

NEIL DAVIES

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Call of The Wild

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NEIL DAVIES | Call of the Wild

I have been painting the Penwith landscape for nearly twenty years, yet it still has the power to surprise me, to present something previously unnoticed on my frequent ramblings across the countryside, or to give me new angles on familiar subjects.

The differing seasons and our wonderfully varied weather pattern further ensure I am never short of material: the yellow glow of windswept gorse, blue sky stretching above and beyond; the visceral excitement of watching sun, cloud and rain sweeping across the landscape; the crashing of waves upon the shore in a winter storm - ever present, but ever changing.

The wilderness of the high moors around Penwith and the wild, rugged boundary of the coastline recall a primeval connection with the soul of the land. It is an ancient and elemental landscape where nature is a force to be reckoned with and to be respected - a place of darkly glowering skies and turbulent sea as furious storms sweep in from the Atlantic. And then - sometimes within hours - all is tranquil as the sun soaks the land with warmth, its light bouncing across the gorse and silvery granite, catching the wave edges and wet rocks and making them sparkle.

In spite of the capriciousness of these natural forces, man has made his mark here too, as can be witnessed from the remains of so many ancient human settlements down through history to the relatively recent isolated cottages hewn from the local granite, some appearing to be doing their utmost to become one with the landscape again. All have endeavoured to survive, and have succeeded through respecting and working with the forces of nature, and the unique landscape which these forces have created.

Neil Davies, 2017



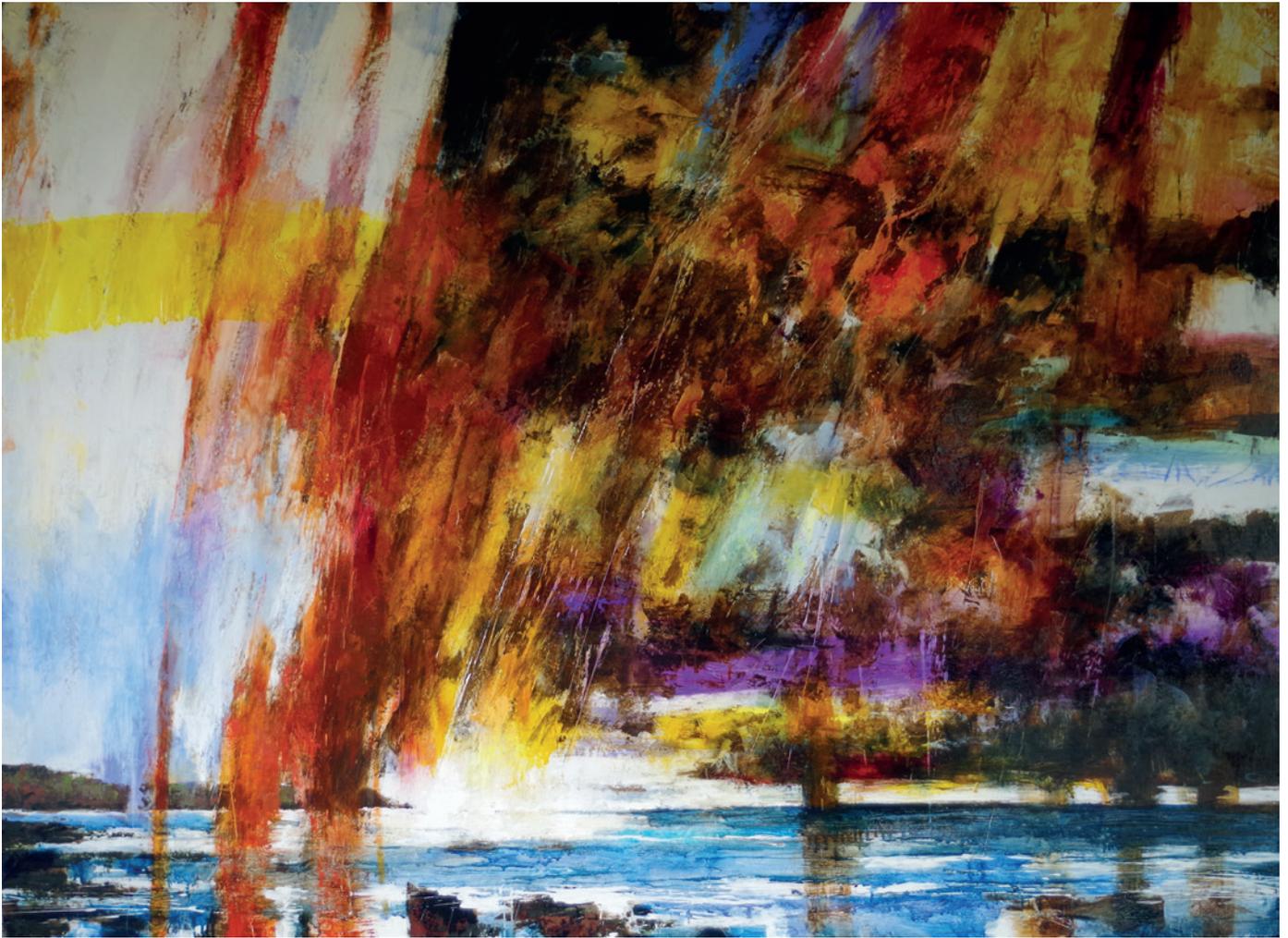
Stormy day - wind howling, surf crashing against the rocks,
clouds race across the sky. Walking along the cliff path
from Sennen, trying to stay upright ...

