

Inspired ^{by} the Sea



Oil paintings by Sarah Jane Brown, St Davids, Pembrokeshire

Interview by Matthew Pike

“My process involves memory – of walking, photographing, sketching, drawing – embedding all that visual information into my mind, then putting it all away and just painting. It’s abstractive – I’m not recreating specific scenes – I express something much more personal and emotive. My memory acts like a filter, allowing production to take place in a personal way. Many years ago I got hit with a period of depression and it took me about three years before I could do anything vaguely normal. I don’t know where it came from, but it was debilitating and I couldn’t even get up in the morning. Art was huge for my recovery – it gave me something to focus on and I discovered something I was passionate about and felt joyful about. It combined all the things I love and gave me a way to express myself. Pembrokeshire’s the most spectacular place to live in the world – I’m so fortunate. Because it’s a national park, it’s not built-up and the quality of life is very special.”

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About...

Sarah Jane has lived in St Davids since she was 18, working on local boat trips and the ferry to Ireland. Now a full-time artist, she has a solo show beginning at the end of the month in Off The Wall Gallery, in Cardiff.

ABOVE: A Brief Unveiling “At Whitesands Bay there are rocks you don’t normally see in the summer because they’re covered in sand. For just a few days each year the tide takes sand away, exposing these rocks.”





I REMEMBER

“This is evocative of the incredible sunsets we’ve had lately – of standing on a beach, watching a sunset and not believing the intensity of colour. When you remember something, things are familiar, but not specific. You remember the colour, the vague shape, and what you felt. The details get lost, but it doesn’t matter – the overall feeling is still embedded in your memory. The whole series of paintings in the exhibition in Cardiff is the play between memory and emotion.”

THE LAST STORM



“In winter we had storms Ophelia and Brian back-to-back. It was devastating here. We lost 75 percent of seal pups, and boats were wrecked. We went out and took photos of the waves crashing on the rocks. You lose the horizon, and the swell is hammering the cliffs and flooding inland – it’s a disorientating experience. The waves were surging over the harbour wall and up the inlet. The day after, it was still really rough – I stood on a clifftop and felt the spray buffeting. This painting is a recollection of that – being out the day after the worst of the storm.”





INSPIRED BY THE **SEA**



HATS AND BARRELS

“This is from my experience of working on the local boat trips. We head out to Grassholm Island (to the gannet colony), then further out to The Smalls – the last thing before you’re out on open water. Between them is a reef called The Hats and Barrels, which is only exposed at low water. It’s a very treacherous place with strong tides swirling around over them. They’re the reason why there’s a lighthouse at The Smalls. You get the experience of the water and your viewpoint is constantly moving. You’re not looking at something from a stable, horizontal platform. The painting is purposefully disorientating.”



BLURRED LINES

“This painting recreates the experience of when you get swells rolling in. The waves are consistent in their inconsistency – they’re endlessly shifting. You can’t capture them, you can’t make them stop – you just have to observe and absorb. At Whitesands there’s a little headland called the Ram’s Nose and when you walk out and stand at the end of it, it’s almost as if you’re in the waves. You’re at the same level as the surfers, standing on land but feeling as if you’re in the sea.”

For more information



- Blurring Time and Tide, 27th October-21st November. Off The Wall Gallery, Cardiff. Tel: 029 20554469. galleryoffthewall.com
- To see more of Sarah Jane’s work visit sjbart.com, or the Features section in News & Features on walesandborders.com