done!).
- (vi) **Note.** The word "**to Express**". Music or a painting aren't an "**expression**" of a something else. The arts are already a form of thought. The drawing on p. 39 is the high bar that tests our ordinary daubs!



Detail. 1/16th of 36x40". A thundery sky, lightning and rain over the distant moors. An approaching downpour.

(vii) Here is a thought of **Wittgenstein's**. It could very well be appropriate for all the guff written on modern art. "Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the language we use". Artists; Constable, Van Gogh, Cezanne, Picasso, Bacon etc; spoke best on art: because they painted!

I'll use the excuse of the walk to show, I hope, an intelligible way of considering painting. Besides the small paintings done on the Way, I will use material of the many much larger paintings I have done, and the 500 images of paintings + commentaries that I have on a memory stick. They need to be zoomed in on /enlarged, because they are c. 40 x 40 inches. I certainly don't want people to step back! www.paintingsanthonybamber.com 1200 pages.



Detail 1/24th of 40 x 36 inches. Hurting swifts. Maybe in a not so far off day, they will not return. Always fewer. "The world is ours"?

Representational painting conveys meanings: that's the reason for them! The arts are not aesthetic cheesecake but have something to SAY, and it is only through **representation** (and perforce, all **representation** is an **abstraction**), that a painting can make a comprehensible comment, or visible response to our existence in the world. (Music, Photography and "Installations" work differently). But the present way we speak about painting is **so chaotic**. This has been partly a result of the soft thinking over "**abstract**" painting (p. 40), and the encouragement to a merely aesthetic view of art; as if it were a higher form of curtain material – though of course supposedly holding "deep meanings"! Thanks to crooked language, "The Arts" are full of charlatans and windbags! Whatever people say about Picasso, his work was always about our world or our comprehending responses and of course, he could speak about it sensibly and so wittily! These 61 paintings were almost entirely painted outside; with a few having at most, 5 - 10% added as changes or additions. Landscape painters notice things in nature and by the slow experiment of trial and error, we try to find a **suitable correlative** for what we can only vaguely foresee a **manner** of (1 in a 1000) **possible ways of representing** but also presenting something more than the "scene" and which will convince us of having a something added to the "real" before us. On p. 39 there is a letter by Van Gogh to Emile Bernhard, (and which all art students should pin up) in which he declares that we must engage in our personal "hand to hand struggle" to find a right language that will communicate. There is no easy

fix. Despite all that rich extension of the forms of representation that came in the 20th century, we've failed to work out a unifying view of that extended language. How we read it.

In the general confusion, I have seen artists apply (!!) "abstraction" to give their painting the right "modern look". Here is Shakespeare's mocking irony on himself for looking for a quick fix of "novelty"!

Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods, and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,

But in Van Gogh's letter to Bernhard, (p.40) there is a sort of rebuttal, as also is implied by Shakespeare's self-irony, on "invention". Van Gogh asserts that you have to study nature on the spot (it's a matter of sincerity), finding your way by looking and experimenting, and looking again in order to avoid **facile abstractions**/: mere "....new-found **methods**, and **compounds** strange:" **borrowed abstractions**.



40 x 42 inches. (see detail p. 47). That morning seemed to require the April day to be painted like this. Francis Bacon. "After the camera, painting must deepen the game"! But painting has snobbishly avoided doing any "imitation", any "representation" – all supposedly "so yesterday". But I use Bacon's

expression; “**armature of the real**”, because unless the painter can call up, even with his shorthand referent, “the real”, (as did Picasso), the painting cannot respond to the world. It’s just mystificatory “marks”. So I never showed these paintings. “Trying to paint the beauty of the world? Oh please. Give us unmade beds”! My sour grapes are on behalf of all the untried, discouraged painters. I survived, and still managed to do my naïve daubs.

There are **three useful phrases** that I will use frequently.

1st. **phrase** a painting is “**wound around the armature of the real**”, is of the painter Francis Bacon, indicating Bacon’s referencing a “real” and which thus makes possible for paint to be an interpretation of the world, through an artist’s ways of painting/drawing and which makes that interpreted world, convincing and intelligible to others; (not a hermetic “thing in itself”).

2nd **phrase** “**oblique**” **representation**”, is mine, and has helped me understand the symbolic width there is in all representation: because it leads us into a needed realisation that **representation** should be understood in a much wider sense than is customary, since there is no “true” representation; all the arts are abstractions, (in the proper sense); encodings in their particular language, of a “reality”: that is to say, **the world/reality** that we (and our culture) encounter, and also strands of our inner life, by which I mean simply, our accumulated biography; its experiences and how we have responded to them, entwining them around that outer world: that strange amalgam that our minds create. And all communicated to others through a visual, (partly invented) language, which always must have an eye on its comprehensibility to others, (thanks to the “armature of the real”) and not obscure the world, under “painterly” “Bravura”, (Constable dismissively called it).

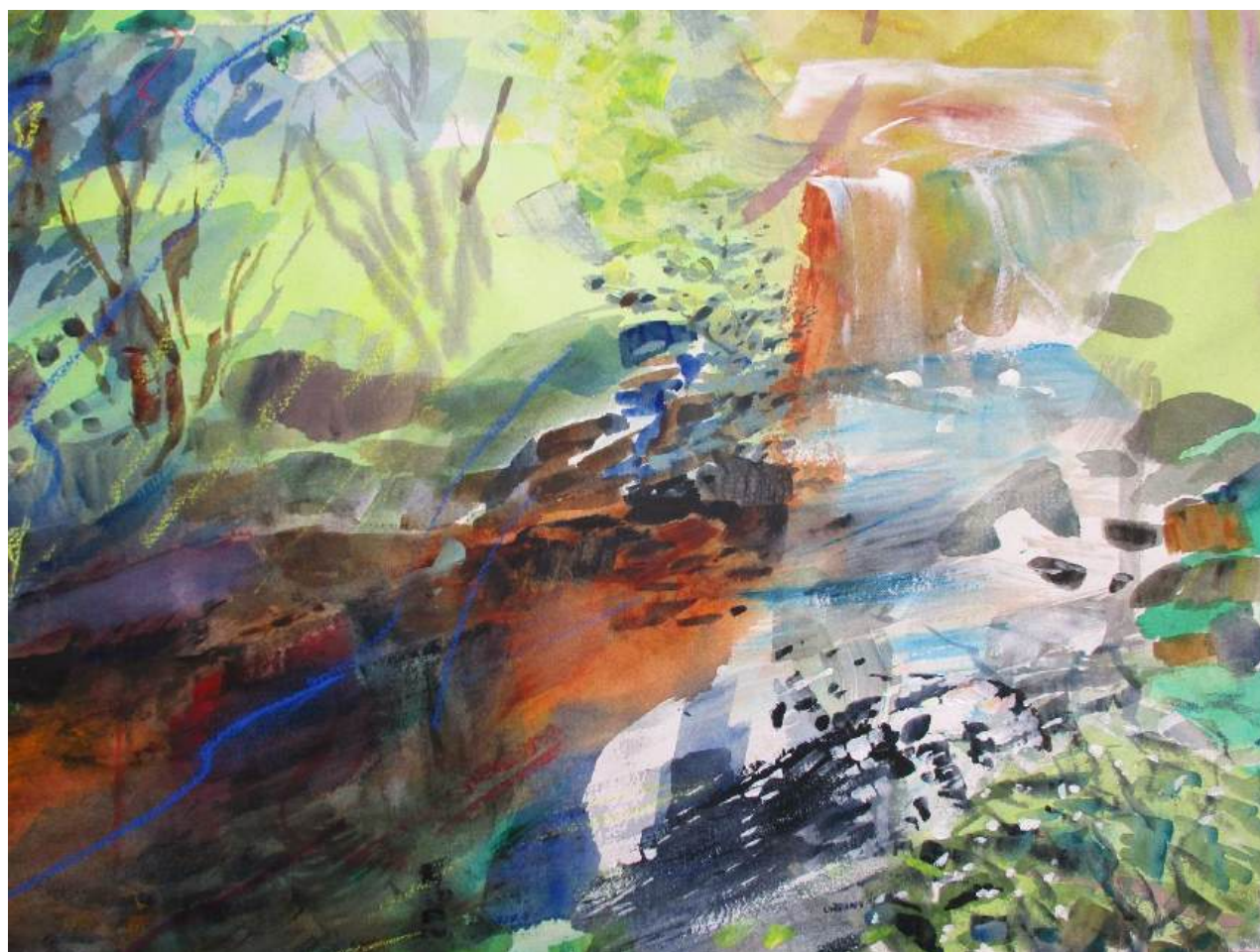
The 3rd **phrase**. “**It’s the world stupid**”, which I refashioned from President Clinton’s reminder to himself that he pinned on the wall: “It’s the economy stupid”, into a painter’s version, which of course links to Bacon’s “**armature of the real**”. A perfect modern example of the highest quality in painting is Francis Bacon’s series of “Homage to Van Gogh’s self-portrait on the road to Tarascon”. Tin it is the “real” world. Paint marks. Interpretation. Meaning. Revelation. That lonely figure. All the pathos of Van Gogh’s life in that maelstrom of Bacon’s paint. A lot of modern painting seems more dedicated to making a “pure” paint novelty, which reveals little of nature or world out there. Instead it is just various forms of pretentious painterly flourish and fashion! (that kind of painting done in **slabs, scribbles n’ dribbles** etc), that made Constable vexedly write; “There is room for a natural painter”! What he meant was that the **world out there** matters, (not a style got from a style shop run by critics!), but by looking, (and yes alright, at a few paintings too!) and by the steady trial and error of making paintings that might **reveal** what we have missed in nature. What he meant by “bravura” painting, was the cul de sac of **purely aesthetic** choices, familiar formulas, tricks of modernist “abstraction”, and gestural swish! Ugh.

In this booklet you will find a number of **details**, which are important to the argument. I think that “representation”, in its widest sense is essential to meaningful painting that **interprets** our common world. That is why these two phrases are useful. Bacon’s “**painting is made around the armature of the real**” and my phrase of “**oblique representation**”. I believe that all landscape painting should in every inch be representational – though in the wide sense of Bacon’s “felt along the nervous system” or as in that jokey Guinness ad which promises, that it will “**reach the parts that other beers don’t reach**”! So those details I show are important. There should be no idle passages – all the paint should seem to suggest direct **and** indirect (oblique) likeness. As further illustration, take Samuel Palmer’s sepia drawings in the Ashmolean museum. Despite being so small, they seem to be close ups of some larger image, or themselves larger than their size. I sometimes joke that I would like my landscapes to have an electric fence close to them to constrain viewers to stay close up. Look at the painting on **p.33** as a good instance of **oblique representation**. Those rain drops that fell on the watercolour’s seeping blue hillside, and sky, did not “spoil” it, but in fact gave it more! Look again at the native American observation on p. 10 where that “little

shadow” is, in the watercolour, those **few raindrops** that on that very evening fell like exclamations, and that was a version of a this world-sacred (as also, **snow falling** on p. 16) that we all know and which Crowfoot celebrates with his “**little shadow**”. (p.10)



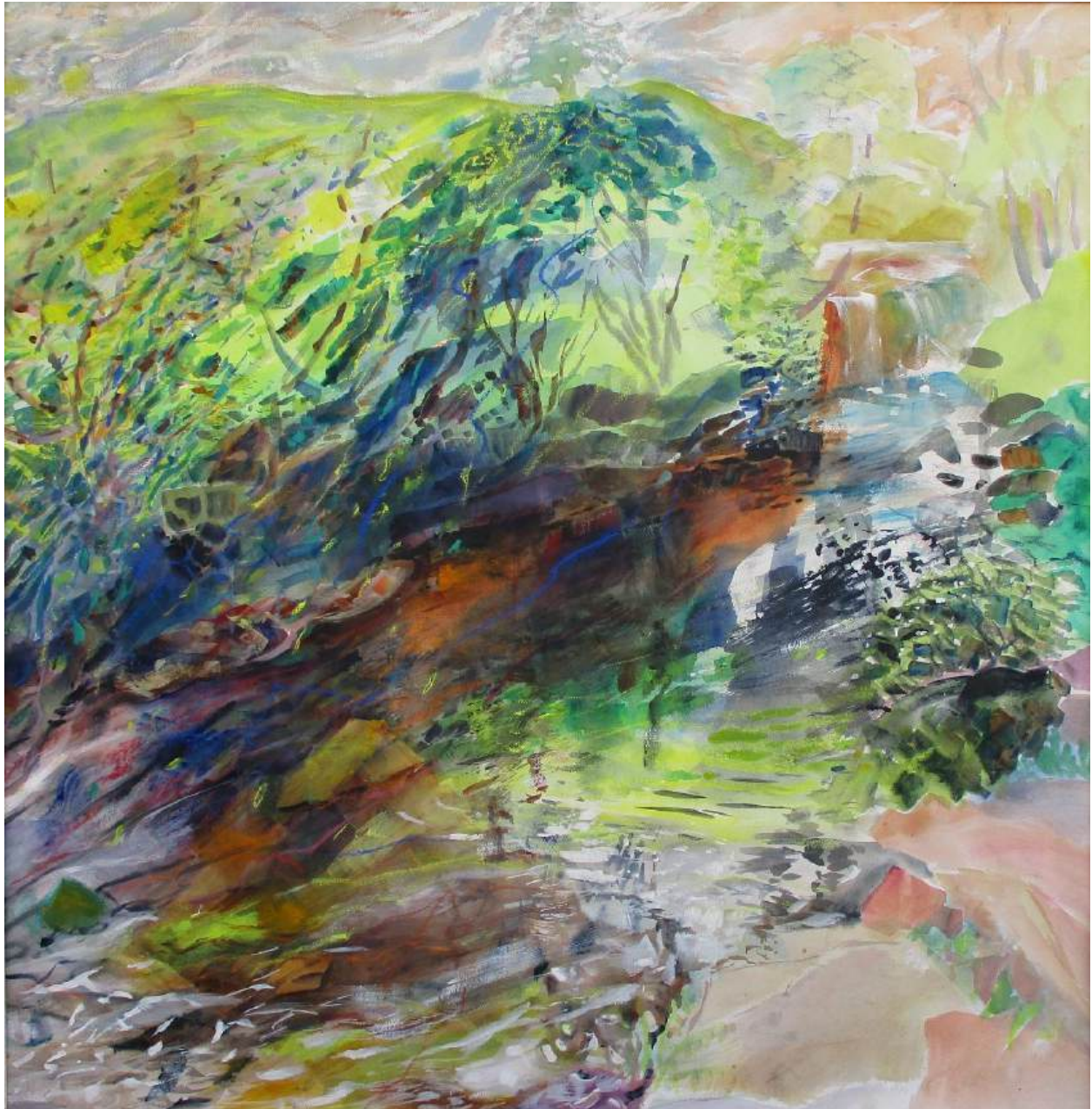
Last sun. Meadow flowers amidst the long shadows. Distant moors. 37 x 37 inches. Below detail 1/12th icicles. Stream.



