

Yasmin David

Into the Light

3 July 2021 — Spring 2022



Exhibition guide

Collections Galleries, Floors 1&2

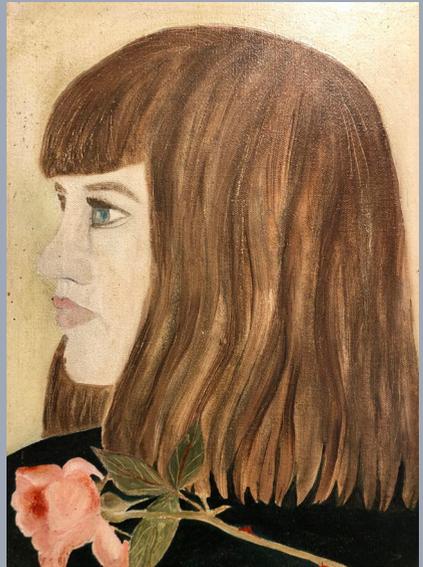
The New Art Gallery Walsall

The New Art Gallery is proud to present the first public solo exhibition by 20th century British landscape painter **Yasmin David (1939-2009)**.

INTRODUCTION

Julie Brown, Collections Curator

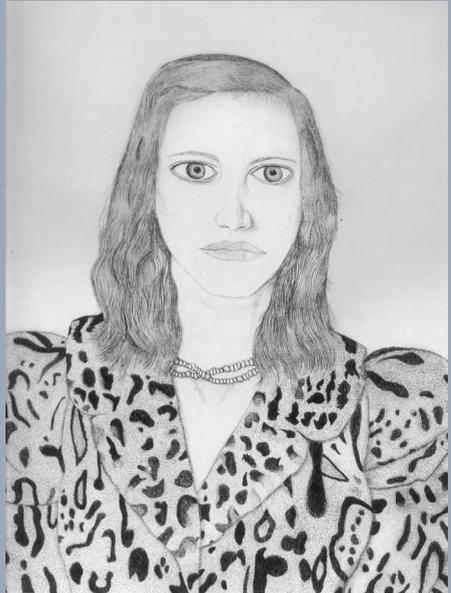
Yasmin David (1939-2009) produced a prolific body of work over 50 years. Well-connected, coming from the prodigious Garman clan, her mother Lorna was the youngest of nine remarkable siblings, whose influence spanned the artistic, social and political life of the early 20th century. Yasmin's aunt Kathleen Garman, donor to The New Art Gallery, was the life partner of sculptor Jacob Epstein, and first mother-in-law of painter Lucian Freud. Yasmin's brother was the celebrated 20th century painter, Michael Wishart (1928-1996), who studied under Cedric Morris at his East Anglian School of Painting, and moved in the same circles as Francis Bacon. Yasmin could have had the contacts to have exhibited widely, should she have chosen to.



Lorna Wishart, *Portrait of Yasmin with Rose*, 1959

However the complexities of family dynamics may have led to Yasmin being reluctant to step into the limelight. She believed her brother, Michael, had been tormented by his genius (his dependency on drugs and alcohol were well documented). Lorna Wishart (1911-2000) was a vivacious character who captivated those around her with her Hollywood starlet demeanour. A young Lucian Freud was besotted with her, and she inspired early works such as *Girl in an Ocelot Coat*, 1944.

Aged 16, Lorna had married a University friend of her brother Douglas, publisher Ernest Wishart, and they had two sons by the time Lorna was 22. The couple remained devoted to each other throughout their lives. In 1937 Lorna was on a beach in Cornwall when she came across a young violinist and asked him to play for her. It was the poet, Laurie Lee (1914-1997). The two embarked on a passionate love affair, and in 1939 Lorna gave birth to Yasmin (so named as the 'Y' resembles two conjoined 'Ls'.) Lee dedicated *The Sun My Monument* (1944), his first published book of war poetry to Lorna. Yasmin was brought up by Lorna and Ernest, and only discovered Laurie was her biological father when she was 19. Both Lucian and Laurie went on to marry Lorna's nieces (Kitty and Kathy).



Lucian Freud, *Girl in an Ocelot Coat*, 1944

Yasmin had a loyalty to the father with whom she had grown up, but was naturally inquisitive to learn more about Laurie. She cultivated a relationship with him, the two sharing a love of the English landscape and literature, and exchanging heartfelt, poetic correspondence throughout the rest of their lives.

Yasmin chose to keep her art and poetry for herself, and shunned any kind of self-promotion. She chose to live her life freely, authentically and to its fullest (which could almost be the Garman family motto.)

Having grown up in West Sussex, Yasmin studied art in Worthing for a year in 1957 and in the late 50s exhibited in group shows at The Mall Galleries in London. Then in 1961, aged 22, she married the educator, and later Jungian analyst, Julian David, and moved with him to rural South Devon. They both taught at Dartington Hall School (where Lucian Freud was once a pupil, alongside Epstein's eldest daughter, Peggy Jean.)

Apart from spells in Italy in the late 60s, where they ran a social work project with Dartington gap year students, and South Africa in the early 90s, at the end of the Apartheid, where her husband set up a Jungian training centre, they lived at Luscombe Farm together for the rest of her life, raising their three children, Esther, Gabriel and Clio.

