

Inspirational

Issue 6



Christine Chester

David Skillicorn

Jennifer McCurdy

Gopika Nath

Chris Keegan

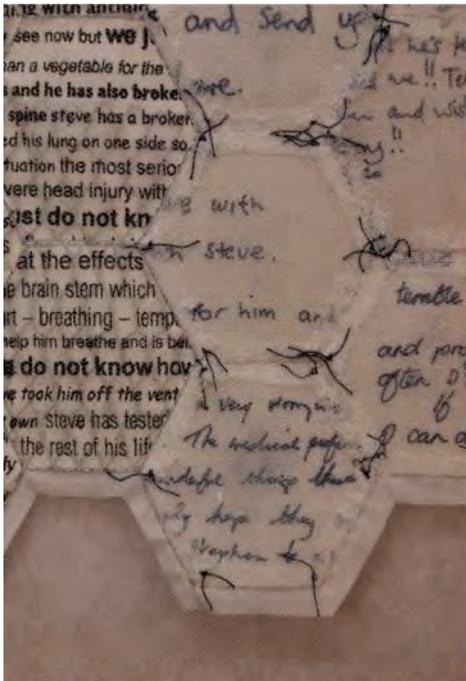
Polly Jacobs Giacchina

Russell Tomlin

Terry Jarrard-Diamond

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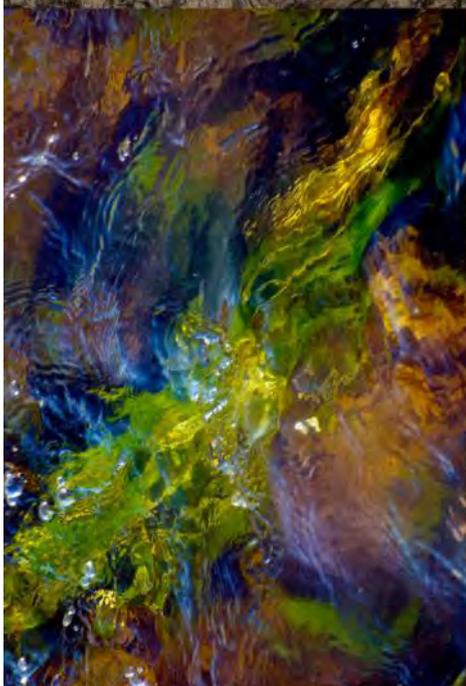
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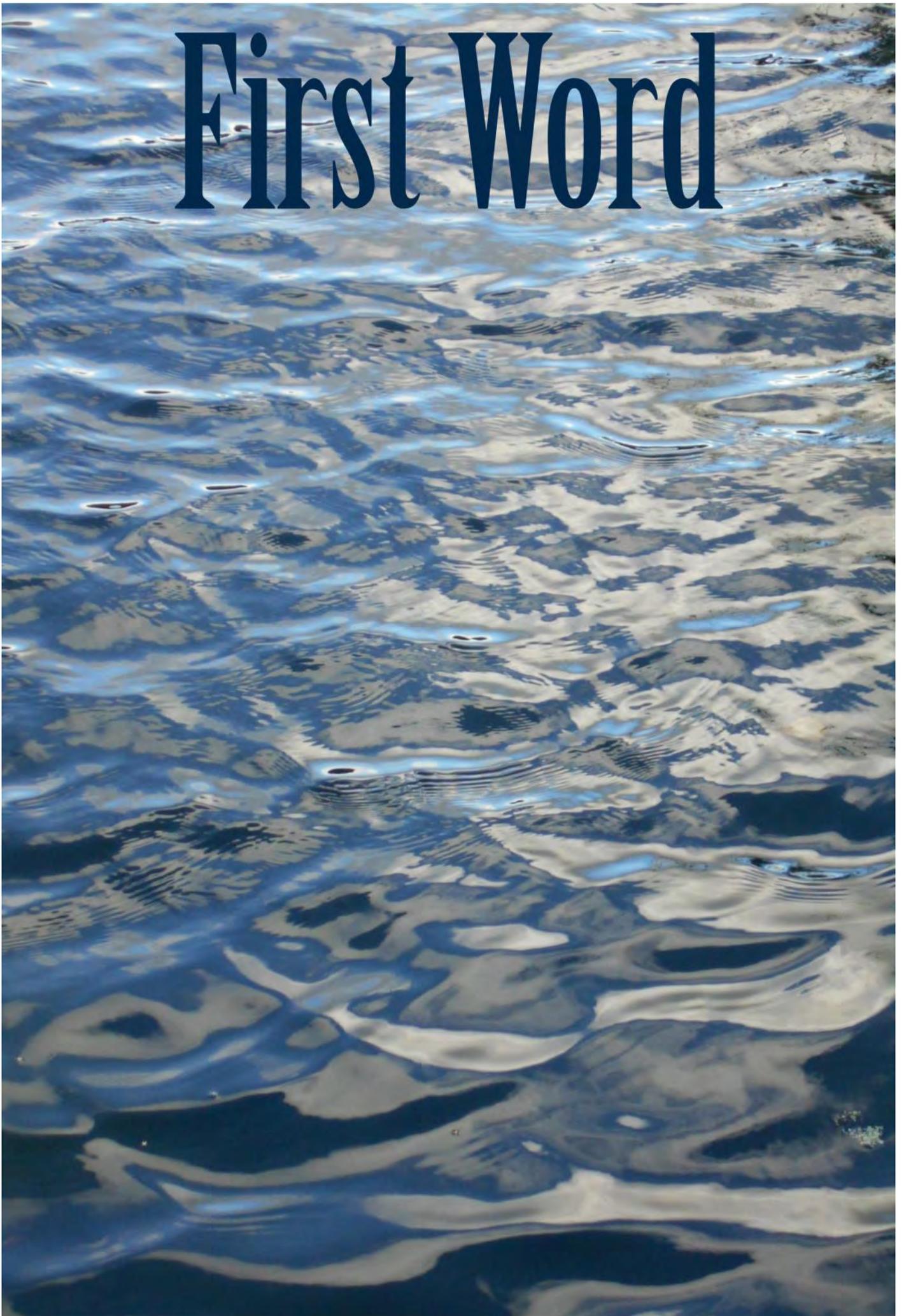
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First Word



A very warm welcome to this the sixth issue of the Inspirational magazine. With this issue the Inspirational project will have featured, through all six numbers, a total of forty eight artists from a range of disciplines, including textiles, ceramics, mixed media, land art, paper, fine art painting, basketry, glass, photography, screenprinting, the list goes on.