detail 1/9th of whole. I give some time to this first painting to show the interplay of marks and communication. This painting was, like the majority of the others, done entirely outside. It is interesting for its, what I like to call, **“oblique” representation**; which I explain below. We must formulate an inclusive view of painting. All “representational” painting, by virtue of its varying encoding of the “real”, is in some way, interpretation of the world that we know – often

“revealing” of something we hadn’t noticed before, or loving reminders. Painting is not mere **aesthetics**; (except in the widest sense of the how and why of our responses). All a painting’s “aesthetics” should **add up** to something - **mean** something. “Representation” should have a **by-product of meanings**. (A painter knows when what he has made is dumb!) In the case of Picasso’s “oblique realism”, it all has meanings, sentiment, certainly humour.

Most of the “real” that is represented in this first painting can be “read” easily enough as “sky”, “stream” and its “bank” etc. Maybe, more slowly there emerges a “waterfall” on top right and with some slender “trunks of trees” and the lighter “grass” behind and all is mirrored in the stream’s “slow current” and “surface”. There is an opposite bank with “ledges of rock” and a “larger tree” with its layers of “foliage”, and a “sand bank” and the deeper brown peaty “water” of the “stream”. On the bottom left are some flecks of white which show the broken water caused by the obstacle of shallower water and buried rocks. There are unnaturalistic yellow crayon marks standing for leaves caught in light, and the top “waterfall” is reduced in detail, but I wouldn’t add to it. So there is a lot of what **Francis Bacon** called “the real” (maybe only lightly alluded to, but anchoring), and around which a painting deposits its **sensual, symbolic representational “language”**. It is the paint marks and colours together with the peculiarity of the drawing’s evidencing of “world”, which must chime in the viewer and bring traces to their mind’s surface.



38 x 37 inches. This painting is so out of date! Because It wants to celebrate our sensuous, tactile joy in – that liquid yellow of leaves reflected / The “ripples” / The blue of sky reflection/ dale and clouds / The leaves moving. In landscape painting, a painting sets up the “armature of the real”, so that paint can interpret the world and our loving response to it. “Armature + paint”! Such specific reference is what is out of fashion: the cart before the horse. Manner before “real”. “There is room for a natural painter”. Constable.

In this painting 1, and within this discrete (I’d call it) **imitation**, (see p. 46), there are one or two obvious **unnaturalisms**, which yet I would not want to “tidy up”, or make more “realistic”: the lines of lighter clouds, the lines of the alternating dark and lighter meadow, the lines of the stream’s ripples, the lines of the middle-left hazel bush, and above all the sudden and not so easily “read” white, lumpy “reflections” (middle right). In some very **oblique** fashion, if I were to cover over, or modify these “uncomfortable” (and not very realistic white areas), the painting would be lessened – which is in itself, an important lesson on the limits of a too imitational drawing, and how “drawing” should be more widely defined. Look seriously at how the work of Picasso, Matisse, Giacometti, Klee, Bacon should redefine drawing, and so the use of the word “distortion” in their cases isn’t helpful – because it suggests a “real” reality which has been “distorted”! This was once missed by the Guardian art critic, Boyd who thought Bacon “couldn’t draw”, whereas Sutherland could! No; they both could; in their

way, which is where my phrase, “**oblique representation**” helps; or we’d have to say Picasso couldn’t draw!

Those whites in my painting, at one level function as “reflections” of “sky” and “water”, but their “imitation” is very limited – summary: like the yellow and blue crayon marks. They seem rather to be an oblique “concentration”, or essence of the natural phenomenon, rather than “accurate drawing”, (whatever that is (!) they draw their sense from the surrounding “real”- You see that with “drawing”, we shouldn’t apologetically excuse its “distortions”! Partly these white-sky-reflections are “indicated” as being reflections by the extra indicated back-up - the middle-right white illumination on the upturned leaves of the “bush”, whose whites merge into that artificially strong white “unnaturalistic” area of water “reflections” and the indicated whole “landscape” which sets the context. Another strong example of such **abbreviations** (see p. 40) are the blue simplified crayon marks in the water that take advantage of the surrounding easily read “real” of “stream/water”, to stand **indicatively** (but not “abstractly”!), for “current” swirls in the stream. They are painted almost like the ideograms of Japanese Kangi “alphabet”. They are a kind of **outer limits of “representation”**; the simple blue crayon lines are mysteriously powerful – they are both current-swirl and a **blue** - “in itself”. Now that “in itself” is what Abstract art laid claim to exercising, but fatally, it lacks the “content” of Bacon’s “**real**”; as here where the “blue” is not only “in itself”, but also sky/stream-reflection/ripple - all that **world** that we have introjected across a life time into our “soul”, and which ricochets here between world-thing and paint marks, and provoking, as Bacon put it, a “visceral” reaction, “felt along the nervous system”; or I’d prefer; among that heartfelt deposit of significant memory. So, a **special kind of “drawing”** (!) or paint mark that very much in Bacon’s case, “reaches the parts that other beers don’t”! I wanted below, the wateriness of water! But this is only 1/36th of the whole.



But the art police will ask, “Haven’t you heard? Imitation is out. So Yesterday”.





42 x 31. Inches. Whole. Here it is as if the pointed brush and its marks exclaimed at the beauty of the Blackthorn. The Jubilation at spring's return. Body health.

"Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled;
With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed".

The ancient Greeks thought that a vital spirit was in the human breast, "thumus" and which leaves us at death. (Not as "spirit", but as in our last breath, or life-force). For Spinoza, that thumus pertained to all growing things; and for him nature was itself coterminous with a kind of **spirit/God or sap** of growing things such as here in the old blackthorn; putting out its perhaps last resisting flowering for another year and I take it as its own expression of joy and exuberance. This is not "Romantic animism". It was the simple produce of the common day". (see p.27, 28). The life around us that charms gardeners. I like to think that most of this booklet communicates that participatory "thumus").

'What is life?

It is the **flash** of a **firefly** in the night.

It is the **breath** of a **buffalo** in the **wintertime**.

It is the little **shadow** which runs across

The **grass** and loses itself in the **sunset**".

Crowfoot, Blackfoot warrior and orator 1830. Or those swooping swifts. P.2

It is said that Delacroix, on seeing the Constable Haywain, taken to be exhibited in Paris, decided to repaint sections of his Battle of Schio, by borrowing from Constable, the realisms of his "unfinished" flecks of broken light coloured paint, standing for the leaves upturned by the wind. The Royal academy found such a surface, "unfinished", and on several occasions asked Constable to "finish" his submitted paintings and similarly to fill in the still visible red-brown underpainting which Constable had left showing because the colour contrasting red seemed to give his greens an added lustre! So too, the Impressionists were similarly criticised for the same defect of their "unfinished", until theirs was recognised as a new way of painting, in which the viewer becomes a co-creator of the painting, filling in, with an imaginative participation, that which is only roughly indicated, and is only apparently "missing"! An oxymoron of unrealistic realistic! (Like Rembrandt's drawings). All "theatrical" effects work in a related way, despite all the actors being, "only actors", and the props obviously "only pretend"! The "distortions" of

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Picasso's or Matisse's figures have a realistic (!) eloquence; and almost the very "distortions" work towards "realisms" (!) so no one would want to change them! This is very much true of the recomposings of Picasso's figures and often the source of his humour: it's so witty! The so called distortions speak! Almost any drawing and painting of his could be intelligently explained/described, because they are moved not my mannerism but thought; they are interpretations of our reality; as are children's drawings. So whatever drawing is, it needs to include such examples. You could say that the art history of the 20th century was fundamentally about a reappraisal of the mysteries of representation, which is not as self-evident a matter as many believe. And think how easily we take as real, theatre's real-unreal, theatre in verse (!) (not to speak of opera!). Or how is it that we can read the "numinous", as so evident in late Constable? But are we now to accept that representational painting /drawing has reached the end of the line? But what matters is that without any comprehensible referent to the world, there is no comment on the world possible. – There is so much confusion and vagueness in the chat, and the yearly controversy over the so called Turner (!) prize shows that despite that "Turner" in the title, there is little painting. So what is painting? Music self-evidently matters; its "content"/message is often felt as profound. No need of justification. That quality of opening up or revealing. I think a painting should have that which we feel usually lacking in our modern lives, and for which Joyce borrowed the New Testament word "**Epiphany**", which is so present in music: below, Shakespeare, in comic, self-mocking self-aggrandising, points out that to make Orpheus' lute eloquent, it must first be strung with **poets'** sinews ! – to help the limping musicians! But Mr Shakespeare, you knew you couldn't compete with music; it doesn't need poets' sinews – it can work its magic just with plain strings! As he knew and described so eloquently, on many occasions, with such sympathy and insight. And by the way, there has never been a poet whose verse is so crammed with "world"! Painting could learn!

For Orpheus' lute was strung with poet's sinews,
Whose lightest touch could soften steel and stones
Make tigers tame and huge Leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands.

(What an eloquent way to speak of the eloquence of music!).

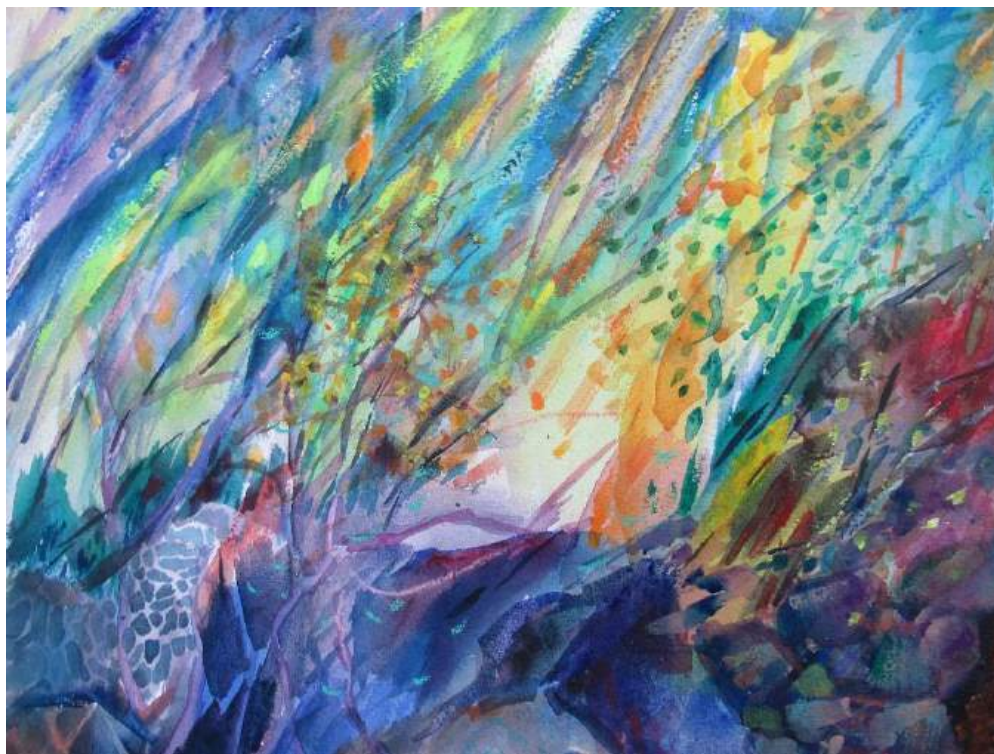
Yes, that is the power of music (and lovely, words about it! Dancing whales on the beach!). Poetry and drama also present us with what we have not thought before. But Painting? The first half of the 20th century didn't seem to be too put out by the way that "the camera", seemed to have "stolen" representation! But as Bacon observed, "after the camera, painting must deepen the game"; and that is what happened. But in my view, in the last 70 years, the **merely aesthetical** (of necessity), explanations / justifications for "Abstract" art, have steadily seeped into considerations on all painting and like an acid, dissolved hard thinking about art. The very fog around the Turner prize is a proof. So now art includes, (almost entirely is), all sorts of off-shoots – interesting as they may be: visualised Sociology, Semiology, Situational "art", Political Agit prop/ Social injustice, woke problematics, and the various "Installations"; they all show to what degree, painting/sculpture, which were once, in some form or other, representational (= interpretational), have lost their nerve, and passed on the baton to a kind of cultural bricolage. And for that reason, as Miriam Elia pointed out recently in the Telegraph, we should be more honest and take Turner out of the "Turner prize". Maybe I say, dedicate a new **Constable** prize to children/students, who still do representation – painted or drawn, and often with great insight into the human condition! Yes, **they** find room for **that**! As did Picasso or Bacon - and without any need for the windbagery of "Postmodernism". If ever a child "does an

abstract”, they only do it as a joke and as a satire on the silliness of the adult “culture” world! They do it satirically!