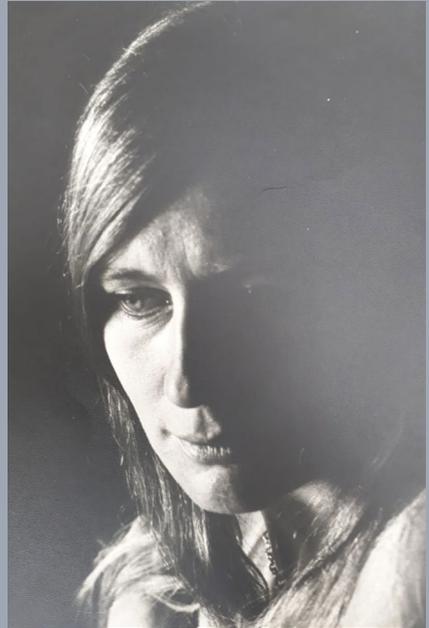
From her wooden 'bunkhouse' studio amidst the apple orchards Yasmin explored her interest in psychoanalysis working as a counsellor, and spent time tending to the sheep, horse riding and helping with the foundation of Luscombe Drinks, a family business. Every day she would write in journals, describing the natural world on her doorstep, in poetic verse. Polaroid photographs, and sketches of the local landscape, were also the inspiration for her paintings, sometimes painted *en plein air*, but more often in her studio hideaway. Yasmin remained devoted to both her family, and also her painting, which became a personal endeavour with which to express her authentic self.



Yasmin David, *Untitled (Late Abstract 2)*, c.2008, oil on board

Yasmin's early work had a more traditional, realist approach, with subject matter including family portraits, domestic animals, wildlife and nature. As her own artistic language developed and matured, her works became more abstract in their approach to capturing the essence of the light and changing seasons of the countryside around her.

Only close family and friends were aware of Yasmin's intense devotion to her painting, and the full extent only revealed itself after she passed away, in 2009. Her daughter, the filmmaker Clio David, dedicated a decade to painstakingly uncovering her mother's back catalogue, discovering many works carefully tucked away, hidden from view, across the family home and in outhouses on the farm.



Yasmin David, c.1972.

Drawer upon drawer was filled with sketches, notebooks, poetry, and photographs of favourite locations, mapping light, land and sky. Giving no titles to her works, or dates, Clio and the rest of her family plotted her biography through her work and the trajectory of her painting career has been approximated for this exhibition, with descriptions offered in place of titles. Comparisons have been made with text from her journals, Polaroids and notes of dramatic colour schemes, in determining the approximate date or location of works.

Yasmin's significant collection, was a mystery waiting to be discovered. During her lifetime it acted as a cathartic escape. However she become resolved the last few days of her life to entrust the work to her family, believing it was good enough to be exhibited when the time was right. Now, more than a decade later, the work is premiered alongside the collection of her aunt Kathleen, and the legacy of her mother and brother, ready to come into the spotlight, and cement her place in modern art history in her own right.

PAINTING WITH LIGHT

Clio David

*A woodland stream, dark rock pools filled with quartz;
a wet country lane, a tunnel of black and gold; a
Dartmoor tor, blue in the distance with black clouds
raining down either side. These are some of the images
in my mother's paintings.*



Yasmin David, *Untitled (Woodland Stream 1)*, 1998-2003, oil on board

A family friend once described her paintings as being like 'Dark Turners', and while Turner was a key influence, it was the light she painted with, the light illuminating the darkness.

David Bowie was another influence. *I believe in the light shining through, somehow.* (David Bowie, Space Oddity). As was Credence Clearwater Revival, Simon and Garfunkel and much of the music of the 1970s.

Her main influence was always the light and how it illuminated, shaped and sculpted the landscapes where she lived, predominantly in Devon, but also in Sicily and South Africa. Driving around in her car and looking at the passing landscapes was a great source of inspiration, and watching the light; on rainy days, seeing it diffuse on a black hill; on sunny days, watching it dance through leaves on to a dark stream; and how the clouds gathered and dispersed in the sky, casting shadows filled with drama on the landscapes below.