However, what I have noticed as these issues have progressed is the increasing number of artists that are becoming uncomfortable with being categorised purely by discipline. There is definitely a shift in perspective by artists themselves as to their understanding of their work as well as to their personal definition.

An artist by definition is an individual who produces works of art. Who interprets what a work of art is seems to be a subjective one, though there are many out there who are convinced that they know exactly who **shouldn't be termed an artist, and who should.**

Personally, I have my own policy in this regard, and I now tend to use the term artist for any creative individual I come across, irrespective of their discipline. It seems to me that an artist is a matter of individual perspective.

Artists are in the business of trying to understand the world around them, to make sense of their personal perspective, and if possible, give others an inkling of that personal perspective through their work. It is a valuable contribution to the betterment of us all, and not the valueless contribution that some would have us believe.

In many ways, the creative arts re-emphasise, in a contemporary society that undervalues the uniqueness of the individual, the contribution that that unique individual can make to the community, through self-expression.

Rather than being perceived as a selfish act, creative self-expression is in fact selfless, with the artist projecting their thoughts, ideas, observations **of the world for others to share. "Look what I have seen of the world, is it not intriguing, fascinating, full of wonder and celebration?"**

By living in a culture that undervalues the creative artist, we also by inference undervalue contemplation, empathy, connection with source, understanding of the larger picture, of which we are all a part. Our very complexity should be a sense of celebration, not one that needs to be diminished due to efficiency.

We are not, as some would have us believe, simplistic single skilled machines. We cannot be graded by our usefulness, or the amount of money we produce for others, we are an organic life form that has substance and value outside of the narrow definitions imposed by others.

As artists, self-expression seems mandatory, whatever the discipline used for that self-expression. However, to me it seems as if an artist should not really be judged by what paint, stitch, clay, metal, wood, glass they use. It is not even about studying and identifying construction methods, although that has its role to play, studying the method of making can sometimes miss the point of why the making occurred in the first place.

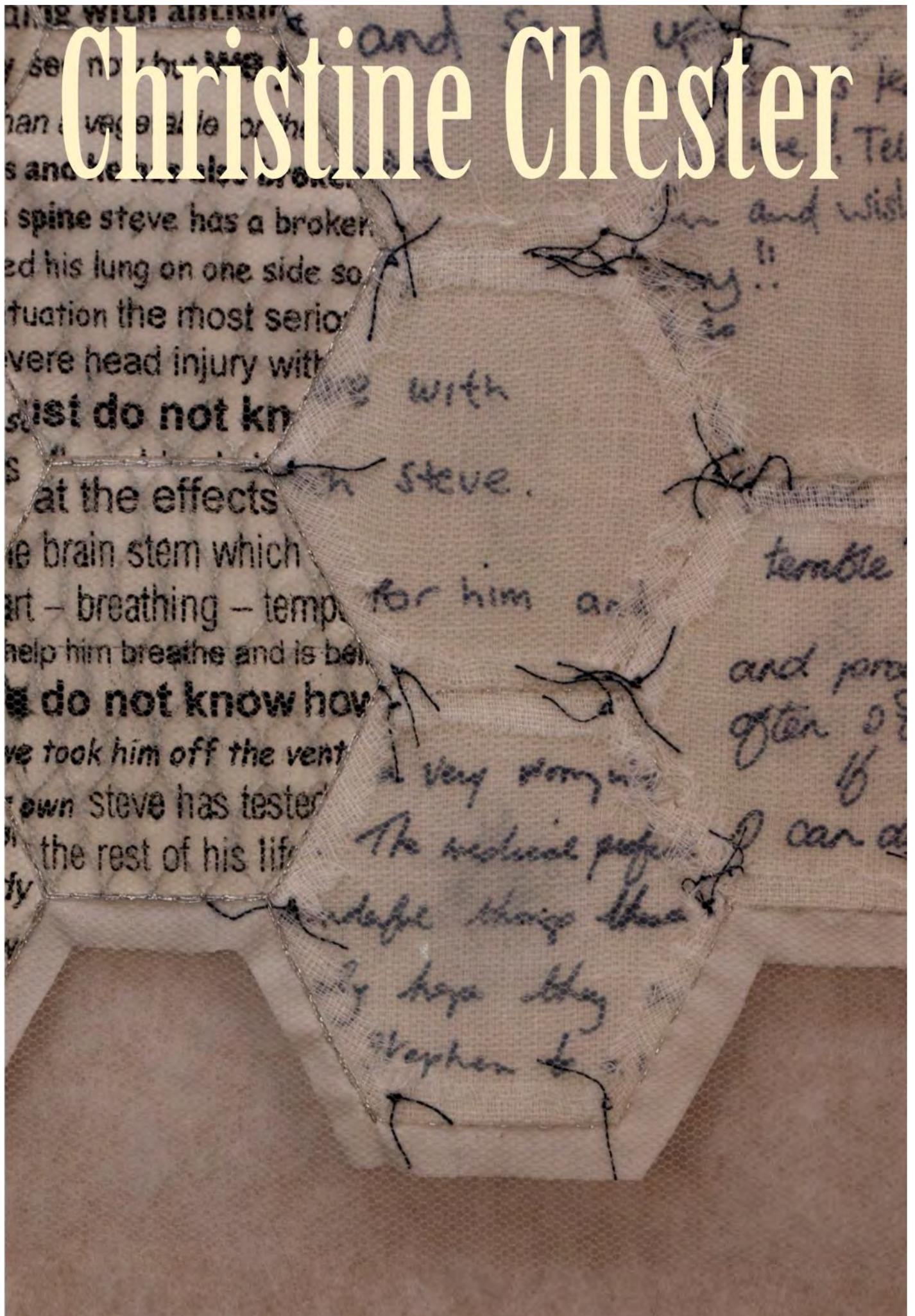
The artist is trying to say something beyond brush stroke and stitch, and it is important that we listen to what they have to say. It is a major part of why I started the Inspirational project in the first place, and it is why I have insisted that it be multi-disciplined, and not single disciplined. There are far too many interesting and inspirational artists out there, and to not **include them because they don't fit into a genre seems to me at least, short-sighted. It isn't the world we live in any more.**