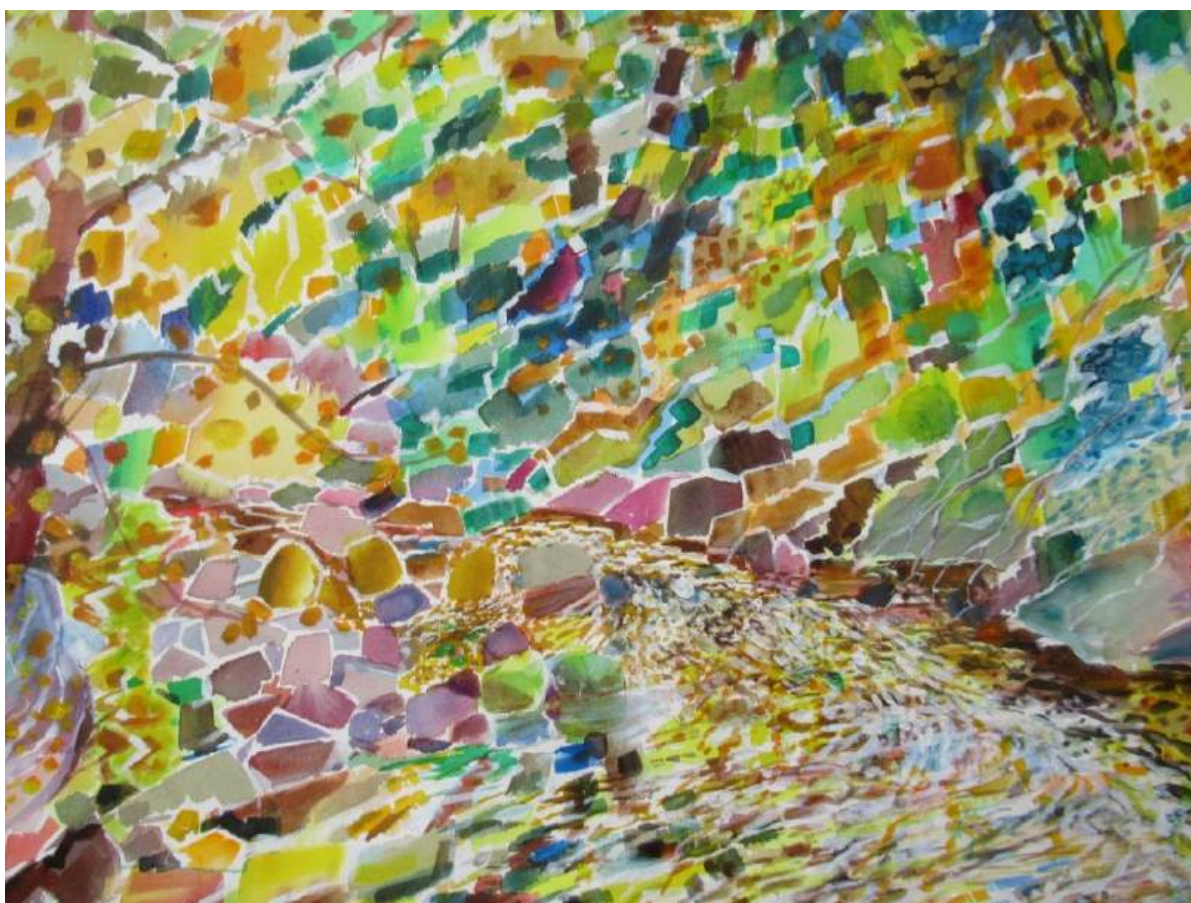


39 x 34 inches. Sepia ink. Like black and white photography: there is a mysterious extra realism that seems to lie in the rich monochrome sepia! (are we remembering black and white films?). Anyone who uses Sepia ink has the friendly ghost of Samuel Palmer nearby! What I have noticed in him is the rhythm of his whites and of the ink marks. That is the special quality of his “drawing”. Now sepia or black ink drawing is monochrome; having no representational help from colour, and in Palmer, instead, the drawing seems to be directed by **feelings** which transpose the drawing, making the hills rounder, the plants and trees as if seen and felt close up and so enlarged. There is – as in Van Gogh an overall and non-realistic rhythm that unites; an animism and participation – a psychological participation, a subjective enthusiasm and clearly Palmer had heard Blake’s insistence that art should be visionary. But that is a word. What makes for our agreement that it is “visionary”? It is the rhythms in Palmer that seem to bind all, as if in a single hymn of praise, an animistic identification. I understand that but want this drawing to remain ordinary though enthusiastic. The foreground water pays attention to the interlocking rhythms of the rippling water. The sky, the blossom, the upturned leaves, the rippled water, the reflections of the branches, the foaming waterfall, the sunlight on the distant rocks, the rhythm of the darks and upturned leaves and their in-between sky. Yes, “naturalistic” (careful with these terms that bite!) **but** also, subjective/responsive, **praising** – an in-seeing, love-respect. So then it is no longer a mere “scene” , but includes a subjective attitude, response, and also a reverence towards the “real”. Difficult! (see other sepias; p. 12.15.22.23.29.31.43.44.45)





Last sunlight. 39 x 37 inches. Detail below is 1/25th



Above, Autumn. Stream and bank. 1/9th

Below. Whole painting. 39 x 32 inches. Stream. Snow beginning.



Above. Watercolour. Last evening brightness. 22 x 35 inches

Detail of page 29. Below. 1/6th of 38 x 34 inches





39 x 40 inches. You couldn't invent a painting like this in the "studio". With watercolours, the paper that is left white and unpainted, always shines more than any white paint (see Blackthorn. P.10) and of course with watercolour the white paper shines through all the colours, giving that brilliance to watercolour. Here the clouds still had gaps that varied the light getting through, just before the gathering gloom closed in on the setting sun, and it began to seriously snow – the crows were making wing to the wood, and the weather was menacing me to go home soon; and when I did, I had to be careful to keep the still watery surface (90x90cms) upside down, (to keep off the snow) and flat, (to stop the colour running downwards) with a long hill to climb home! Painting outside has its drama and above all, its **isness!** The pleasure of it! The cold, that yellowing sun on the mauve snow, those distance defining crows, and those flakes of snow threatening to become unmanageable. (you can't bend over 40 inches to protect it!). But oh dear, who dares paint **crows**, the **sun** or **snowflakes** nowadays!? "That's for children". The art police will be after you. And that stops people enjoying the nature-recall of such painting – so nobody is there to do better! I for myself have ignored the fashion-prohibitions. I've ignored the Apartheid divisions in art! But maybe at a cost – (can you sell such yesterday stuff!), but importantly, there haven't been enough other landscapists from whom a decent one could have emerged from my ordinariness.

The "Romantic" period was romantic because it was aware of a past time being engulfed by something speedily different, and of losing a previous **seeing/feeling lens** of existence. Wordsworth's poetry, Constable's paintings, German Romantic poetry (more than English), were all preoccupied by a radical change in the experience of living. But rather than the too conscious "Romantic poetry", see a Native Americans thought (p.10 and 23. 27. 28.) which viewed an **everyday world** that still was theirs, and in Wordsworth's phrase; was "the simple produce of the common day". (p.27. 28).



40 x 43 inches Moors. Gathering darkness. Below, detail 1/16th.





38 x 37 inches. Below is a detail. See comment below on next page. Below – a detail 1/24th



The above painting - **Evening on the moors** - is suitable to demonstrate what I mean by **oblique representation**.

Imagine the educative pleasure the public would feel to see a much less esoteric “art” than a “dirty bed” or “old rope”! Say a dozen artists treating Constable and Turner with proper respect, by treating their “nature” with a differing personal idiosyncrasy.

This **detail** of the previous (a lower-left 1/16 of the whole). takes me back to the consideration of Palmer. This is not a Sepia (see other sepias; p. 12.15.22.23.29.31.43.44.45), but it takes pleasure in up close micro detail of a landscape painting where the drawing is obliquely “realistic”, but gets reciprocal support from the whole; each “oblique” representation being focused by others of “evening by a moor stream”. In this context I would obviously scoff; “who needs abstraction, **just zoom in**”! There is this type of seemingly “abstract” “drawing” in Palmer’s details; an “oblique drawing” which yet influences the larger whole **representation**! Here, it was a late summer evening. Looking at just the detail you would think – “ah, pleasant abstract, would not at all be out place in a trendy gallery exhibition”. But oh what would be lost without it being subsumed under the full “representation” of the recognisable (!) **world** and a familiar moment of beautiful season, place and weather! Because that breathing, pulsing sky and blue distanced moors is what makes sense of the “abstractions” and which would you prefer to have? – obviously you’d take the two-in-one! – Echoed evening AND body evoking marks! And in the context of the recognised setting, all the viewers have **their own** laid down life-memories to contribute, and a painter needs to stir those awake in order to get the support of the viewer’s memories which arise to support/fill out the **obliqueness** of the “something more” in the representation and its indirect way of getting at the psyche: all that which Francis Bacon meant by communicating to a deeper body memory: “felt along the nervous system”. A haptic response. “Oblique”. The overlaid, coloured water stains, at one level “represent” a moor’s stream and reflections, and the exclaiming marks in the sky work as **body metaphor for astonishment; maybe wonder**. Well at least that is something serious to aim for, if not arrive at yet! Again, look at that Bacon homage to Van Gogh on the road to Tarascon. (Incidentally anyone who wants an excellent example of eloquent art criticism – look for the accompanying leaflet to the Tate exhibition of the work). There is (should be) room for still life and figure paintings genres, – but is there for Landscape? Despite the continual pieties about “The Environment”, Landscape painting is oddly absent from “serious” art. (viz Turner prize, he more honoured in the breach!). **Aren’t we meant to start caring about/for that “nature”!!** The blank is direct and shocking, as if pointing up a hypocrisy and certainly leaves me stuck out on a branch: “what am I doing out here”! In the summer I even paint into landscapes, the swooping swifts and swallows. How naff is that – according to the culture police! But those birds may soon disappear from our summers! What a bereaving thought is that. But really, who cares? We’ve got smart phones! We could call swallows up on that. Look at the swallows and the wind here! - “So yesterday. Poor chap; put him in a dark room”. Such a painting as this is not to be tried –because, “out of fashion”? Personal fact. At 22 I went with paintings for an interview to the Royal Academy schools. Clearly because it was clear that I had started my own interfering preferences, I was told I would need “stripping down” (**sic**. like a motor bike!) to be reassembled in the proper modern manner, no doubt! They tried to save me from myself!