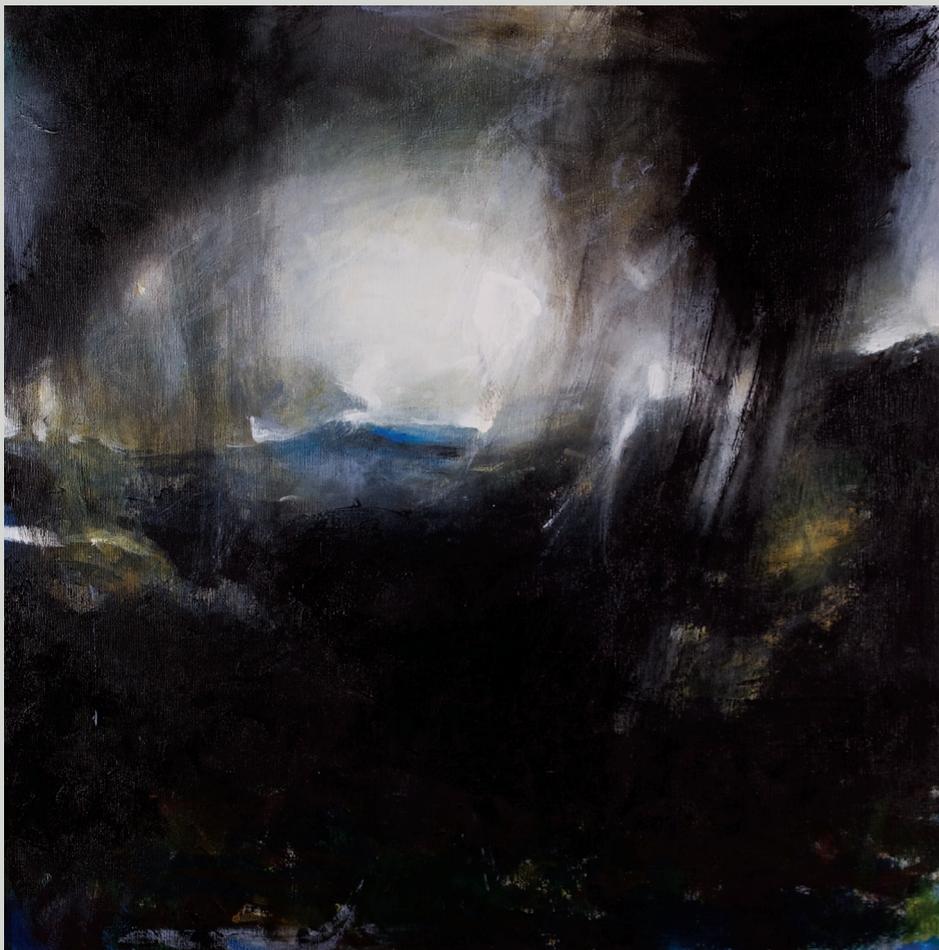
She loved to watch the windy, watery, ever-changing light and seasons, which she painted mainly from her memory, and kept a notebook which she wrote in almost every day, composing poems from what she saw in nature. She was always looking, collating, preparing for her paintings. She took over 200 Polaroids of skies, rivers, hills, trees, all with the same particular light she recreated in her work. Together they created a kind of alchemy she practised every day in different forms, honing her vision as a painter, trying to get closer and closer to what it was that she was seeing.

In his essay on painting in *The Shape of a Pocket*, John Berger wrote:

The painter is constantly attempting to discover or stumble upon, the place which will contain and surround his present act of painting... How does a painting become a place? It's no good looking for the place in nature. Nor can he search for it in art... when a place is found it is found somewhere on the frontier between nature and art.

I think this is key to the understanding of my mother's work – this meeting between art and nature – her paintings embody the constant preoccupation to discover this place.

Her paintings also explore the polarity between light and dark, the sky and the land, the inner and outer states of being, often capturing the molten, ever changing quality of nature, creating powerful expressions of nature in a constant state of flux, of becoming.



Yasmin David, *Untitled (Rain Over Dartmoor)*, c.2005, oil on canvas

There is also a personal presence in her paintings – a human element. Her landscapes are dramatic, emotional and often turbulent – they represent a physical world, but also an inner world, and the drama of human feelings – of being.

She never named her paintings, or signed them. I think, for her, painting was a process so much engrained in her everyday life that she didn't objectify it, or her relation to the images she painted. She was part of the image – seeing, remembering, transforming into paint – that was what interested her.

It seemed to be a transformative, even spiritual, process, and quite a private one to her. In this sense her paintings were and remain true homages to the landscapes and the light she loved. They are unique, original – like her.

PLACE AND SENSORY EXPERIENCE: YASMIN DAVID'S POST-WAR LANDSCAPES

Dr Sophie Hatchwell, University of Birmingham

Yasmin David's work offers an intimate reflection on landscape, environment and light, and these themes suffuse both her painting and accompanying journal writing. Her works of the 60s, 70s and 80s provide a point of comparison with other British women artists in this period, and further inflect our understanding of post-war landscape painting. A personal, essential connection to the land is an important thread running through British art, from the pastoral visions of Samuel Palmer, to Turner's seascapes, to Paul Nash's *genius loci* and Richard Long's long walks. The importance of landscape in British art was reasserted in the years before World War Two, when it became a site for both aesthetic experimentation and for reflection on national heritage and tradition.¹ After the war, landscape remained an important focus for artists as they continued to test the boundaries and capacities of abstraction, and as they dealt with the renegotiation of political, social and environmental practices that the post-war epoch demanded.² Often, it would be through the imaging of a personal, phenomenological connection to the land that this aesthetic, conceptual and political work took place. Well-known examples of this are seen in Peter Lanyon's aerial paintings of Cornwall, and, later Richard Long's long lone walks across Wiltshire and Somerset.