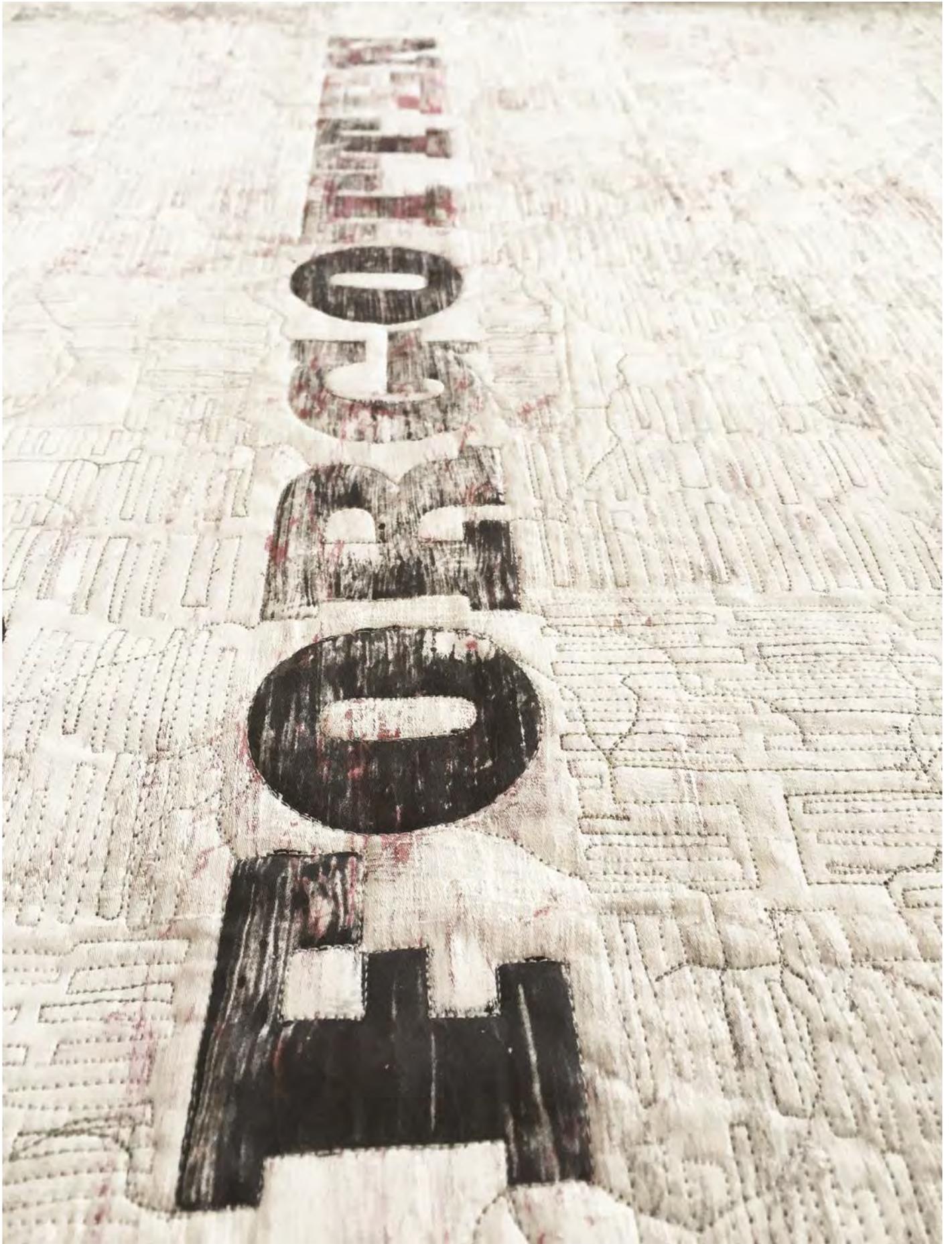
Anyway, I hope that you enjoy the work and perspectives of the eight artists featured: Christine Chester, David Skillicorn, Jennifer McCurdy, Gopika Nath, Chris Keegan, Polly Jacobs Giacchina, Russell Tomlin, Terry Jarrard-Diamond. In this issue I have also included reviews of two brand new books from the publishers Batsford, ***Stitch Stories*** by the artist Cas Holmes, who was featured recently in issue 5 of *Inspirational*, and ***Natural Processes in Textile Art*** by the artist Alice Fox.

I thoroughly hope that you enjoy this issue, it was great to be able to bring together so many diverse, but fascinating artists, and I am already looking forward to treating you to the next eight artists that will be featured in issue 7!