Heavy Surf, Gwynver
61 x 76 cm



Looking out of my studio window, always on storm-watch, I spot this one coming in over the bay. In twenty minutes I have gathered everything I need and am on the shoreline - only to find the storm already on its way out to sea. The sun wavers weakly from behind the clouds, everything sparkling with illuminated rain, the sky streaked with freshly laundered colours. Typical West Penwith weather ...

Tail End of The Storm
122 x 165 cm



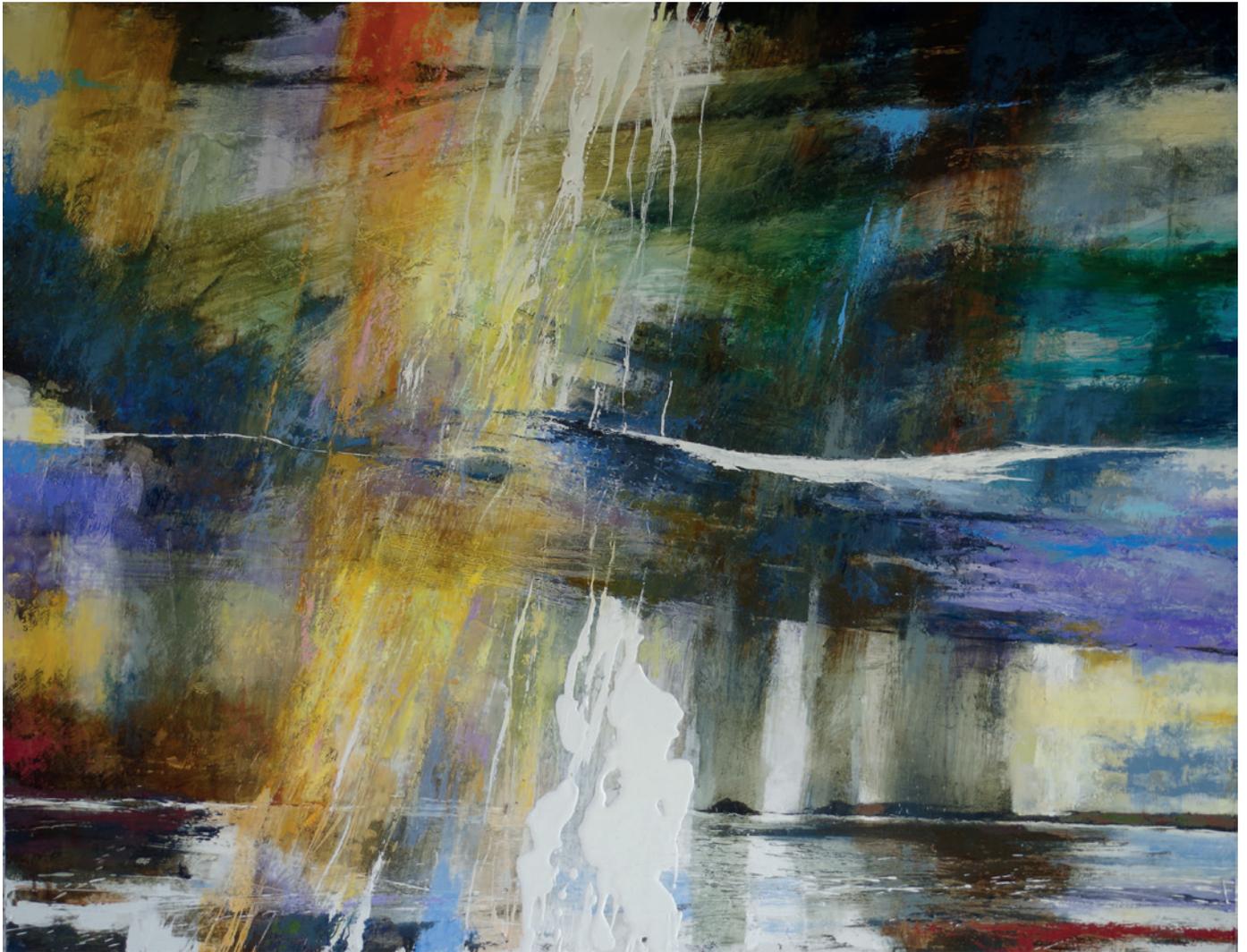
Late autumn, buying the paper on a wet and windy Sunday morning. Come out of the shop to see the rain clouds parting, and bright rays of sunlight breaking through. Cycling down to the shore, I am confronted with a jumble of colours in the sky, looking like a piece of multicoloured crushed velvet from the 1970's.