Yasmin David's paintings belong in this context. Significantly, though, her works also mark out and trace women's experience of the post-war landscape.³ The history of British landscape painting has tended to be dominated by men, as indicative lists of canonical landscape works show, despite the number of women artists working in the post-war period, and addressing the theme of landscape.⁴ Analysis of David's work presents an opportunity to refocus on these figures, in particular Sheila Fell, Barbara Delaney and Gillian Ayres. These women followed in the footsteps of those of the 1930s St Ives milieu: Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Margaret Mellis and Barbara Hepworth. David's painterly exploration of a personal, physical experience of a particular landscape offers a rich point of comparison with her female contemporaries who likewise claimed

¹ Sam Smiles, 'Equivalents for the Megaliths: Prehistory and English Culture, 1920-50' in David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell (eds.), *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past 1880-1940* (Yale UP, 2002).

² Margaret Garlake, *New Art New World* (Yale UP, 1998).

³ In this essay, I discuss women's experiences as artists and as inhabitants of the landscape. This discussion is tied to debates about land, representation and gender that are specific to the post-war period, and in which a binary understanding of gender was dominant. An approach that acknowledges and explores queer and non-binary experiences and representations of the British landscape is much needed, however.

⁴ See Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (eds.), *A Companion to British Art 1600-present* (Blackwell, 2013).

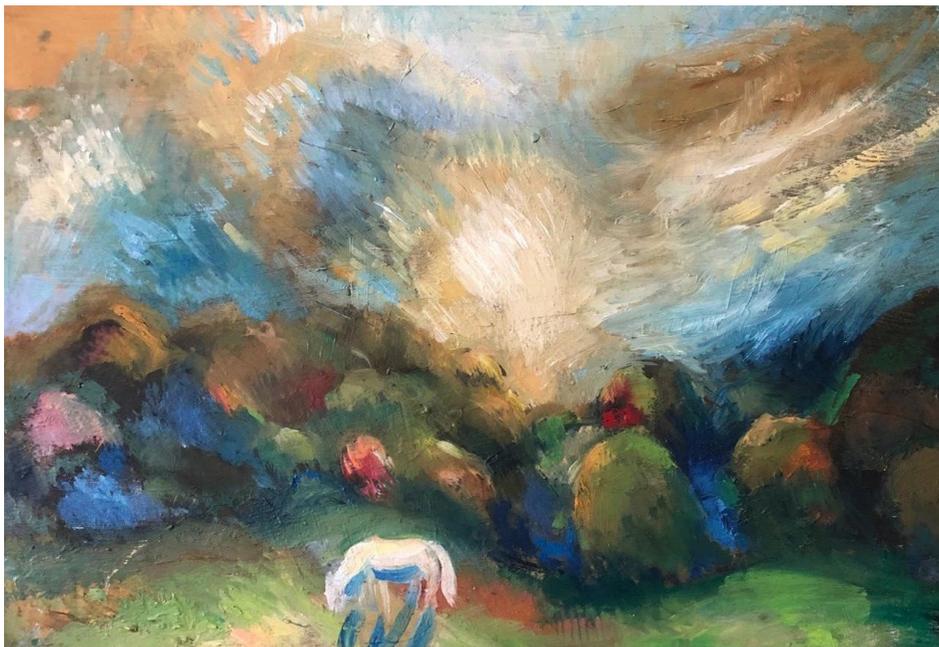


Yasmin David, *Luscombe*, c.1962, oil on canvas

and interrogated their own intimate connection to the land. This analysis, in turn, suggests a way to think about the British landscape outside the traditional patriarchal frameworks of a territory to be conquered or husbanded. Instead, it becomes a place of deep, personal, and sensory connection between an individual and particular location.

David's Landscape

Three landscapes provide the subject matter for David's painting: Devon, Sicily and South Africa. It is the landscape of Devon, however, that is the focal point of the retrospective exhibition at The New Art Gallery Walsall. This is the place where, for over a 40-year period, she produced an extensive body of work: oils, watercolours and sketches. It is where she compiled copious notes in her journals reflecting on the changing weather, seasons, environment and, above all, the quality of light. David didn't date her paintings, and as she did not publically exhibit, it is difficult to be precise about when particular works were made. However, we have a rough idea of which decades different works belong to, and as a result we can identify four broad periods for her Devon landscapes: the early oils of the 1960s, watercolours



Yasmin David, *Untitled (Landscape with Horse)*, c.1968, oil on canvas

of the mid-70s, oils for the late 70s and 80s, and the oils of the 00s, which may be regarded as the culmination of her practice. In this short essay, I am interested in her work of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and how this relates to the broader field of British landscape art at the time. Her 1970s watercolours in particular stand out as an exploration of the personal experience of the artist within and of the landscape.

