

ROBIN RICHMOND LANDSCAPE PAINTING AT THE CURWEN GALLERY

27th February 2014 in [Exhibitions](#) and [Interviews](#) by [Cass Art](#)



Robin Richmond has been described as 'one of the finest painters working in Britain today', and we can see why. Her evocative studies are produced in the natural environment, and seek to document the sense of place rather than making a literal translation. Born in Philadelphia, raised in old Rome, student at Chelsea College of Art in the swinging sixties and now with her largest show to date at the Curwen & New Academy Gallery on the way, the artistic journey of Robin Richmond is one we're eager to find out more about...



Can you tell us a little about how you became a landscape painter?

I became a landscape painter in 1985 when I had a visiting professorship at the University of California at Santa Cruz. I had previously been a very rigorously figurative portrait painter having grown up in Rome and schooled in Renaissance painting (which is why I did a masters in the History of Art and later wrote art history books) but being exposed to California light and the huge skies of the deserts of Arizona, Nevada and Utah changed me forever.

In 1989 I bought a house in the middle of nowhere in rural South-western France and this became my main studio. The landscape surrounding my French home has become my chief subject. The lake at the bottom of my fielding all seasons and weathers; the molten skies; the furze of trees; the horizon; these are all my subjects.

I also travel a lot and this new show contains paintings of Sicily, Tuscany and Umbria.

My work is not transcriptive but evocative. I consider myself to be figurative but am often called abstract. I am not sure what this means....

You paint with a mix of oil and acrylic; do you have a special technique for blending the two? What's your process like?

I became allergic to turpentine after using it for 35 years (my doctor says this is not uncommon!) and as a result began to experiment with acrylics. I was devastated at this

development, but over time discovered Golden Acrylics, stocked now by my wonderful branch of Cass Art. My London studio is in Islington and I used to traipse down to Charing Cross but now just hop on the bus to your flagship store. Very frequently! I love it - such helpful staff and such good materials. My daughter shops there all the way from the South of France, and can't wait until she can shop online to be delivered there! Lots of my artist friends in France will be thrilled too.

I am trying to use oil again sparingly but as I use my hands a lot I have to use rubber gloves which feels too clinical to me. I like getting my hands dirty and have permanently colourful finger nails, no matter how hard I try. I am starting again to put glazes of oil over acrylic layers. My work is a matter of many glazes and Golden is so good it mimics oils but without the long drying period and it uses water of course.



What are your essential materials?

My stock of Golden is my most treasured purchase at Cass Art. Also, paper palettes, foam rollers, your huge range of brushes and now the odd tube of oil paint. Also the great new wooden box frames. I wish you would bring back the gesso panels. They were superb.

Can you tell us a little about your upcoming exhibition 'On Solitary Fields'?

The new show is about remembering landscape and recreating it in the mind and in the studio with all the vagueness this entails. The Harvard neuroscientist Patrick Cavanagh says;" our visual system reflexively fills in our expressions and mood...going deeper into our mental state than any fully explicit painting could."

I could not put it better. I am interested in emotion and in getting that part of my viewers' mind to participate in the act of looking at my work.



What would your advice be to those who'd are curious but a little uncertain about trying landscape painting?

Landscape painting is as easy or difficult as you want to make it. I take students out into the fields and they start off daunted and scared of all the beauty. But just allowing the mind to run free and slosh colour around is an amazing process. Landscape is easier to paint than people. It doesn't talk back and has no ego!

On Solitary Fields will be on display from 6th-29th March 2014 at the Curwen & New Academy Gallery in Central London. Visit Robin's website for more details on the show and her practice.

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