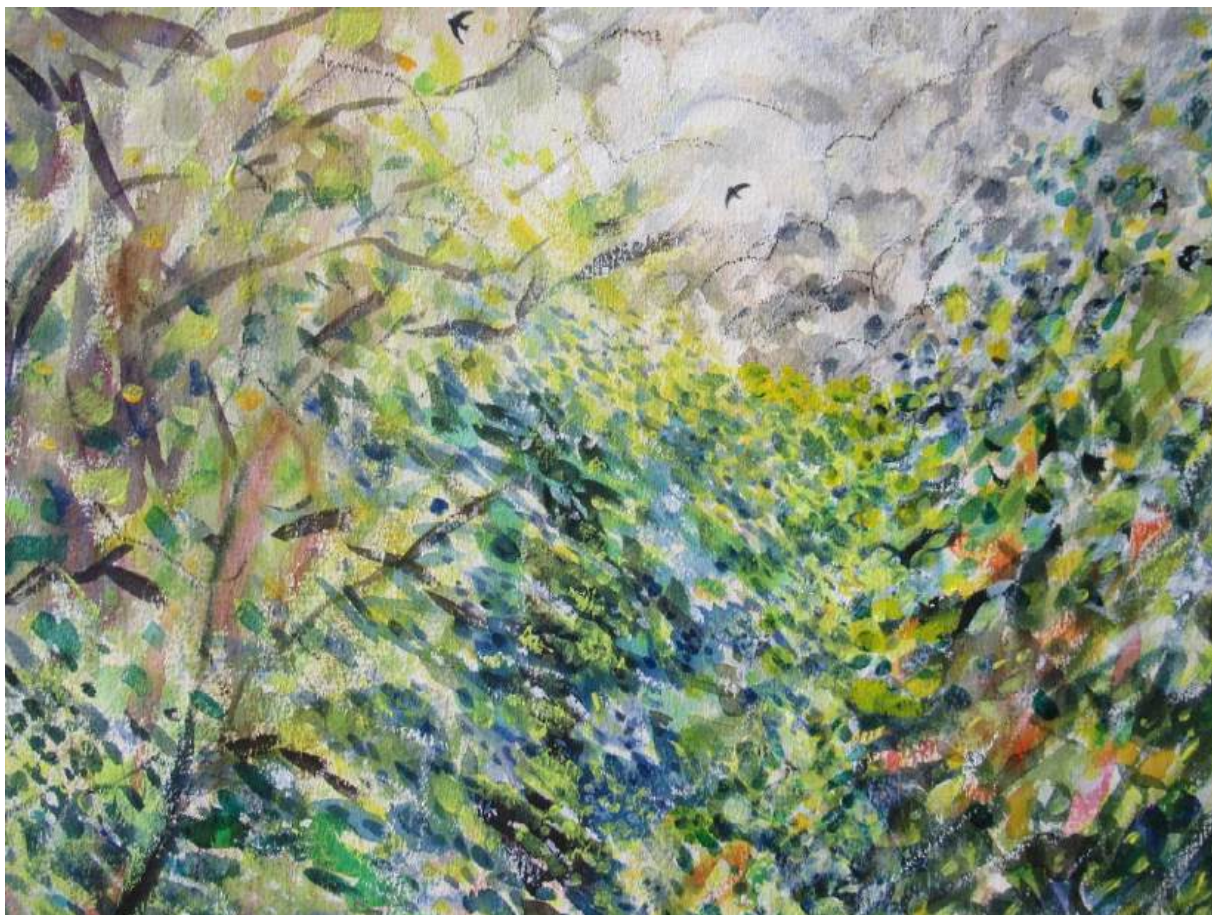


1/6th detail of 40 x 41 inches. The last thing I ask, is for people to “stand back”! I want them to stick their noses up close



Pelly, Tom, Georgina and Johnny. Summer day.

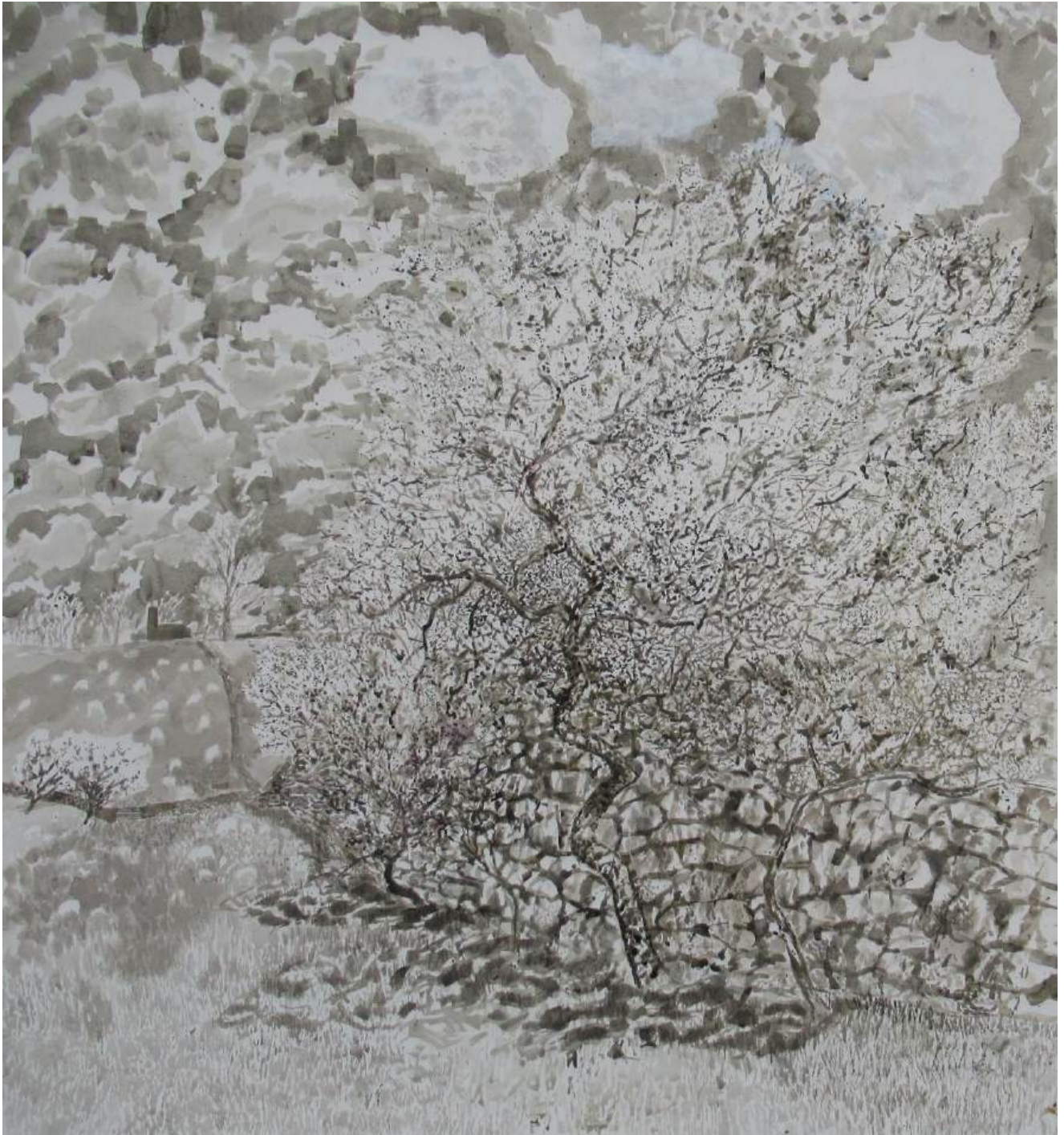




This was such a lofty day. The high piled clouds, the swooping swifts, the stream's powerful waters, the 4 children playing – so long ago and yet still there; (is that why we paint?!). I wanted to catch the impulse of that day with all the curves – of branches, the curves of swifts in flight, of the breeze, of curved crayon-light, of the pouring stream's curving current. An exclamation over our fragile moment. Those curves are as it were, the “musical” undertow of the painting. It moves across and through the painting, just as the wind did that day. If only a painting could find the language of this: **“A motion and a spirit that impels/All thinking things, all objects of all thought/and rolls through all things”**. (Wordsworth). Now that would be a worthy recall of what was felt to be implicit in that day and that day's “armature of the real”; “a simple produce of the common day”, (see p.25) and would join to that numinous in nature which all people feel – at varying intensity; and include the exclamation of the day; that fugitive moment; happiness on the wing with the swifts and the children's ringing exclamations. That otherness of (still yet), a companion world! The connectedness (!) of forms of daily life with its natural surroundings. Wordsworth's “the simple produce of the common day”. That is what Heidegger spent 100 volumes trying to track down – “**Dasein**”! The fully **being in the moment**. How to really taste life on the palate; not just in art, but simply in the common day. But the horse had bolted! Thus 100 volumes were spent in looking for it! The sad desperation in that! I think Constable's landscapes are ordinarily situated in the common day. The art lies in putting that first and the art second. That is why Constables landscapes tug at our heartstrings for the love that they express, because in a sense, what he painted, he had already lost. Mysterious.

You can't overlay the fact here with modernism's splash and dribble and conserve any shred of “the common day”. It just becomes “art”! That is what Constable meant by asserting, “there is room for a natural painter”. (even then!). Reading the following, don't we need it! **In the 2012 Journal of affective disorders**, I came across this statistic; that 25% of us will at some stage of life suffer from mental illness, and recently there was a BBC TV series by the anthropologist **Eli Shahami**; “Humans are not evolved for modern life”. And also, this finding by **Beijing university**, that children significantly exposed to nature, did 7 times as well as other children in school and in their subsequent life! **So where is such exposure in fashionable “Modern art”?**

This following painting: Blackthorn tree on an April day. It is a suicidal obstinacy. It is SO out of the loop, SO naïve, childish, SO ignoring of fashion: it wants to present “the simple produce of the common day” and OMG, expresses LOVE and says, “yes” (at a cost) to Constable's stubborn; “there is room for a natural painter”, which puts whatever little art we have, into service of that which is loved.



42 x 42 inches. Another example of the realism of sepia/grey unreal. The greys of blackthorn, sky, stone wall, sheep and shadows. The filigree stitchwork of it all! I have so enjoyed making these small acts of praise. Sat there! To hell with the art police! It's "...the uncertain glory of an April day, that now shows all its beauty to the sun and by and by, a cloud takes all away"! How can you overlay all that **other** with "Bravura" or the paint scratchings of modernism! "It's the world stupid"!a cloud takes all away! Look at the fleeting shadows on the higgledy piggledy wall! How dear are those shadows! If you have to be true to a "**manner**", then you cannot look anymore. That was what Constable had to endlessly repeat.

If we want to protect the "environment" we could start with a coherent, sensibilizing art program for schools with an National Annual Constable prize for paintings done outside. Remember that Beijing research - that children significantly exposed to nature did 7 times as well at school and in after life). That would be a double bingo "initiative"! Children draw and paint the world as they find it and almost thanks to the oddity of their drawing-representation of the world, we find them expressive. Then when they notice their own effects, they start to really paint like Picasso or

Matisse! They turn their mode of drawing to interpretative advantage! And also follow Van Gogh's advice to Emile Bernhard! (p. 30). "Get outside"! (other sepia. p. 12.15.22.23.29.31.43.44.45)



40 x 40 inches. **The swimmer.** I hope that I have understood a little of Samuel Palmer. Another note on representation. Wild garlic. A dead tree. New nettles. The brittle dead tree. A downpour. Why, for all our endless "environment" talk, is art barred (by fashion) from trying to homage this? Is it really so "yesterday"? Yes! That settles it! We must remain "amateurs" or children and then it's "charming". Alas! Constable's healthy ambition to not be infiltrated, "when I am sat to make a sketch, I try to forget that I have ever seen a painting"; yes that is real "experiment". I have a strange ideal, that it is the scene that paints itself. Whatever the "artist" does, he does to bring out a something of the **world** and our response **to** the world! That is not subordination but respect. "It's the world stupid". Do **your scratchings**, dribbles and clever "marking" evidence **that**?! That is the test. Here I would like the paint to make us remember or even feel the falling rain! Now if only I could have got people to call for an umbrella as Fuseli did! "Get me an umbrella, I'm going to look at some Constable pictures". It was indeed "...the world" that he painted!. (sepias. p. 12.15.22.23.29.31.43.44.45)

'What is life?

It is the **flash** of a **firefly** in the night.

It is the **breath** of a **buffalo** in the **wintertime**.

It is the little **shadow** which runs across

The **grass** and loses itself in the **sunset**".

Crowfoot, Blackfoot warrior and orator 1830.

Have we asked why the Native Americans are not memorialised for that particular Holocaust that their culture and way of life suffered under the extermination by the English/Americans?

At 15, an art teacher encouraged me to "get outside". That effectively has made me a misfit! The oddity of the uneconomic activity, the necessary solitude, and then the looking at season and weather. The obstinacy in sticking at something so out of the silly cultural loop and

unrewarded. But I found it suited me and after all; teenagers are trying as best they can, to make sense of the world they find themselves growing into, and then, we adults are more or less homeless in this world. So I always had a special sympathy for Wordsworth's isolated voice and his subordination to the surrounding landscape of the Lake district. Interesting that the Native American quote was contemporary to Wordsworth. In his relatively wild childhood he could understand what Spinoza wrote about – the interchangeability of "God" and "Nature". ("Natura sive Deus". Before the big "God" got him back into a damaging Christian, dualistic conformity! Compare Goethe's independence.)

Boehme (1570-1627), related what we would call a "mystical" experience when once, on seeing a beam of light reflected from a pewter dish, it seemed to him, to reveal "the secret of the cosmos". This was his inner experience but since the words poorly represented that experience, it remained hidden: not shared. For James Joyce such an experience was common to everyone, although maybe at rare moments: a momentary shaft of insight. He made secular use of a word from the Greek New Testament, "**Epiphany**" though not the Christian **revelation** that it stands for. He used the word in his novels. In plainer terms, it was that experience of fleeting unity between self-experience and some aspect of the surrounding world; often the natural world and the signs of its millennia or seasons: what has been, and maybe (?) will for "ever" be. We still experience that at moments; despite the multiplicity of our modern distractions. We also call it **wonder**. What I have always failed to adequately "represent"! But if there had been thousands of us allowed to try?!

I think that Landscape painting tries to find a sufficient image to express for others what Boehme could only relate. In fact I think all the profoundest moments of poetry, music and painting are such **figurations of Epiphany**. Think of **Renoir's** boating party: the utter happiness of a group of friends in carefree conviviality, with the boathouse awning gently moving with the breeze, and boaters still on the river. "La douceur de vivre"! Or think of **Bonnard's** views on to a garden from an illuminated room. As for music; it tells us what we recognise as fundamental but can't put into words; the cosmic enormity in the opening of Beethoven's Ninth! Poetry tries to entwine words in such a way as to make the world or our experience of it, comprehensible and illuminated to others: to share experience.