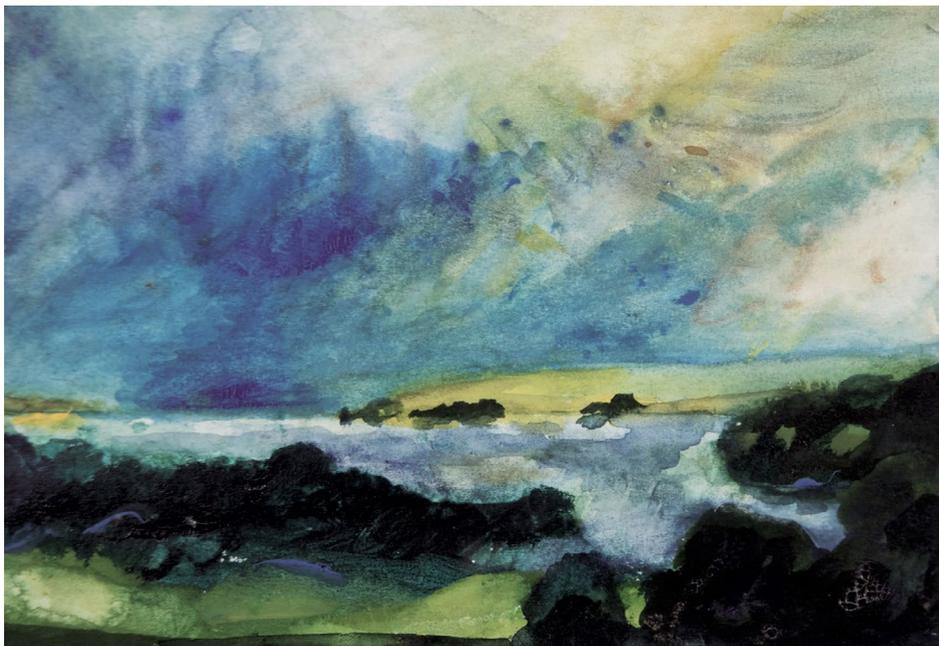
Works from the 1960s like *Luscombe* and *Landscape with Horse* record her home landscape of Devon, in the south of the county, near Dartmoor. The works are decidedly different from each other, and this difference marks three touchstones in David's work: with the house at *Luscombe*, we get a demonstration of the artist's personal connection to the land. From *Landscape with Horse*, we get a sense of the artist's fascination with light. In this work also, the landscape becomes pathetic fallacy or perhaps archetype. *Luscombe* offers us a representative image of the artist's rural home, where she lived from 1961. In this painting, the house seems to sink into the surrounding greenery. It is a landscape of a building: a seeming contradiction resolved by the formal and material interweaving of the architectural structure with the surrounding trees, hedges and field. The dimensions of the house and its walls, rendered through black streaks of paint, echo and extend the linear forms of the black tree trunk in the foreground, with the chimney stacks and pots of the house reaching skywards, in direct approximation of the tree's upper branches. David gives us a house made out the land, and in doing so, forges a strong conceptual association between its inhabitants and wider landscape.

Landscape with Horse does something quite different. It presents an almost archetypal representation of a rural landscape: semi-abstracted rolling green pastures surrounded by dense autumnal woodland, reminiscent of Paul Nash's earlier, Fraser-inspired depictions of the equinox.⁵ The shining figure of the white horse emphasises this liminal reading of the landscape. The rough rendering of its outline in a few broad brush strokes mark it more as a symbol than a representation of a specific animal, and bring to mind the symbolic function of the horse in Jungian theory, as a manifestation of the powerful unconscious.⁶ I do not wish to claim that David was intentionally exploring myth and psychoanalytic theory in this work, but I suggest is that this landscape is not a memetic representation of a specific place at a specific moment. Instead, it offers an exploration of the emotive and expressive effects of landscape as it is captured in paint. Equally, it is an expression of the dramatic, atmospheric and symbolic capacities of landscape as a place experienced by and inhabited by the artist. The close attention paid to light in this work, to the way the sun reflects off moving clouds, presents the most forceful evidence for this claim: it is in the representation of the sky and sun that David is most clearly developing her material and conceptual practice.

The material rendering of light and land in paint provides the focus for David's watercolours of the 1970s, and is a continuation from her Sisley seascapes of the preceding few years. Her aim appears to be to develop a gestalt representation of the landscape. By this, I mean that her works incorporate an essential visual record of the land in general terms, a clear sense of the changing qualities of light, weather and atmosphere, and also offer us a sense of the artist's personal, emotive and phenomenological experience of being within the landscape. Her paintings are a distillation of all of these qualities, rather than straightforward representations of specific places. This is borne out in her method of working. David built up a vast visual and conceptual archive of snapshot views of the Devon landscape. These take the form of: preliminary watercolours made *en plein air* in specific places; sketches in journals; colour maps that build up the palette of the landscape over time; journal entries that record particular moments of connection between the artist and the land, and comment on light, the weather, flight of birds etc.; and resultant works made from memory that draw on all these resources. The result is that some paintings appear to depict specific places and capture specific atmospheric conditions.

⁵ See Paul Nash, *Landscape of the Vernal Equinox III*, 1944 (National Galleries Scotland). Roger Cardinal, *The Landscape Vision of Paul Nash* (Reaktion, 1989).