John X

Christine Chester

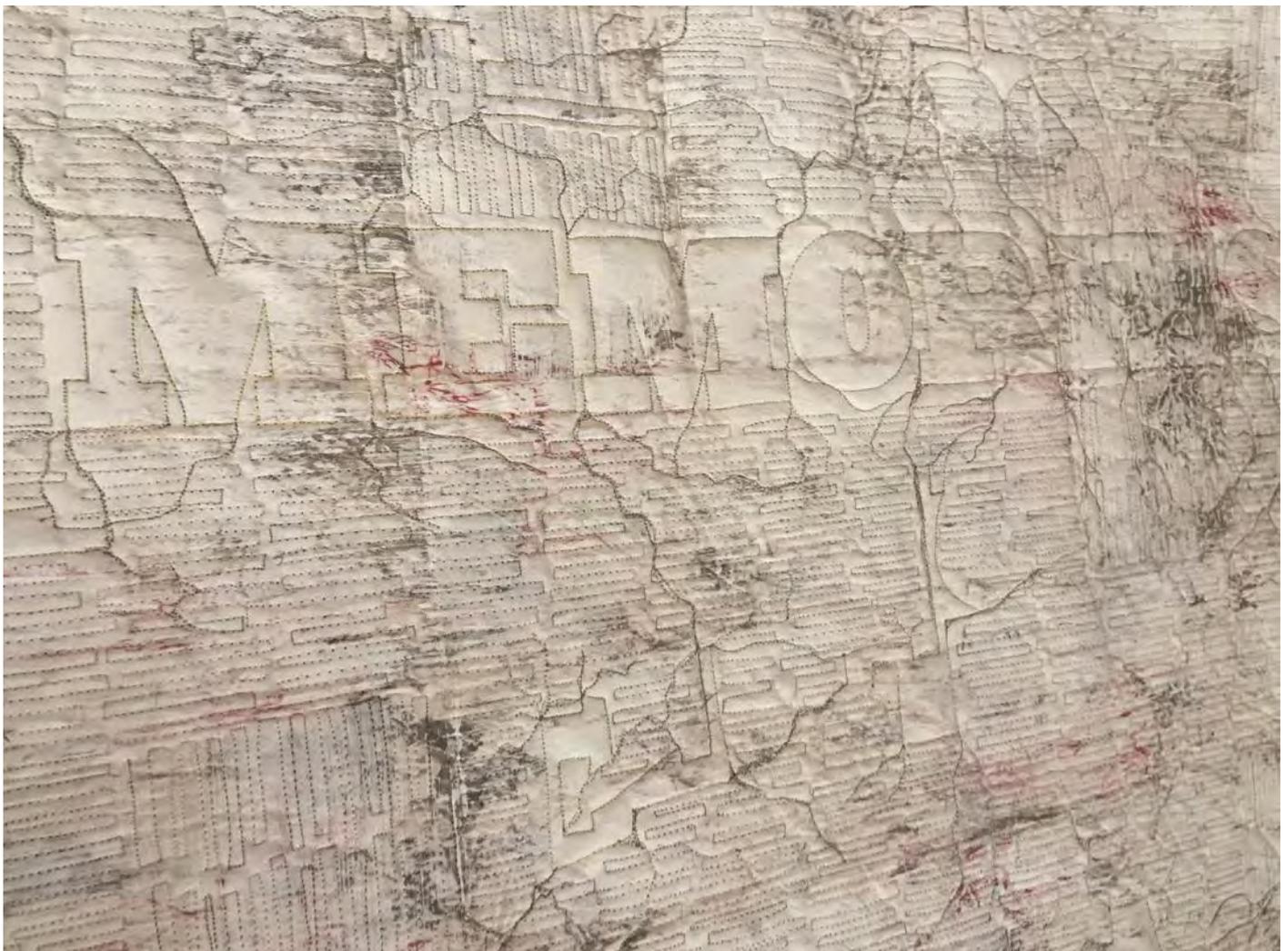


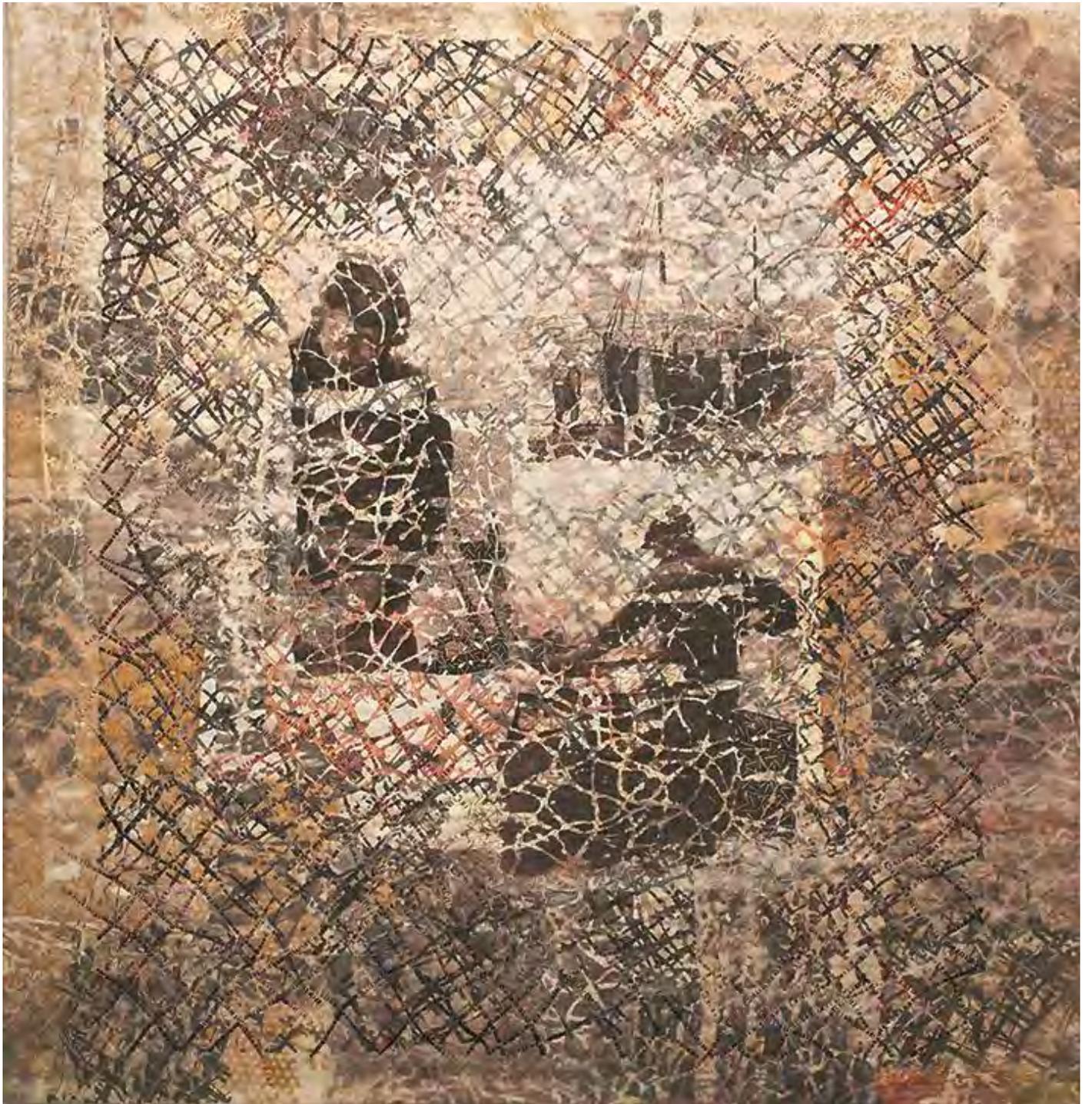


Identity and personality, and their potential for being systematically dismantled, have haunted and intrigued the artist Christine Chester, it permeates her work and guides her creative questioning.

Christine has focused her work on the effects of the general human condition known as dementia. Dementia has at its core loss, the loss of memory, loss of language, loss of character. These are all personalised aspects of ourselves, it is who we identify ourselves with, it is particular and specific to the human condition, the ideal of the individuals that we all believe ourselves to be.

Christine has an intimate understanding of dementia, and what it can do to the human psyche as it passes along its journey through a human life. Her father suffered from dementia in the last few years of his life, and although unimaginable difficult to be a part of, Christine has managed to use her creativity in order to both observe and question dementia and its relationship to the human character.





Christine concentrates much of her work on memory, identity, and the fragility that those two states have on what it is to be human, on what it is to be both a fully functioning individual character, and what it is to start losing the security of that individual character.

This particular artist attempts to convey some of the complexity of feeling and intent from the standpoint of both the sufferer and the observer. The complexity that is such a fundamental part of the journey into dementia **is imbued within Christine's creative work. There are layers of meaning** as there are layers of the condition, some layers being thick, impenetrable, permanent, others seeming to be rhythmically random, cycling between states of opaque to crystal clearness, and back again.

Fracturing, the breaking down of identity and belonging through increased memory loss, is a distorting of the assumption of identity. An innate belief in the security of that identity, in the belief that we are who we are because of our memories, can so easily begin to unravel, so that