There is another word that describes Boehme's experience and what the best art holds, the **numinous**: a religious sense in which God is felt as co-terminus with nature; **Spinoza's** Nature. In an affecting art work, there is a seeming summation of being alive and a feeling of completeness, without distraction; as with that Renoir or when we exclaim simply; "How beautiful". Surely if we were sincere about that poor, mistreated "environment", we would prize landscape painting that lets us better "see" the epiphany and transport. And yet for a Turner prize, poor man, they offer a prize of £25,000, as if worthy of his name, for Tracy Ermin's **shabby bed**! We're doomed! Incidentally, that word "environment" is a long Latin word that means little to most people. But whatever it is, Modernism and fashion has banished Landscape painting as "too yesterday", and so, no Epiphanies of nature are anymore attempted – despite our rabbiting on about "the environment"! And for one artist to emerge, you need thousands of us trying! So no art student will be tempted to make something so out of the loop as a "Landscape", or keep at it as I have tried. Fashion calls the tune and anyway, most people don't see the polluted rivers or seas, or the grubbed out hedgerows that sheltered and fed the birds – and then, we are all very busy on our phones and our countless distractions of "entertainment", films/busy steel and concrete cities/ podcasts, fashions/ messages/, cruises (!) OMG, and all that hardly leaves attention for "nature". Us! Maybe for us all, nature is too removed for us to imaginatively or physically participate in it. So a painted "landscape" is an odd genre, for it wants to pull us in to participation. As with dear Fuseli's umbrella exclamation! Or the power of Shakespeare's continual nature metaphors that force us to participate:

As Philomel* in summer's front doth sing *changed into a Nightingale
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:
Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,

But that wild music burthens every bough

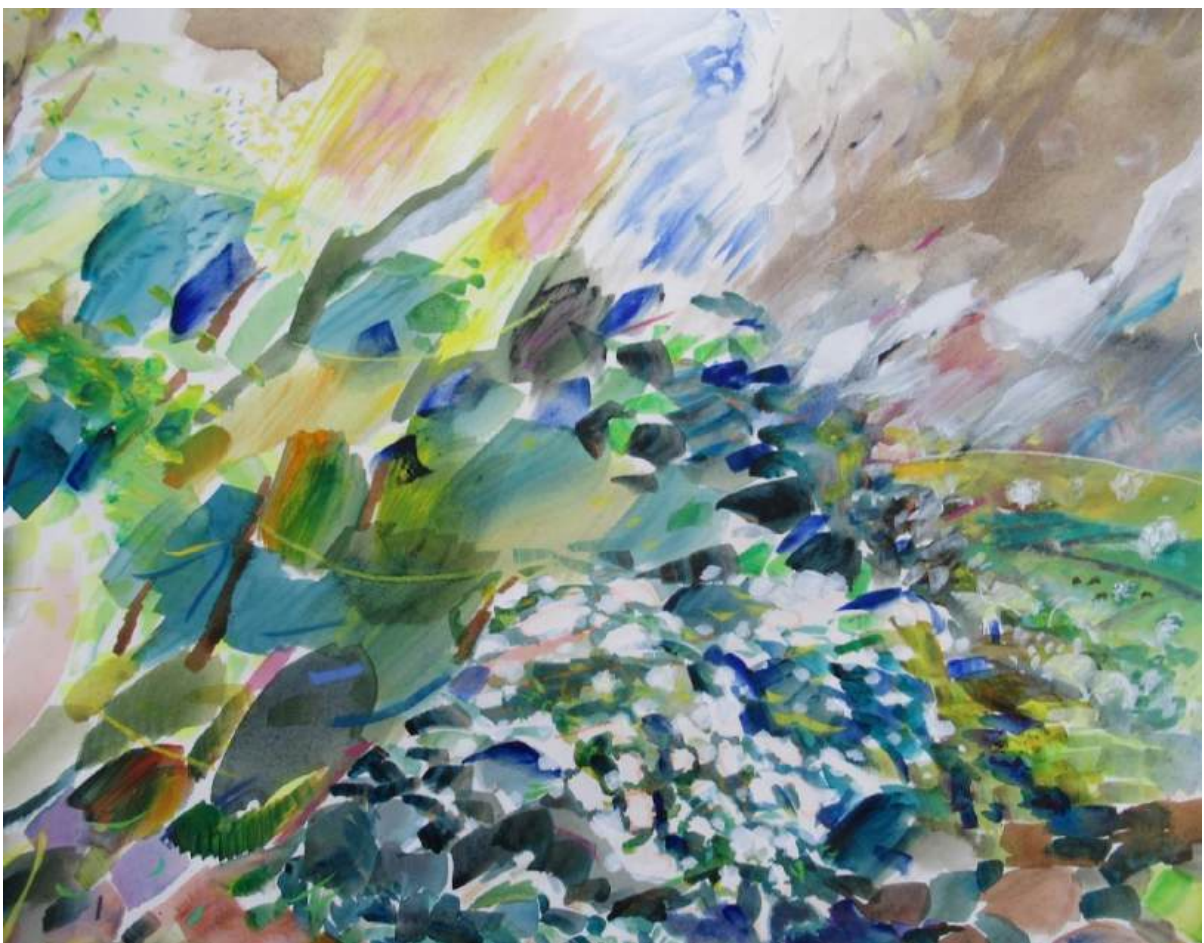
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.

Here is a piece of art criticism worth noting for its upside downness. Not his fault. It is so common. Call it; "Egotistical determinism"! "I am right". It seems that there is a railway line that historians/critics have constructed which takes artists in the right direction! "Just get on the train"! "It's the true way;" "it serves best"!

Wittgenstein thought it merited a lifetime of enquiry into the bewitchment of the mind by the language we use and are infected by! Despite all that "help" from critics/historians, what critic could have anticipated Picasso or Francis Bacon and their "language"!? Painting, (its procedures) grows *pari passu* with the "real". Having an exhibition at the Tate must show that Nash had got something right! But this historian's tone is so superior; omniscient. (But Nash did his best!). Bullying words are one of the off shoots of human big-cheese modes of being (and thinking). The **historian** was a good person who had had a respected career at a leading American university, successfully published books, yet wrote on Nash in the terms I quote here. "...**this** (= **wrong turning?**) *cut Nash off from the modifications of naturalism (⊗ is the **ism** so self evident?) that might have served him best ⊗ (**might**", but **asserted!**), the wave after wave of French invention (⊗?) that led (⊗?) from Millet and Courbet to Seurat and Cézanne. (⊗ isn't "led" a little OTT and who is missing?)*⊗ "Mr Nash, do keep up" ⊗! What **logic** connects those four painters as the main highway? And is there a highway? No wonder that remark of Constable; "I try to forget that I have ever seen a painting." You can't **abstract /extract manners/styles**; you have to find one, work for one, entwine one with your "real", discover one in your failures. The lesson of Van Gogh is that you must **care about the "real" in your special way**. (p.39. 40) It's a question of **Being!** To hell with the critic's cited 4 French horseman of the apocalypse! There is a excluding **determinism** in that sort of thinking, and reminds one of that thought on the "bewitchment" of minds. (p.1)



44 x 45 inches. Painting above. The last shadows across the sun absorbed moors under the still bright sky. The sky reflected in the stream. The dear particularity of wild garlic, nettles, brown peaty water over stoney bottomed stream. You could say that it was trying to pass on love! But no! It's Forbidden, "So yesterday". Perhaps the "**Numinous**" shouldn't be defined as "religious" or "spiritual", but just a respect for place or for the immeasurable prolixity of nature's transformations of forms of life – all life; its more-than-usness. "Great creating nature". But there is our generalised sense of exile; of not fitting.



Detail of previous. 1/24th. Is this "Abstraction" or oblique representation? Below; detail of next painting. 1/16th Cows on the hill.



40 x 42 inches **Numinous**; we could redefine it as, not God-connecting, but **earth-connecting**; simply that awed respect for aspects of nature that are hugely beyond our tiny measure: our sense of the numinous lies in our awe and wonder at the “sacred”, simply of millennia. Fossils. Deserts of sand buried and turned to “sandstone”! But due to all our human centred activity during our life, we have become proud and therefore unresponsive to the **numinous**. We can’t see or hear it. We live our present as if it were privileged. We have surrounded ourselves with a purely human habitat – which is, in daily life, only very lightly disturbed by the still enormous powers of nature (and therefore we cannot read landscapes because other than for the distracted tractor driver in his cab with music and phone, (and even he, hardly), we are no longer used to reading nature – it is not our habitat and our new habitat has different fauna.

A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

.....the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth:

I say that landscape painting is religious, though not as in monotheisms’ mighty ruler-God, (oh no! another ruler!), or an already “revealed” book. Spinoza thought of God as co-terminus with Nature which generates continual life – the seeds and propulsions within plants and all living things; the power of generation within them, our children and the seasons’ changes. Landscape painting celebrates all that which generates - plants, trees, insects, birds, animal – and all that we have laid down in our life’s memory of nature. So a landscape painting must have a breath of the **numinous** (an awed “religious” respect) in its representation; a quality that we easily pass over and miss. Landscape’s **numinous** would be found in just the wonder that **Milton** imagines in Adam’s awakening to the world. Isn’t that the heart of Van Gogh’s appeal? His loving,

abnegating connection. In this blackthorn below, is the “art” simply in the respectful fretwork of those white spaces between the leaves and twigs and the way they unify the **all** of the picture: grass, twigs, clouds – “a motion and a spirit”? How I remember painting it, sat there. So often and at different seasons. Fortunate to have been there – those days.

Straight toward Heaven my wondering eyes I turned, And gazed a while the ample sky; Stood on my feet: about me round I saw Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains, And liquid lapse of murmuring streams; by these, Creatures that lived and moved, and walked, or flew; Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled; With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed.	Knew not to speak I tried, and forthwith spake; My tongue obeyed, and readily could name Whate'er I saw. Thou Sun, said I, fair light, And thou enlightened Earth, so fresh and gay, Ye Hills, and Dales, ye Rivers, Woods, and Plains, And ye that live and move, fair Creatures, tell, Tell, if ye saw, how I came thus, how here?-.....
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“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but a thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect. Chief Seattle. 1854 (another contemporary of Wordsworth!)	“Beauty—a living Presence of the earth, Surpassing the most fair <u>ideal forms</u>..... ... <u>fictions</u> of what never was. For the discerning intellect of Man, When wedded to <u>this</u> goodly universe In love and holy passion, shall find these A simple produce of the common day. Wordsworth (from The excursion) 1814.
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39 x 37 inches. Mixed sepia and black ink. Below detail of p. 24

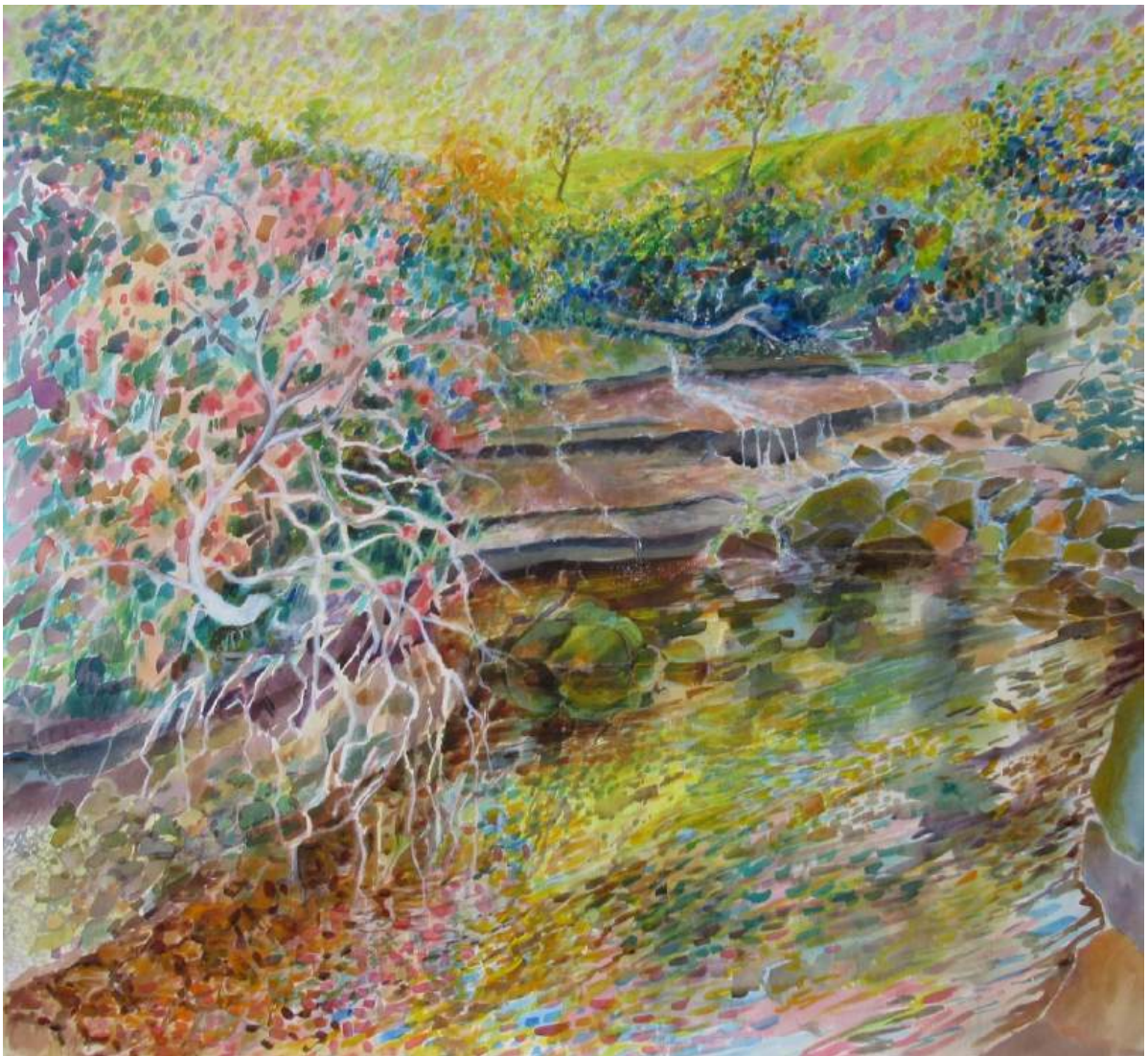


In this watercolour, Stream, rocks and rowan berries, the rain is again being very helpful! That reminds me of a long ago artist called **Long**, who went for walks and made photos of his brief passage; as in the ripples in a pond made by the stone he had thrown, his trampled grass, or cairn of stones. Touching; though there was a photo! I more egotistically, colour paper and take it home!