Sunshine Through The Storm
122 x 165 cm



Pausing on a family walk to stand on the rocks and look out to sea. Sunny day, but I can sense the rain's not far away. Sure enough - dark clouds sail in with a deluge of rain. The family runs for shelter (there isn't much ...) but I stay to watch - hazard of the profession ...

Deluge over Porth Ledden
79 x 102 cm



Watching the storm head out to sea, leaving behind an amazing sky: bands of colour and light twist and turn together, giving it a dreamlike, ethereal quality.

Dreamscape
78 x 102 cm



Standing on the rocks, observing the sky, which today is dark blues and greens, slightly threatening yet magnificent; as with so much in nature, I appreciate its beauty but am acutely aware of its power.

Inky Sky Over Priest Cove
61 x 61 cm



Walking up on Conquer Downs and Lady Downs with my wife and youngest son - only April, but plenty of blue sky and spring sunshine between the clouds. The clouds shift and a sudden stream of light pours through the gap, illuminating a lone cottage on the horizon.

Light Stream
30 x 40 cm



Up on the moors - big, open skies and swirling light and clouds. Early spring, and the hawthorn is coming alive, mixing with the leftover autumn bracken, new greenery and splashes of gorse.

Heathland Cottage and Hawthorn
61 x 61 cm



After an evening meal in St. Ives with friends, we walk home via the cliff path, stopping at Hellesveor Cliff to watch the light show. Feel very lucky that this is just a short walk down the lane from our house - always there but always different.

Evening Harmony
61 x 76 cm



Enys Garden bluebells in all their spring glory - "proper English bluebells", my wife says - the small, purple, scented kind native to us, not the giant, pale blue, scentless Spanish imposters which spring up in unintended gardens and anywhere else they can infiltrate. Not a pale blue monstrosity in sight here ...

Purple Sea
80 x 100 cm



On the recommendation of a friend, my wife and I decide to visit Enys Gardens to see their famous bluebells. We follow the designated path, and suddenly come upon a drift of bluebells stretching into the distance, surrounded by beautiful, twisted trees of all varieties, some of which appear to be dancing. The woods are filled with birdsong and the scent is all-pervading.

It Must Be May
46 x 61 cm



Sitting eating a sandwich at Porthledden, looking across to Cape Cornwall. Mid February, and the sky is turbulent with boiling rainclouds and shifting, watery light. Out to sea, I can see the rain making its way to shore, so hastily pack up my things and head for the car. Nothing worse than a wet cheese sandwich ...

Beneath Heavy Skies
61 x 76 cm



In one of my favourite haunts, Priest Cove, where I've spent the afternoon sketching. Today the weather can't make its mind up, and twice I've headed back to the car to shelter from a heavy downpour. The light show between the showers makes it all worthwhile though - purples, greys and indigo intermingle, changing hues every time the sun makes an appearance.

Dodging The Showers
61 x 76 cm



Standing on the cliffs trying to spot a seal - apparently they were around here yesterday. No luck, but enjoy watching the clouds marching steadily across the sky, hurried along by a brisk wind.