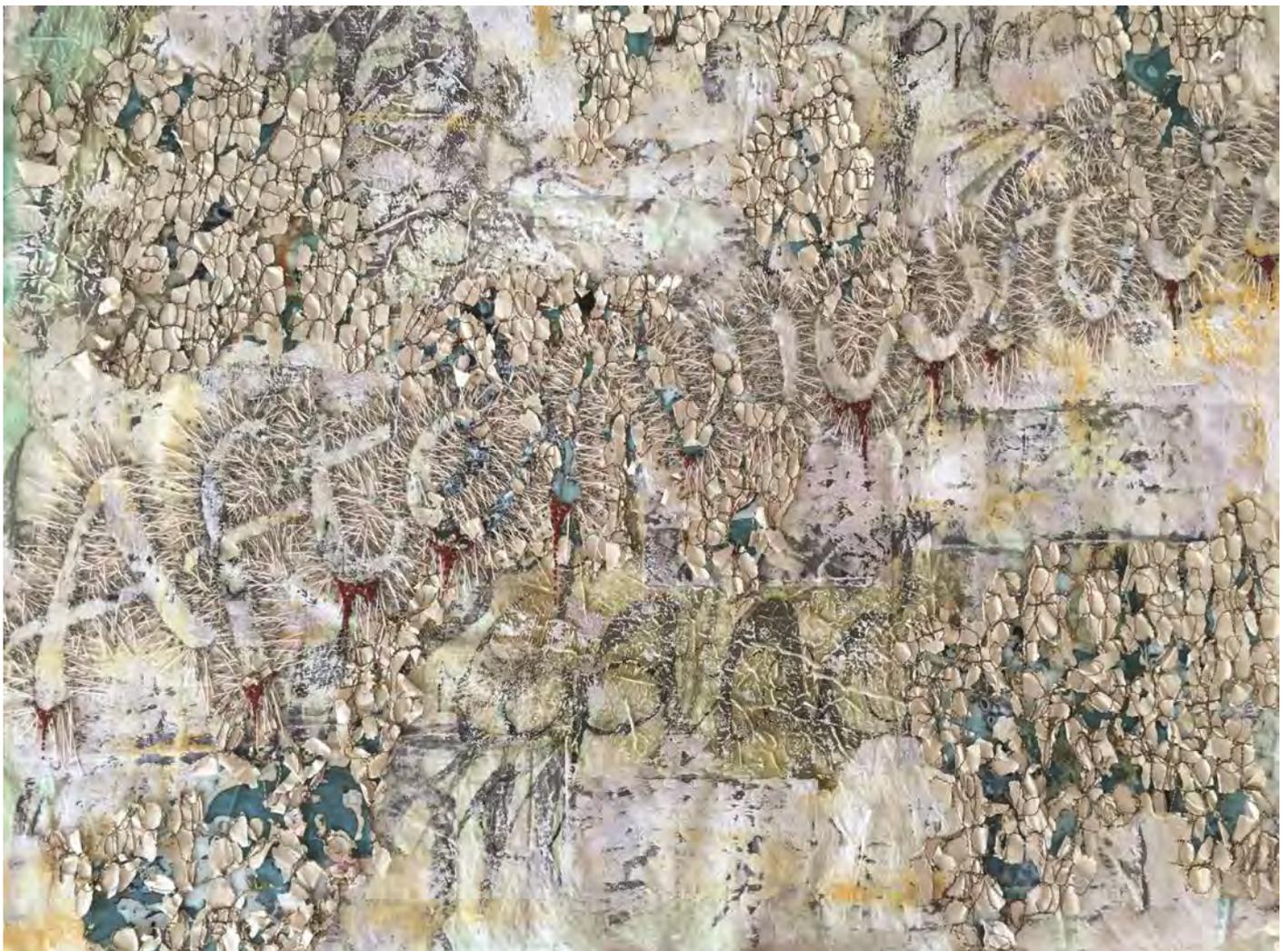


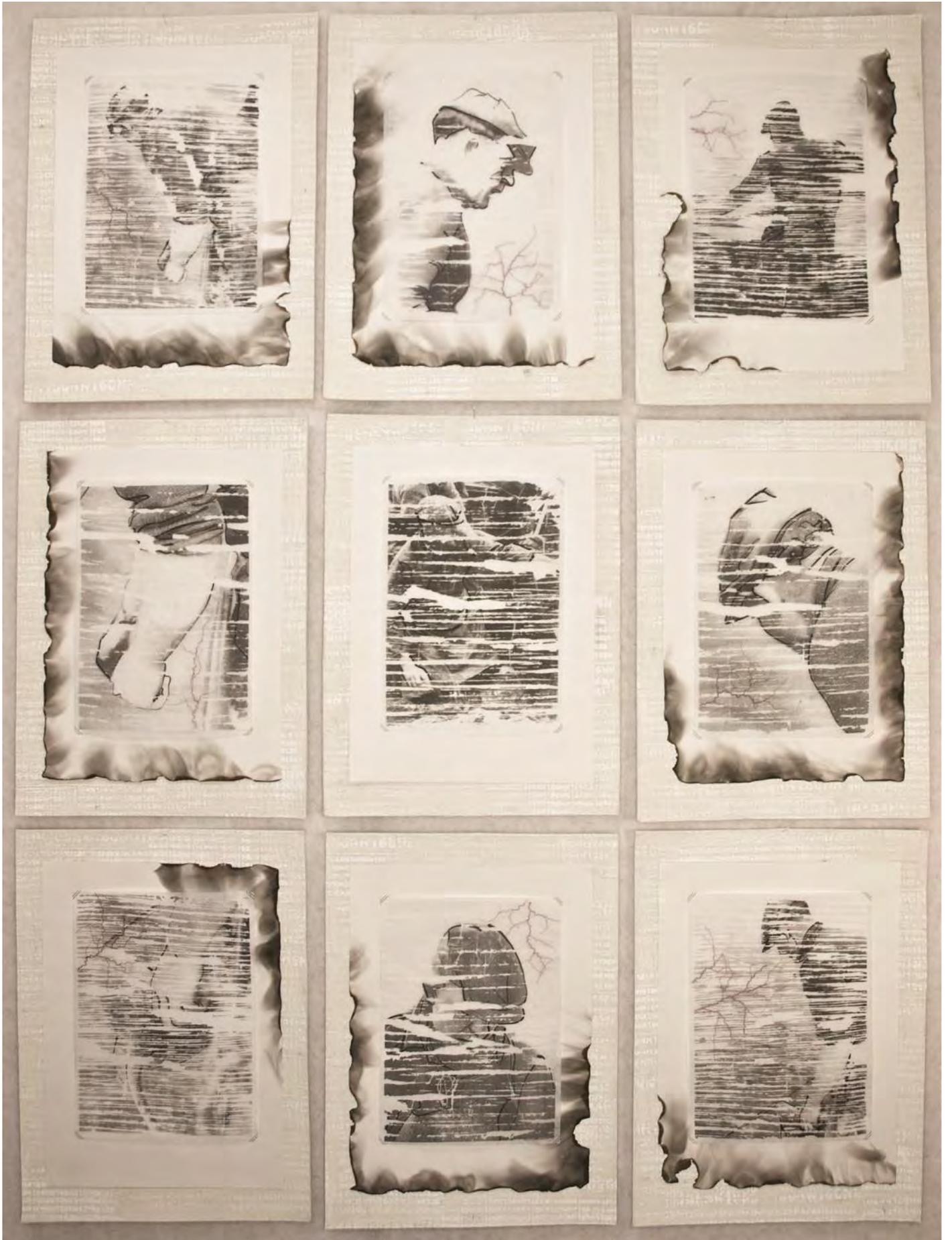
belief becomes confused doubt, trust is lost, and memory becomes both tangible and intangible.

Disconnection, a feeling of always losing the momentum of a particular pathway, as if the continuity of intent has become distracted, disengaged, even detached. These are part of the pathway of dementia, and therefore part of the pathway of the sufferer.

Stories and events that are told by those that suffer from dementia, often become increasingly fractured, repetitive, and usually lack a framework of context. Losing immediate and intimate understanding of a memory can be frustrating and disconcerting in its own right, the wholesale unravelling of memory in its entirety is a frightening and bewildering prospect.

There is a strange underlying rhythm to dementia, a cycle of remembering and forgetting. It is a world that becomes increasingly





made up of half-remembered and half-forgotten connections, whether a connection between an individual, a memory, or a place. Sometimes the connection can appear to be real, at other times confusingly unreal.

Christine imbues her work with the half-remembered, as well as the half-forgotten. Words and phrases cover her compositions, sometimes seeming to half-appear out of the mist of forgetfulness, at other times appearing to sink back into that mist.

Singular words or phrases are an important element in the pathway of dementia, often they are the only things that significantly connect sufferers with others outside of the condition, and more importantly they can be significant connectors with the tangible in themselves.

Christine therefore places great emphasis on repetition. Although words within the context of dementia may appear to be seemingly random, there is a modulation between remembering and forgetting, of connection and disconnection. To endlessly repeat is to at least try to endlessly remember.