On the next page - 31. sepia. (40 x 39 inches). A private **sacred**. This is an example of all that comes from painting outside; the in the moment **isness** of it: especially with ink, where every mark is **indelible**, so you have the excitement of imminent disaster; no second chance! In the detail, you can see how I later used a razor to scrape a sun dazzle on some of the clouds. Over the last three years, with also the covid year, when I have tried to “complete” inside, those 400 odd accumulated, half-finished, abandoned or put aside paintings, the marks stirred the past. Some of the paintings had on them rain marks, while on others, the water had frozen and superimposed freeze patterns. They were a bit like Buddhist prayer flags that the wind/weather activates! They also reminded me of the steep climb home after finishing painting, and all done (uncomfortably on 40 inches square paper!) outside and therefore, like prayer, done on your knees! I remember in summer, when after sunset, both the sky and earth would throb with the warmth of the past day’s sun, (as in this below), or in winter, when sometimes the water froze in coloured multiple layers (though sadly they fused as they melted!). Then walking back, there was such an intensity in the sky and the dark line of the hills was as sharp as a knife edge: “Der Abend wiegte schon die Erde, und an den Bergen hing die Nacht”! (p. 33. THAT was Goethe’s “**Religious**”, and landscape painting should be like that). Below is a sepia ink painting that shows my admiration/envy for Japanese Kangi “writing” – image-sign and meaning conjoined! (A landscape painter’s life time’s dream!). What for the Japanese **sign** is the “**meaning**” of the “**thing**”, is in a painting, the pictured “**real**”, and as with the Japanese meaning/the “**thing**” – here, the **day’s windy** tiptoe excitement, is what should decide the “**marks**”/sign. The way that the running together of the ink marks is a sort of metaphor for the body’s response to the day’s weather. An exclamation. The sinuous patterns of the stream’s current, the blowing clouds and coming rain, the leaves detaching, the torn boisterousness of the autumn day. Painting outside! Alive.



Below. Blustery and showery autumn day. 42 x 43 inches. (see p. 12.15.22.23.29.31.43.44.45)



38 x 35 inches. Rowan berries. Sunset.

A landscape painting is always trying (or should be), to present a worthy homage to the beauty of the world that we are distracted from. Here is the moment of the going down of the sun – even for us sophisticates of electricity, it can strike us as, (we say weakly), “beautiful”; even at times, it strike us with awe. So here is a stream, and the berries of a Rowan tree, often painted, also in spring with its blossom. Probably a landscape painter’s “effects” depend on a steadily accruing experience and loyalty to place. (Cezanne’s St Victoire, Constable’s Stour). Here some of the lower branches are without fruit and in their boney greyness; ghostly. The water trickles from the rock, almost audible – such tricks of “presence” try to make an image of wonder. (but “sploshing” breaks the spell – and splosh remains splosh – **if without an “armature of the real”**). Here in this painting, the sentinel trees on the horizon stand out against the yellow gold of the setting sun, which spangles through the leaves and makes me squash and merge the paint to suit. How can we do justice to such nature effects! But we should TRY and not be put off by the “art” police who are ok with unmade beds but tell us, like severe Calvinists, that imitation of nature is idolatrous – and certainly “so yesterday”! We once were – for a very long time, Hunter Gatherers. Sunset; it is not just “beautiful”, but in a primitive way, can strike us as frightening; enormous – as it was to my 3 year old daughter watching the sun steadily disappear, and noticing for the first time one evening, the full enormity of it! So she began to cry unconsolably to see it “go”, until we could convince her that it did that every day to make the night time dark, but that it came back to make it light again. Yes in front of the enormity of a “disappearing” sun, she was right to feel awe, and that is what is so evident in the ink drawing of Van Gogh that I show at the end to prove a point, even if it points out **my failure** to paint the disappearing numinous. That Native American thought (p. 23) describes what we arrogant materialists miss. Although many of us also feel homeless in a mistaken habitat.



12 x 10 inches. Dusk. Guarene. Italy. The fruit trees in the fading light. The distant autumn vineyards just discernible, and behind, the green hillside, and blue higher hill and from the just visible cloud above, there are let fall those few, nicely placed rain drops (!) that suffuse, like exclaiming wonder! Nature's "finishing touch"! What a marvellous medium is watercolour. The suffusions of astonishment.

Here are two lines of a poem that are so beautiful – best not to spoil them with translation!.... (**wiegte** *rocked* - as in cradle but also in English, "*explosion rocked...*")? So English's double meaning in *rocked* rather spoils it! Translation never gets it right! In German too there are two meanings to **wiegen**, *rock* (cradle) and *weigh*. However, for the darkening earth it fits with the weight needed to rock the heavy earth or the cradle! So the darkening "**Abend**" seems to *rock the earth* and darkness does *weigh down*. How words put together heterogeneous things yet see connections. The evening *weighed* the earth down? And then that word **hing** *hung* the night, takes us back to the cradle idea because cradles are *rocked* and *hanged*, but here it is the descending night that also *hangs above/over* the hills! Beautiful! Just four letters does what this little watercolour limps after! This hillside of Guarene always reminds me of those lines. Pity the painting is slower!

Der Abend wiegte schon die Erde, evening rocked (as in cradle) already earth
Und an den Bergen hing die Nacht over/on mountains/hills hung night

Landscape painting should be a response to the world; a **wonder**; and wonder is the **non-"religious" religious** feeling of respect and love to a world that (it seems an enormity), we will one day, be abstracted (!) from - That realisation is a sufficient this-world "spirituality". (If only!).

Remember Wittgenstein's warning against language and how we suffer the "bewitchment" of our minds through the language (and our paint too) that we use - caught by our own fishhook! Such abstraction / manner occurs because Van Gogh's advice to Emile Bernhard is ignored; "get outside and **look**!" You may fail, but at least it's a failure of trying to see and think! "Cezanne" and those other three Frenchmen quoted on page 25 were thinking for themselves – not for us!

Of our evolutionary time, the greater span was spent as Hunter Gatherers. On everything in nature, we depended for existence. What is painting? During the steady increase in the forms and variations to **representation** in the 20th century, there occurred a void of understanding of the semantics/ aesthetics of that mark-making; painting/ drawing.

It became accepted that painting's marks were autonomous. No No! **It all must be wound around the armature of the real** – the reference to our known world – in some way or other. That was the secret of Picasso's so getting "to parts that other beers don't reach"! This lack of understanding was the result of all the deforming fancy talk to justify abstract art, so there was no coherent interpretative aesthetics of the psychic weight of representation's mark; those which, as Bacon put it, "**are felt along the nervous system**". The large extension of the "language" of representation – the heart of 20th century art – and here, (the interpretation of an autumn sunset), was not given a coherent explanation; no interpretative subtlety. No looking for what **made meaning in Painting**. Instead we've had that mystifying fog. Imagine if painting were allowed / encouraged to find an adequate correlative for the beauty of the world? No! Carry on with your modern splashing, colour "blocks", and dribbling and all of course with their **deep meaning**. Ha! "That is the highway"! "A painting is a painting"! No! the world!

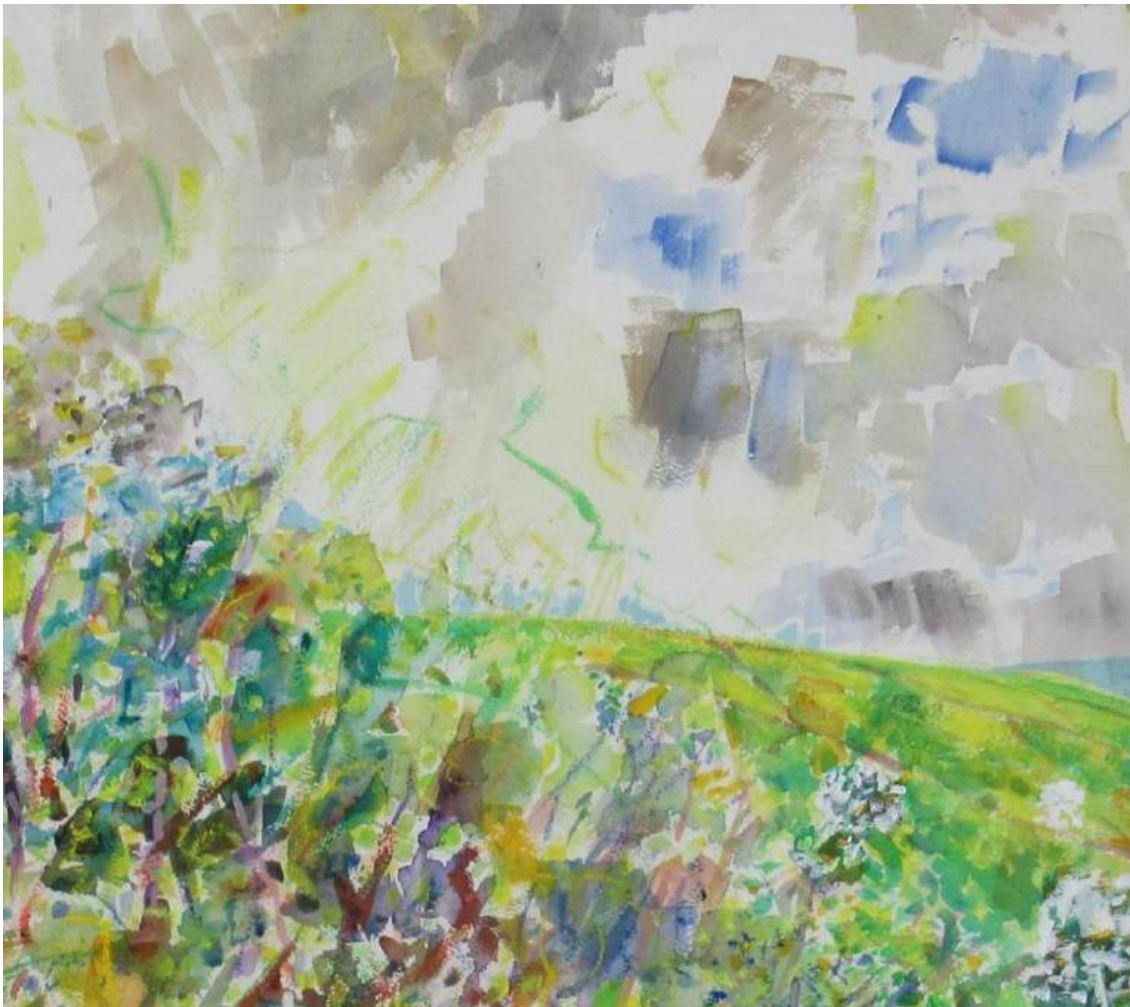


30 x 24 inches. A smaller watercolour. Again of that hillside of Guarene. Alba, and the farm fields of La Piov. This has that brilliance of effect that is special to watercolour. It paints itself! It was evening. When, as the light goes, things seem to exude the warmth and light of the passed day. The seeping, staining of watercolours and how they suffuse into each other, seems a physical metaphor for both the brilliance of the light and the wonder that we feel at the beauty of the fruit trees, the vineyards, the farm roof, or the runner beans and blue cabbages (!) in the foreground. As if, in that seeping suffusing of water colour, and those vigorous, exclaiming brush marks in the sky, there were a backwash of loving astonishment. But otherwise, what is a landscape painting doing? What's the point of it!! The suffusing light of this or that falling darkness in the previous; they are attempts to envision wonder, but is that just fine talk. We are the Lords of creation – or so we behave. **Below are two details.** The first is of a **meadow** and Hawthorns – the wild flowers and grass, the abundance of the May blossom. Question. How to find a personal correlative for that spring luxuriance; some set of metaphoric and oblique marks that describe that place and a response? Not be frightened of your own loyalty to “the real”! “What would the art police say”! This I'd say was natural Abstraction (from the “real”); even more apparent in the **second detail. 1/16.** It is an evening light in spring, on the **edge of a wood.** It is paint that seemed to fit that place and time; not an applied **extraneous** “manner”. I was certainly **sitting outside in front of this.** It was early spring when new growth is delicate, still fragile and tenuous, with the rough winds of April to withstand. There was the pink last rays of sunset tinting the greys of winter branches. This was (like ALL painting!), an abstraction from “the real”, but I'd say, abstraction growing from the thing itself (as opposed to being applied as style and mere different manner of painting, (as in much gallery painting), when “marks” seem mere “Bravura”. Like bullfighters with their capes!