March of The Clouds
61 x 76 cm



A walk over the cliffs to Priest Cove, on a bitter but occasionally sunny winter's day. Fishermen's boats are all hauled well up the slipway, away from the treacherous winter sea and storms - just as well, judging by the inky sky and dark clouds sailing in. Only a couple of miles back to the car ...

Safe For Now, Priest Cove
80 x 80 cm



Walking back from St. Ives up Burthallan Lane, I cut across the fields taking the short cut home, and the path plunges through a tunnel of blackthorn blossom. It is more prolific than usual this year, and with Rosewall Hill behind it, it just had to be painted..

White Blossom, Blackthorn
46 x 61 cm



Although the gorse in Cornwall never quite stops blooming, it always becomes brighter and more abundant in spring, and this year is a bumper one for the beautiful golden furze, which glows with colour in the spring sunshine, releasing its familiar scent of coconut.

Gorse Time Again
122 x 122 cm



I am always fascinated by a solitary cottage in an otherwise wild and deserted landscape; this one is substantial, squatting resolutely at the end of a deep, rutted track, windows small and scant. It gives the impression of having been here, like its surroundings, since ancient times, and, blending with the surrounding granite, has become a true part of the landscape.

Solitary Cottage
46 x 61 cm



Sunny spring walk around Woonsmith - spring has definitely sprung. Larks are ascending, buzzards calling; spring colours are coming through - gorse, bluebells and campion all clutter the hedgerows, vying for space with the burgeoning cow parsley and ever-present nettles.

Rutted Track to Woonsmith
46 x 61 cm



Late April on Lady Downs - sunshine today, after a long period of wild wind and rain. Boggy and squelchy underfoot, rutted tracks filled with water. Groundwater aside, the landscape - and the cottage - remain resilient and undisturbed, despite their frequent battering from the elements.

Moorland Cottage, Lady Downs
60 x 76 cm



Walking up on the moors, on a day of sunshine and showers. Wind picks up suddenly, gusting across the long bleached grass. The day turns black, the heavens open, and I am soaked through in minutes. No shelter to be had up here ... but then it's gone again, the sun comes out, and I am left gently steaming ...

Caught in a Squall
46 x 61 cm



Late summer turning to autumn - ferns rusting to bracken. Sunday afternoon walk to Carn Kenidjack, stopping on the way to sit in the centre of Tregeseal stone circle. This place epitomises the permanence of the Penwith landscape, another example of man's symbiotic relationship with the land.

A Change of Seasons
122 x 165 cm



Walking along the path from Pendeen Lighthouse via Boat Cove to Portheras, I am intrigued by this cottage perched on the edge, looking somewhat precarious. Having climbed the path up to the cottage and its outbuildings, I turn to admire the view from the way I came. Stunning - start planning a second painting, called "Looking back" ...

Looking Up
25 x 25 cm



Late autumn up on the moor, enjoying a rare sunny day with minimal wind. Suddenly the wind picks up, dark clouds roll in, looming over the blue sky and blotting out the sun. Back to the car - rain stops play.

Darkening Sky Over Carn Galver
30 x 40 cm



It has been dark and wet all day - typical late November day - but I head to the shore in hope, and am rewarded by a sudden clearing in the clouds, from which a shaft of sunlight escapes. It doesn't last long though - within minutes it's raining again - time to head home but glad I made the effort.

A Break in The Weather
25 x 30 cm



Another winter storm, this time at Lands End. The sky is a boiling mix of rusts, purples and charcoal grey, but suddenly the clouds part, revealing a streak of blue, and a shaft of light breaks through, piercing the horizon and diving into the sea.

Lands End Storm, Sun Breaking Through
25 x 30 cm



Beautiful, sunny spring day towards the end of March - but the wind is still gusting in from the Atlantic, whipping up the waves and sending the clouds scurrying across the sky. Not quite sunbathing weather yet ...

A Very Blustery Day
30 x 30 cm



Early summer in the fields around Rosemergy. The summer greening is gradually taking over from the autumn and winter rusts and earthy hues, and everything looks lush and verdant - very beautiful and pastoral, but for me, not so exciting to paint, as the energy and forcefulness of nature are absent. Although actually, maybe I'll just do one or two ...

Summer Hedgerows, Rosemergy
46 x 61 cm