By reiterating a word or phrase in her work, by embellishing and signifying that word or phrase, Christine is reflecting the significance that it can hold within dementia, the repeated word or phrase becomes an





anchor in a storm, a hook in which for a moment at least, the sufferer can find a calm haven.

Interestingly, whilst travelling along the path of observation, identity, and interpretation of dementia, Christine became interested in the phenomenon of palimpsest. Briefly, palimpsest is a term applied to manuscripts where the original text had been either washed or scraped away, leaving the valuable parchment to make way for new text.

However, what is of particular interest to Christine, and links invaluable to her interest in the pathway of dementia, is the fact that these refurbished **manuscripts, these palimpsest's, rarely remained blank after the original text has been washed or scraped away, the original text could never be fully erased, it had a memory of its own, perhaps only remembered in fragments, but still connected to the parchment. Over time, original texts would bleed through to create a ghostly print, lying beneath whatever new text had been added.**





In many respects, the palimpsest idea is still with us in a number of forms, one in particular is that of fly posting, and Christine has explored this contemporary phenomenon, linking it back to the earlier parchment one, each brings up ideas of layering, of the complexity of meaning, of broken meaning, of glimpses, of fracturing, the cracking and distressing of a personality.

It is the palimpsest that really seems to have made its impact on **Christine's work**. It is an ideal and significant interpreter of the passage of dementia, and is an extremely effective means of projecting the artists own ideas and observations as to the importance of memory, identity, and its loss.

The dense intensity of some of Christine's compositions, the seemingly endless layers of action and interaction, play well against some of her other compositions, where the noticeable top layers have become hopelessly fragmented, indistinct, as if much has bled away and what is left seems little more than a stain of remembering.



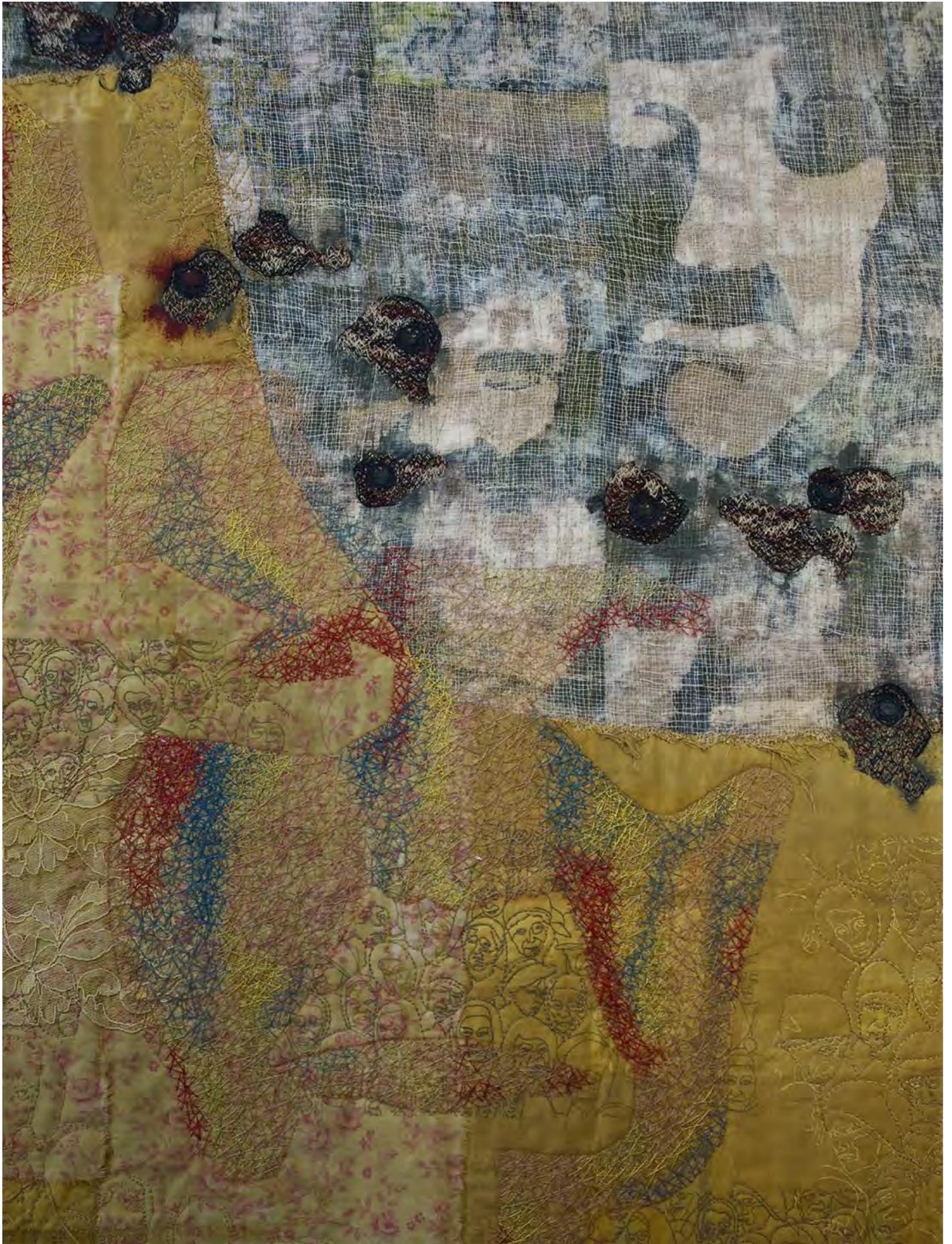


This is all really quite powerful stuff, and Christine should be commended for taking on such a difficult, but fundamental subject as her source material. It is never easy to delve deep within ourselves, particularly when it comes to questioning such fundamental belief systems as the shifting of our core, that of our identity.

However, it is through the conceptual understanding of art, that we learn something about ourselves. It is through the unique perspective of the **artist that we expand our horizons that we see what we hadn't thought to see**, and that is one of the most important points to note when approaching the art world.