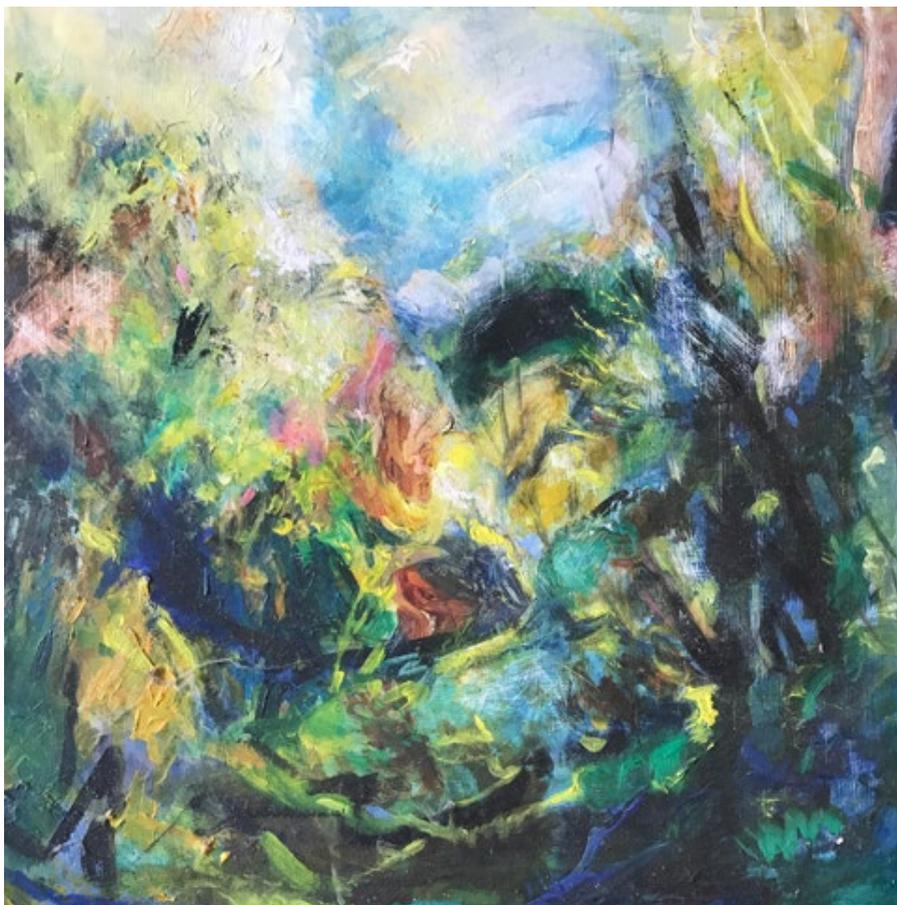
⁶ Renos K. Papadopoulos (ed.), *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology* (Routledge, 2006).



Yasmin David, *Untitled (Watercolour series)*, late 1970s, watercolour on paper

Her Watercolour series is a good example of this. The image illustrated above, pays detailed attention to the complex topography of a coastline of rocks, sands and tides, thereby giving the sense that this is a record of a specific place. This is reinforced when we look to David's sketch books, where we find loosely drafted but quite detailed records of a similar scene, featuring multiple notes about colour added to linear and graphic sketches, as well as heavily-saturated images.

Others watercolours in the series, however, depict a more archetypal landscape, in a comparable manner to *Landscape with Horse*. In these cases, representations of the land are filtered through David's material and conceptual preparatory work of walking, sketching, colour mapping and journaling. A number of these other works depict what could be coastal view, but could also conceivably be wooded hills, appearing as composite landscapes comprising layers of multiple snapshot views: the pale distant horizon, the immediate foreground, partially overwritten by warm, earthy ochres and browns, then superseded by stormy black and blue hues, and finally, in a couple of cases, the sky bleeding down into the rest of the paintings. The different layers of watercolour wash, and the differing opacity and saturation of these, provide material evidence for this process of layering, which is both a result of the artist's chosen medium and method, but also an expression of the complex and multifaceted nature of her experience of the land as an embodied and emotional process.



Yasmin David, *Untitled (Yellow and Blue Landscape)*, c.1987, oil on board

David's oils of the 1980s further develop this process of layering, both in the material practice of a dense layering of paint and form, but also in the conceptual sense of layering multiple views and multiple emotive and dramatic moods into single images. *Yellow and Blue Landscape* is a key example. Much of the material and conceptual focus of this work rests on sunlight: illuminating, structuring, bringing colour to the image. The landscapes depicted in these works, drawn from sketches, journal notes and memory, evoke the different places David visited at different times and under differing atmospheric conditions. The paintings seek to capture a sense of an accumulation of different moments experienced by the artist as she moved about within the landscape, and the emotional responses these moments inspired.

This interpretation is supported by her journals, which are full of fleeting instances captured in brief sentences, in metaphors, and in lists, often reflecting on the qualities and effect of light:

17 March: *Still, overcast metal light, but birdsong so exultantly abandoned that dizzy cliffs open among the bushes, and mountains appear above the trees, evoking great, imaginal worlds of song.*

These field notes in turn feed back into David's painting practice, as distillations of amassed sensory experiences: an ongoing record of the artist's embodied interaction with the land.

Post-War British Modernism and Landscape

Histories of British art frequently stress the importance of landscape as a site and subject both for individual artists and for the expression of national culture.⁷ Representations of landscapes in British art have therefore been seen (often simultaneously) as personal and subjective, and also socio-political. In the post-war period, these two tendencies became pronounced, as interwar ideas about the timelessness and enduring nature of the British countryside were dismantled by increasing industrialisation and Cold War anxiety.⁸ Historians of the period have noted the varying subjects that encompass landscape painting in this period: terrain, weather, human presence, agriculture, urban sprawl. This diversity of this subject matter is mirrored by diversity in how artists approached the 'interpretation of place': 'as a physical location, metaphor, historical construction, or personal emotional focus'.⁹

David commenced painting two decades after the Second World War, well after perceptions of an enduring British landscape had fractured, and landscape as a subject matter for artists was much less stable. This was the period when, as the historian Margaret Garlake argues, shifts in the art world led to an increased focus on the urban environment and on developments in American painting. At the same time, there

⁷ Peters Corbett et al, 2002.