Below. 1/6 of whole 38 x 35. Hawthorns in May.

Bottom, is a detail 1/30 of a whole. 38 x 35 inches





Above of 39x37. 1/9th Dales in brisk spring sunshine. Below Blackthorn with drizzle falling on the painting. Whole 44 x 32

In that Bacon "Homage to Van Gogh on the road to Tarascon", the painting would be meaningless without both the figure **AND** that violent visceral, communicative paint! That isn't mere scrape, splosh, and smudge. There, such "ugly" marks had perspicacity - the pain of existence is there . No mere esoteric "mark"!

Razor cut an empty canvas! Brilliant! No! "It's the world stupid"! As a result of such superficial silliness, the "armature of the real" has been given no coherent language of interpretation. And therefore, what can they teach, or what example set in art schools? Writing on painting has not seemed to take seriously all that which Bacon's phrase points to; ("armature of the real"). It becomes just a history of "styles". A dangerous simplification. (=destructive. See art critic on p. 25). So turn one of these large ink paintings of mine upside down; (90 x 90cm) and they just become squiggles: "shapes, balance, tache, tensions"...etc That infinite art talk! So all my effort to paint what is both "real" and psychological/interpretative; of what **MATTERS** to us, cannot be agreed with or disagreed with; "anything goes", and that explains why the public, is between puzzled or polite, and says overmodestly; "I don't really understand art". Recently and obviously hitting the headlines, an "artist" had collected old discarded ropes and was selling it for £1,000,000. With the cheeky title, "A heap of Old rope" (a "brilliant" Postmodern joke against the hand that pays – "you'll pay a million quid for this – "load of old rope? You fool.") – "Brilliantly "Conceptualist", and revealing of capitalist values." Art talk! So to that modest admission, "I don't really understand art", I'd reply, "you're better off not worrying yourself about it. It is mostly, inverted commas cleverness or "a heap of old rope", that isn't actually "rope", but "art". Yes the ventriloquism is brilliant. - Is it?



1/6th The whole is 39 x 35 inches. There is something of stained glass in watercolours. I am so far out of the loop of "Contemporary Art"- that perhaps one day I shall wake up, back in the Middle Ages, once more working for my master glazier on his Great East Window of - "Paradise"! Here is Constable's favourite hour – midday and the overhead sun; edging all with light, rather than the edging darks of stain glass leading ! Just think; if to celebrate the beauty of the (disappearing?) world is forbidden, then to paint such edging by the midday sun or the large cloud (in the unseen sky) about to hide the sun, won't be undertaken - if it retains a scrap of a recognisable

“world”! – At most we must do it with some scribble n’dribble! And God forbid that the image had any **resemblance**; (the word almost seems a blasphemy!).



1/24th Blackthorn tree as sleet fell. 36 x 34 inches. **Below.** Blackbird and Holly Bush in early morning light. 1/30th of whole.



Now look at this drawing below by Van Gogh which breaks your heart, when we think of his life and death. It certainly moves us, unlike "A load of old rope". I show this drawing by **Van Gogh** because it proves my point better than I could.



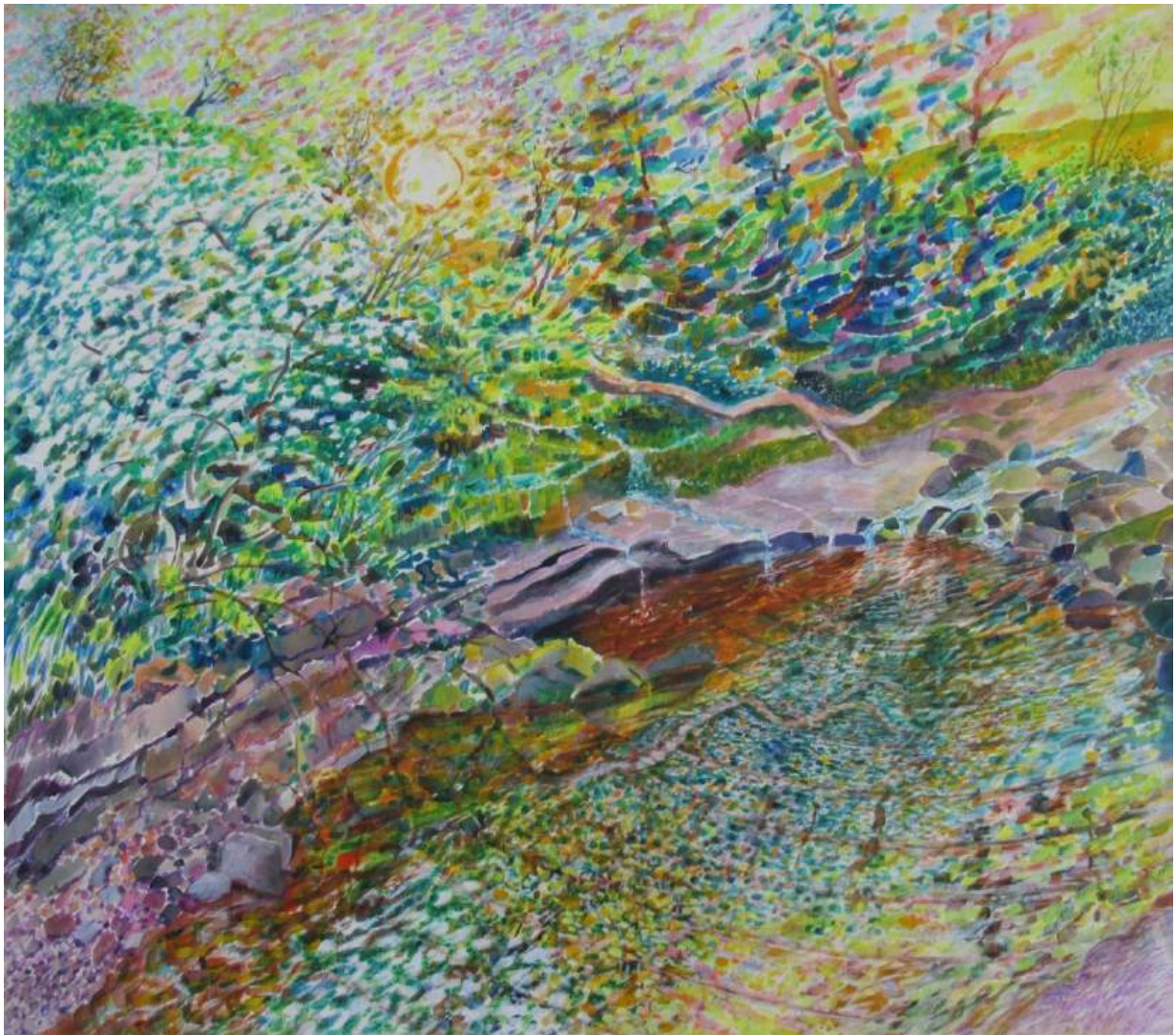
Van Gogh used a reed pen, which initially makes marks that are dark and full and which then steadily become weaker as the ink is used up. At sunset, the low sun casts alternate illuminations and shadows which here are both perfectly realistically drawn by that reed pen; full and then weaker, and yet are strangely (because of Van Gogh's language of drawing); "visionary", revelatory. The dashes seem to be a language not just of "realism"; (that too), but seem to teem with a cosmic force; so people have noticed something religious about his art. That is the something else besides, that we secondary artists may feel, but search in vain for the language to express it, except that word "**express**" is a false trail: music, painting, poetry **are** the figurations; they do not derive from a "thought" or "concept". We secondary artists see and feel, but have no adequate correlative for wonder. But this is a drawing that **IS** an "Epiphany". That is why I have shown this **drawing**, to show how a painting **can** configure a moment of Epiphany, even if I can't. What is, or should be the aim of a painting (or here a drawing)? To describe ordinary, yet special experiences in our lives. James Joyce made use of a word from the New Testament; **Epiphany**, meaning in Greek, a **revelation**, and Joyce gave the word to those special experiences that we all have, when suddenly the world or our experience has a special dimension – ordinary but beyond the ordinary; this **Van Gogh drawing**. So I think the best in painting, music, or poetry presents in its encoding "art", that sort of **revelation**. And in a painting, (I ignore abstract art which is just a detached "design" and pretty curtain material), that phrase of Francis Bacon to which I have often returned: "painting should contain an armature of the **real**"; (armature - worth looking up in an electro-mechanics dictionary). That is to say, that whatever the clever language of art, it is (or should be) always "wound around that **armature**" of something "**real**"; and it's this oscillation of pen / paint

language and **real** which carries the meaning/ interpretation/ thought or sentiment towards the “world” and that sought after “Epiphany”; just as here the **pen’s marks** are wound around the **setting sun, and the sweeping field**. And that field has been observed. It is both real and visionary! That was Van Gogh!

The two arise together. That was Van Gogh’s Spinozerist genius. “It’s the world, stupid!” What is important is that the “religious”, “visionary” quality that we perceive in the marks of Van Gogh’s drawing, is not a merely “technical” thing; a manner of marks alone, (or a copiable “style”), for only Van Gogh’s **attitude** could find these marks to carry a little of **how he thought** and **responded** to the world, as he was drawing it – “style” can’t be found in a second hand “styles” shop; it’s an inner thing. That is what makes the quote on p. 25 objectionable in its hauteur, and the letter below, to Emile Bernhard, touching and sincere.- *the letter from Van Gogh to Emile Bernhard. 1886. “...When Gauguin was in Arles, I once or twice allowed myself to be led into abstraction, as you know; in a woman rocking a cradle, a dark woman reading novels in a yellow library, and at that time abstraction seemed an attractive route to me. But that’s enchanted ground, — my good fellow — and one soon finds oneself up against a wall. I’m not saying that one may not take the risk **after a whole manly life of searching, of fighting hand-to-hand with reality**, (or “Nature”? but both words work), but as far as I’m concerned I don’t want to rack my brains over that sort of thing. And the whole year,, hardly thinking of Impressionism or of this or that.... at present I am working in the olive trees.....”* Could have been Constable speaking!

Abstraction. An important word, yet we’re still so confused by it! Like a lot of words it started out as a metaphor – something more apparent in German than for English words which are so often disguised Latin in their etymology. Ab stract -take out from, take out some element from a group of connected things. So a poet picks words to stand for what he thinks are significant descriptors, or a painter **abstracts** from reality, those aspects that he makes “stand for” the whole that he is “representing”. The poet and painter makes **abstractions** of word or paint/pencil from a whole in order to represent a recallable, imagined “reality”. Visual or poetic representation depends on an us noticing and **abstracting**, (in proper sense), which is then encoded in a “language”; word/paint. Think of one of your favourite child drawings, It is clearly an **abstraction** – a one sided, and for that reason, an often charming **abstraction** from “reality”, in the sense that the child’s attention has alighted on some odd and particular aspect of the “real”. What the child draws is however integral – it is autonomous. It is not a mere “dressing”, but integrated. Any painting is made up of only some aspects of a, recognisable reality, but even a most perfect “imitation” soon fails a test of likeness! Like a successful painting/drawing, the child’s is all of a piece: a new reality, echoing the “real” of all of us. Now consider the presumption of some **Abstraction!** And this concerns the claims for so called “**abstract art**”, even though in point of fact it has not been “**abstracted**” from anything, but lays claim to be a summation of something wordless and otherwise invisible! Carte blanche! So an **abstractionist** may boldly claim that his squiggles “represent” “The conflict of nations”, or maybe avoid too big a claim, and simply leave the public, as mostly happens, to fill in the squiggles with their own meaning! “There must be one!” So whereas at Picasso exhibitions you see people smiling with comprehension at his wit, at Abstract shows, or most other types, you see people’s furrowed concentration; oh, how they are trying! Sometimes the artist will lofty assert, and dismissively, that their squiggles have “meanings”. A picto**reality!** But in contrast, look at the visual coherence and intelligibility of Picasso’s Guernica!

The final case of **abstraction** is what I would call, **mannerist abstraction** which is almost a modern schtick, or tic “infection”, and which is used to give an image a modern look. A painter must be seen to be modern, so the artist incorporates the modern look! Some artists only see through the memes of convention, which are a sort of spectacles for seeing: those slabs, scribbles, percussive marks, smears, exercised upon an underlying “scene”, reality. These are then presumed to add interpretative – (but autonomous) insight to the painting and they also make it look so up to date! And look, above all they are not being “slavishly realistic”! As Van Gogh advised Emile Bernhard: “get outside and look”! And paint, and look and paint and look again. Find a thread. There is something authoritarian about Art-Fashion. (Look at p.25. Its dictat). It has had a very bad influence on art in schools and in Art schools. The one-eyed Gorgon Zeitgeist that **knows**.



This is spring (see autumn -p. 32) 33 x 37 inches

.....Birds on the branches warbling; all things smiled;
With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed



" Above. An abstract? No it's just 1/36th of the whole! Stream current. "The armature of the real". And the blue is sky. Not "blue"!