⁸ Catherine Jolivet, *Landscape, Art and Identity in 1950s Britain* (Ashgate, 2009)

⁹ Garlake, 1998, p151.

was an ongoing exploration of a 'modern art formed in a cognitive relationship with landscape': artists like Peter Lanyon and Terry Frost are key examples of this.¹⁰ Given the political backdrop (Americanisation, industrialisation, the nuclear threat), we could read David's work as an engagement with the changing symbolic and political function of landscape in Britain in the mid- to late-twentieth century. However, an additional and possibly more insistent interpretation is on offer: that David's work should be seen as part of the tendency in British art for a 'deep sense of physical and psychological identification' with a particular landscape.¹¹ Her work demonstrates the way in which landscape painting can become a 'conduit of personal subjectivity'.¹² By which I mean, her work falls into a category of landscape painting which focuses on representing a personal and subjective experience of the landscape, evoking the ephemeral and sensorial qualities of being in a particular place, at a particular moment in time. Lanyon's aerial views and Patrick Heron's investigations of light and colour both demonstrate a similar experiential evocation of their own personal landscapes in Cornwall.

Artist and art historian Christopher Neve has written that 'landscape painting has always been about what it is like to be in the world and in a particular condition', indicating that the sort of experiential tropes evident in David's work are congruent with an essential and perhaps timeless objective of landscape as a painterly medium.¹³ However, the stylistic and conceptual qualities of these tropes in David's painting root her work firmly in the post-war period, and in the continuing exploration of the forms and boundaries of modernism that concerned artists at this time. Garlake has argued that an 'individual's unique relationship with a locality' is a key marker of the post-war 'modernist' expression of place.¹⁴ This seems to reconfigure both the stylistic, historic and socio-political dimensions of post-war landscape through the lens of the individual. The notion of 'experience' is key here, as the artist's engagement with landscape is seen as embodied: they appear to live within and amongst the landscape and become fully immersed in it, in a physical, bodily sense. The material and conceptual layering in David's work, and her personal, evocative journaling of her daily experiences align her work with this interpretation.

¹⁰ Ibid, p158.

¹¹ Ibid, p166.

¹² Jolivet, 2009, p.4.

¹³ Christopher Neve, *Unquiet Landscape*, 2nd Edition (Thames and Hudson, 2020), pvii.

¹⁴ Garlake, 1998, p167.

Women Artists and the Land

Association of landscape with the human body is a common feature in creative practice in Britain: we might think of the development of pathetic fallacy in Gothic literature, for example, or of Henry Moore's sculptures of reclining figures installed in locations like the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. In many cases, the link between land and body is heavily gendered: the landscape conceived as a female body, there to be explored, conquered, settled and husbanded. Landscape is perceived as 'mother earth', fertile and bountiful, or as a wild, untameable and primeval force - all gendered notions that suggest it will be men who will attempt to cultivate or domesticate the land.¹⁵ In the post-war period, this figuring of the landscape as a female body was seen both in artistic representations of the land, but also in the critical discourse surrounding the work of women artists who looked to landscape for subject matter. Moore's reclining figures are an example of the former. These are predominantly female and were read, in part, as anthropomorphic representations of the landscape, with bodily features synonymous with undulating hills, valleys, dells and hollows. As the historian Catherine Jolivet has shown, post-war art critics were quick to pick up on these associations, and in doing so, perpetuated the gendered discourse surrounding landscape: Moore, the male artist, is exploring and subjugating the landscape as he carves his sculptures.¹⁶

Conversely, post-war critics were quick to establish a different sort of association with the land when it came to women artists' landscape works. Jolivet takes Barbara Hepworth's post-war sculptures as an example, and shows how critics were eager to read her work as feminine, rooted in the notion that women are closer to nature, regardless of whether the actual production, appearance of subject of the work supported this reading.¹⁷ At the same time, this stereotypical gendering was problematized by Hepworth's own comments about her connection with the landscape: her writings and artistic statements reinforce the idea that she felt a unique and personal connection with the landscape, but that this does not mean her artworks depicts the landscape as feminine, or indeed represent the landscape at all.¹⁸ Instead, her work reflects her feeling and experiences, which were sometimes inspired by landscape, rather than offering a direct, explicitly gendered representation of it. This debate suggests that a different approach is needed to explore the relationship that women - or indeed non-binary - artists might have to the landscape, without falling into the trap of 'naturalising' their association as an extension, and subsequent representation, of the assumed, erroneous feminine character of the land. Two ways forward emerge: first, we can focus on the ways in which artists

¹⁵ Steven Adams and Anna Gruetznier Robins, *Gendering Landscape Art* (Manchester UP, 2000)

¹⁶ Jolivet, 2009, pp.46-8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.50-2.

¹⁸ See the 'Commentaries' in *Barbara Hepworth: Carvings and Drawings* (Whitechapel, 1954).

depict not the landscape but their *individual and embodied* experience of being in it (whatever their gender identity); second, we can consider how, for post-war women artists, their access to landscape and their ability to experience it is affected by socio-political issues relating to gender, as well as intersectional issues of class and race.¹⁹

Yasmin David's landscapes, as shown, are not straightforward representations of a particular scene, but rather distillations of her experiences of being in the landscape a different times. This sense is borne out in her accompanying journal writing in her ephemeral, resonant, accounts of her almost daily excursions: insistent presence containing such depths of meaning and memory.

6 Jan: *Soft, cooler wind from the South-West, rain smelling – sky over the sea pale duck-egg blue washed with yellow – the sea itself murmuring gently, and behind the house (deeply, out of the bushes) a wood pigeon softly bubbling and re-winding down long deep chambers of the inner ear.*

These are not simply personal records however; they are also associated with the particular context in which they were produced: post-war Britain, a time when landscape, as I have shown, carried a variety of aesthetic and political meanings. As such, her painting and writing present an amalgamation of personal experience, natural history, and socio-political history too.²⁰ Through this, comparisons emerge to the work of other female artists working on landscape in the same period.

Capturing personal experience through the medium of landscape painting was a key concern of David's contemporaries Gillian Ayres and Barbara Delaney. Although Ayres worked predominantly in an abstract style and she explained that she 'never used nature directly' in her work, her paintings are essentially amalgams of various fragments drawn from her experience of the world around her, which included the landscapes of South West England, and Wales.²¹ Examples are seen in works like *Weddel* (1973-4, Tate) or *Sundark Blues* (1994, Tate). There are evident comparisons to be made here to David's distillation of the Devonshire landscape over time into single images. Similarly, David's exploration of light and weather conditions finds an

¹⁹ I don't talk directly about race in this essay, but recent scholarship has begun to explore the relationship between landscape, aesthetics and politics in the work of Black British artists. See, for example, Kobena Mercer, 'Black Atlantic Abstraction: Aubrey Williams and Frank Bowling' in *Discrepant Abstraction* (InIVA/MIT, 2006), pp182-205 and T. J. Demos, 'On Terror and Beauty' in *John Akomfrah* (Lisson Gallery, 2016), 13-19.

²⁰ Gillian Carter makes the same point about the Scottish poet Nan Shepherd. See 'Domestic Geography' and the Politics of Scottish Landscape in Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*, *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 8:1 (2001), p26.

²¹ Martin Gayford, 'Painting Against the Tide', *The Daily Telegraph* (30th January 2010), p36.

echo in the work of Barbara Delaney. Many of Delaney's paintings made from the 1970s onwards centre on the artist's experience of place, atmosphere, colour and light. Works like [Light Gathers](#) and [Early Morning](#) are prime examples. Conversely, the socio-political meanings available in David's work encourage comparison with the work of Sheila Fell. Fell, like David, focused on a particular landscape in her practice, in this case Cumbria. Also like David, she sketched extensively *en plein air*, but completed her paintings in the studio.²² Her work therefore shares something of the sense of particular place observed repeatedly overtime and in different conditions by an individual who then attempts to encompass this holistic experience within single images. An important element of Fell's work though is not just the artist's experience of and in the land, but the place of people in the working landscape. Mostly, this is labourers and the rural working class, and her images are significant for avoiding the picturesque and idealised depictions common to artistic representations of this subject: [Landscape with Farm](#) is a good example. Her work, therefore, draws our attention to issues of identity and belonging, but also labour, class and power. It asks us to think about who has access to the landscape, and what sort of agency they have within it.²³ David's work offers an interesting point of comparison: her landscapes are devoid of human presence, save that of the artist herself. They reflect, perhaps, the privilege of the artist, in terms of both her freedom to roam the land, and the creative freedom this subsequently affords her.

To conclude, David's works centre on an exploration of how light and atmosphere, as captured in painted, can convey an artist's personal, sensorial experience of landscape. This experience is cumulative, built up over time, and then distilled into composite images that are an expression of lived experience in a place, rather than direct representation of a particular location at a particular time. This conceptual intent is developed and inscribed through the material construction of the images: the preparatory process of accumulating sketches and notes and journal entries, the resultant layering of colour and form in the final works. David's work can therefore be read as a manifestation of the post-war trend in which the phenomenological reality of landscape became a vehicle for aesthetic experimentation, and *vice versa*. Crucially, David's painting helps us to re-centre the work of women artists within this practice, considered alongside her contemporaries Ayres and Delaney. Through comparison with painters like Fell, we are also reminded of the political relevance of landscape as a site in which gender difference, and class and race, has traditionally been delineated. Her work, therefore, provides a way for us to explore the interaction of the political and the personal in post-war British art, beyond the patriarchal frameworks that have dominated traditional art-historical accounts of landscape.

²² See Simon Poë, 'Sheila Fell: Two Exhibitions and a Book', *British Art Journal*, 2:11 (2010/11), p110.

²³ *Ibid.*

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