1/9th of whole. The blustery wind of, "The uncertain glory of an April day...and by and by a cloud takes all away". The cattle visible"



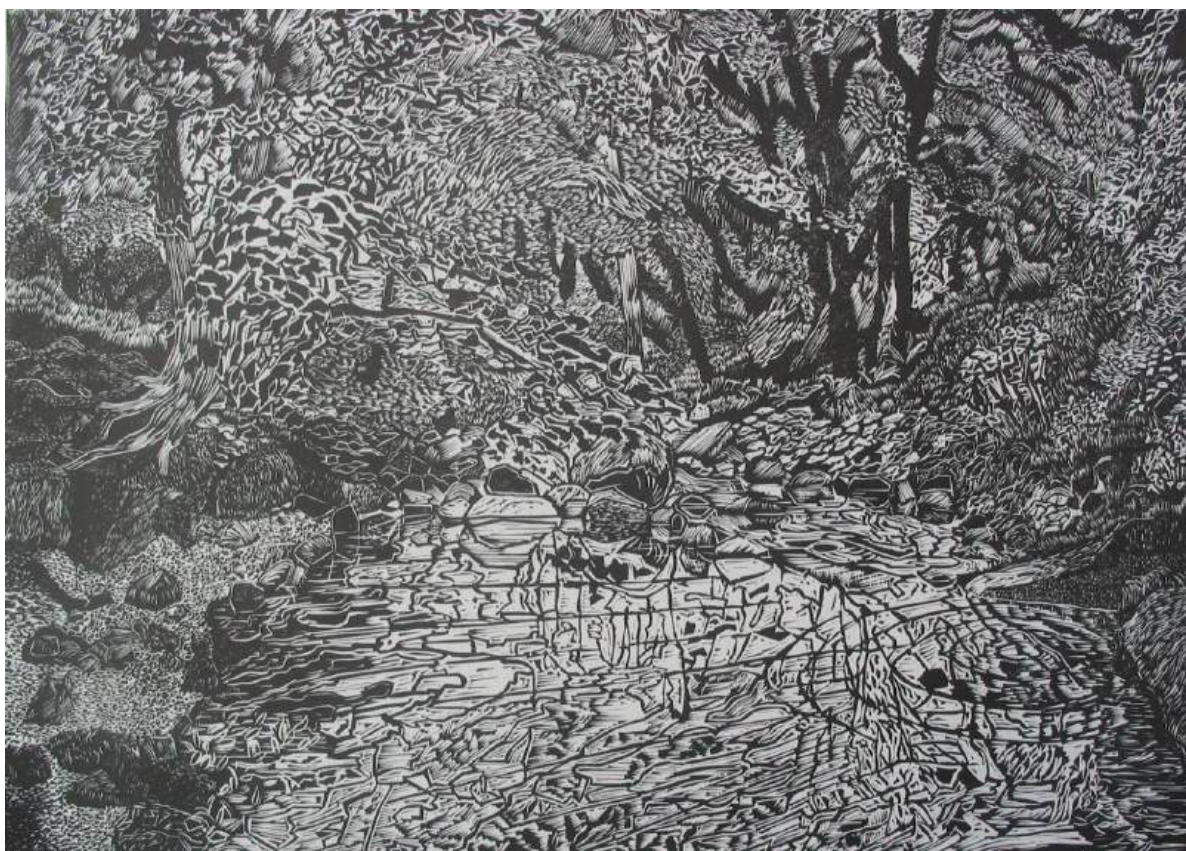
Above. Detail. . 1/4. 37 x 35 inches. Sepia. Blustery May day Hawthorns. Spring meadow flowers. 1/2 of whole.



34 x 37 inches. Evening sun. Hawthorn blossoms and moors. 1/20th

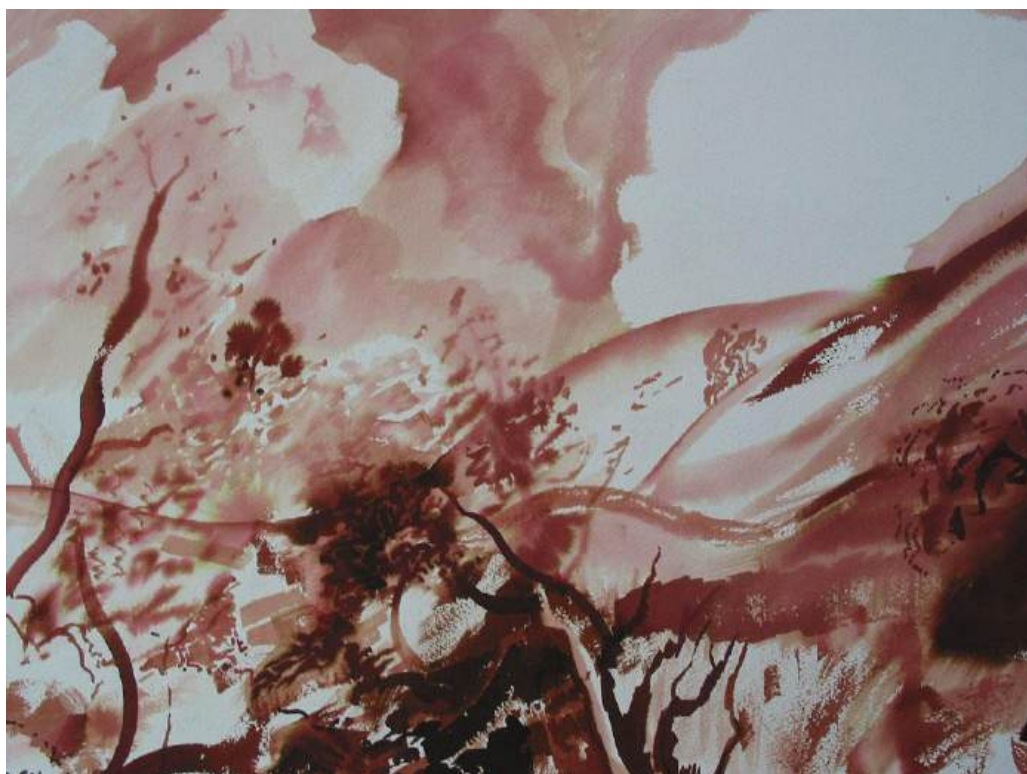


Above. May blossom with meadow flowers in a late slanting sun. 1/16th Below. Linocut 22 x 31 inches.





Sepia. Bright Spring day. 37 x 35 inches. The clouds that fill the sky; pure white rainless clouds, and then, comes - the sun!



Look at page.1. 1/12th of whole. It was a painting of a thundery afternoon. There were the afternoon oppressive clouds and the lightning jag along its contour, the distant moor covered by rain..... these were all, what Bacon meant by the “real”; the thing before me, but also all the accumulated memories of such real things, and a long way back, my painting of such things, which then went to make up my present painted “image”. Nobody “sees” the world like Rembrandt, or Renoir etc, but neither did they! Painting is a special kind of seeing that is an additional something; better to call it an envisioning. (see p.39). What is **imitation**? What were people aiming for in “life classes”? With their pencils; what were they (once!) looking to find/bring out/ evidence, and was it ever “imitation”? People had noticed there were a 101 versions of it! Coleridge used the useful word “**correlative** of feeling”, but we could also add a “**correlative** of paint/pencil/ink”, that if it doesn’t “imitate”, at least **calls up** the real before us. (like this “thunder”). We start from the **real**, and in some way, want to keep a loyalty to it; otherwise why sit there! The “**armature of the real**” and **interpretation**. The elephant in the room in art is “imitation”, and what was ever meant by it? Supposedly, the “art work” has won independence; (“Painting set free”). It is not “constrained” anymore by depending on imitation. In 2013 there was a Turner exhibition with the dangerous title “Painting set free”, which obviously saw Turner as part of that new “freedom” to assert the **painting** rather than any limping **imitation**. But whatever he was, Turner was not a pathfinder for abstraction, or for “the paint in itself” (!) – the sea, mountain, storm, dawn or sunset still mattered greatly to him, (he travelled Europe for them!), and they conditioned his supposedly “set free” paint. (Incidentally, that was such a silly, trendy title for a Turner exhibition. The wrong end of the stick. Read again Van Gogh’s letter. P. 40. But **now**, for a great number of “artists”, the painting flaunts its independence from the “real”, and as I have already pointed out; in that case there is no longer any possibility for painting to interpret either the world or our response to it. No meaning! **Painting has cut off its own legs!** Bacon’s phrase “armature of the real” was his serious attempt to keep the connection and thus the possibility of interpretation. Yes, he pointed out, “after the camera, painting must deepen the game” – but not to give the “game” up! Look again at that Bacon homage to “Van Gogh’s self-portrait on the road to Tarascon”. Painting that matters!

The camera now does the job of calling up our reality, which supposedly was previously the painting’s job, so the title of that Turner exhibition has been taken literally – “Painting set free”! We should be careful with loose terms that we too casually employ. Van Gogh recommended to Emile Bernhard (p. 40) to avoid “abstraction” and instead, “get outside”, and do some hard looking and practice. What was to be searched for was an appropriate, apposite **correlative** of both the place weather etc and also for the feeling/response. It is from those two that the paint takes shape, not from a merely imposed “method”! A painting is a special way of calling up aspects of the real. (=interpreting). We now have styles, manners of paint enforced (applique’ !) **on** the real! Not abstracted **from** (proper use of word) but we abstract **onto** the real! (cf. Shakespeare’s self-mocking, “glance aside” (!) “to new found methods and to compounds strange”!) ie. the wrong way round! The “elephant” (imitation), is now a ghost in the room! All imitation, even Bacon’s nuanced one, is considered old-hat. Ordinary people are interested in understanding reality - in our perplexity, we desperately need to! However, the precondition requires starting from an “armature of the real”, but that has been discouraged by fashion. Perhaps too, “artists” have felt that photography had to be competed with, by refusing all imitation, or choosing (with guilty conscience) only the very slightest “resemblance” to our daily world; and then, after twisting themselves in knots, an actual bed became the ultimate realism; although with Post Modernism’s endless mystification of inverted commas! “Bed”. So to Constable’s, “there is room for a natural painter” we would have to tell him – “not any more”! There has been indicated (p.25) a highway,– in the arts. “Done that, been there”. – So we end up with an Italian “artist” drawing up “**his**” canvas that he has left immersed in a stagnant pond for nearly 2 months – to inspect the masterpiece that he had let nature “paint” **itself**! (more inverted commas! “Brilliant! Who would have thought of that”! “Painting set free”! Clever phrase-making always comes back to bite! Now look again at that critic’s confusion on p. 25. “wave after wave of French invention”; as if painting were like a jet engine; always being improved by new invention. Shakespeare’s sonnet implies; “love” is not made

by “inventing” fine phrases! Nor paintings by matador swish! Look again at that Van Gogh drawing: “The common day”.



Detail of **p. 3** 1/12 Blackthorn blossom and wall. 39 x 38 inches.

Above. Blackthorn. Storm coming.





(viii) In putting together this booklet, I feel gratitude towards these places and days. A disinterested activity you could say, since with hardly any gain. I also notice a constant in the paintings, of what I'd call a merry melancholy; maybe they were my private version of Buddhist monks' prayer flags, whose prayers, it is thought, the wind propagates! 36x38 inches. detail of p.16. 1/24th





38 x 36 inches. Lightning and rain over the moors. First drops of rain. A crab apple tree in blossom. Concluding thought. Of course this painting is very “retro” and a poor naïve thing, but if imitation / representation is barred by the art police, how can we express in painting, a love/respect to the world – which surely, (they keep telling us), we should be trying to make common, before it’s too late! Art has become just a determinist **fashion**, and if we discourage people from trying to do better than this, are we really happy with the dry gruel of scribble n’dribble, and that idiot slogan-idea of an exhibition on Turner (him again!), “Painting set free”? I would like painting to regain the expressive range it once had in the late 19th - 20th century and to remind us, **“It’s the world stupid!”** This verse of Herrick reminds us that love is disinterested.

So good luck came and on my roof did light,
Like noiseless snow or as the dew of night,
Not all at once but gently as the trees
Are by the sunbeams tickled by degrees.

As in that day above where a withdrawing sunbeam illuminates the crabapple tree, a storm is building, and the calves carry on grazing under the lightning that flashes across the clouds, in this verse there is a good illustration of what Bacon meant by “armature of the real”. In this verse of Herrick, all the elements of the poem come by cumulative surprise. That initial “so”, as if of a conversation, the roof, the snow alighting, the dew by night, the trees, sunbeams, not all at once, and tickled; all are pleasing similes for the “revelations” of a good fortune/ luck. It is cumulative and additional just as a painting should be. (Above; the calves, stream, lightning, clouds). The arts deal with the world that matters to us. Even music does. In a **painting**, the varying degrees of likeness of the “real” that is alluded to, sets a **context** for painting to then add oblique allusive extras just as in this brief poem. In both there is a short hand. The secret of Picasso’s wit.



"It's the world stupid". 1/12th of 42 x 40". Zoom it! Imagine inventing an "abstract"/
"Pattern"? No blackbird. No dawn light, no holly bush, no seeming dancing particles
of life, no other 11 parts of the whole painting. We are a deaf culture; our time filling
phones and the drugs of distraction. Read the quotes. P. 10. 23. 27. 28. Are all

these paintings just ruminations on that Max Weber concept: “Die Entzauberung der Welt” (the un/dis-enchantment of the world)? Indeed.