Artists are often accused of being selfish, of being self-absorbed in their own identity, but this is rarely true. The true role of the artist is as reflector, they observe, examine and interpret the world as they understand it, and then reflect that interpretation to the outside world through their work.





They are communicators, often exploring deep within themselves, sometimes that entails tackling difficult and uncomfortable concepts and ideas, such as Christine and her interpretation of the role that dementia plays in so many lives.

Most people who have had to pass through significant moments with someone who has suffered from dementia, can never really forget the experience. These things can never fully heal, and nor are they really meant to, it is part of the tapestry that is our life, part of the thread of the journey.

However, fortunately for creative artists, they have the tools in which to create a cathartic path of sorts, a path towards some form of understanding, of acceptance, and that is what Christine has done in her work. It is a significant and healing body of work, and I am sure that the artist hopes that it will in some way help others along the path towards their own understanding and acceptance.

More of Christine's work can be viewed at her comprehensive website – [Christine Chester](#) - she can also be followed on [twitter](#), [facebook](#)



David Skillicorn



Art so often seems more inclined to be subjective, submersive, and seems much rarer to appear to be objective, involved in the defined. It seems the nature of human creativity, particularly within the last few generations, to be the facilitator to the greater picture, the greater understanding, of helping to look for subliminal messages within colours, tones, textures, and to project those out to the larger population. Often admittedly finding common cause amongst some, and more often than not the hostility and confusion amongst others, but expanding the message nevertheless.

The work of the abstract fine art painter David Skillicorn takes place within the fruitful fields of the subjective, often seeming to pass beyond the physical limitations of his work in order to reach the transcendent, the place where art becomes more than passively decorative, more than a contained element to be viewed and not engaged with, his work instead becomes to all intents and purposes, subservient to the senses and emotions, both his and that of the viewer.

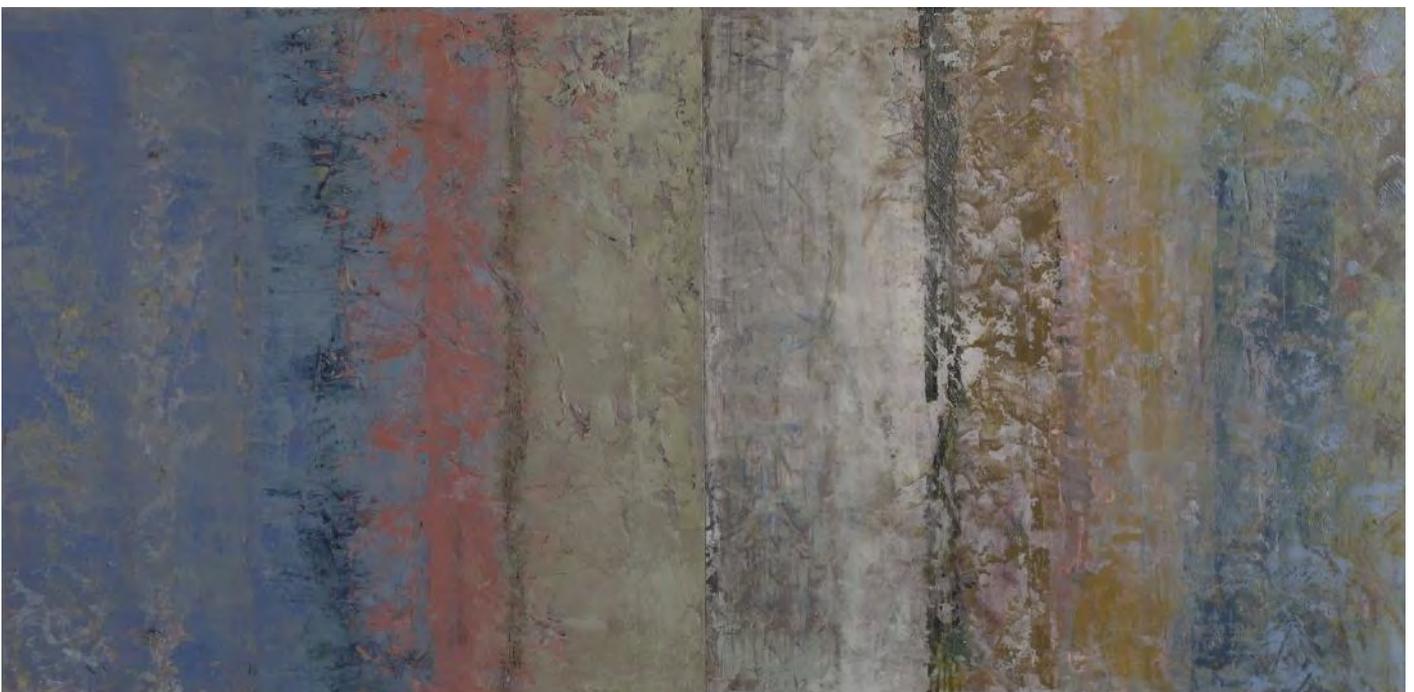




David creatively works with the larger landscape. Having now left the world of portraying more realistic landscapes where he started his fine art career, those vistas that are rooted within the physicality of the known **panorama, the portrayal of 'reality' as seen, he now composes landscapes** that go well beyond the physicality of any known environment, tapping into his own understanding of instinct and intuition, forming ongoing compositions of a depth and understanding of the submersive character of landscape, one that lies well beyond the reality of environment as experienced by us in our everyday mode.

David works both instinctively and intuitively. The abstract suits his creative inclination, as well as his own perspective on the world, perfectly. The abstract, within the context of fine art painting, has no clear illusion or allusion to any form of reality, it has no pretensions of **reproducing an assumed correct portrayal of the world of 'reality', instead** you are left with the only thing that really matters, pure colour and texture.

Not having any obvious reference points to assumed reality frees the mind of both the artist and the viewer. It allows the artist to have freedom of understanding without constraint, as well as the freedom to interpret that understanding as they perceive it to be. We are after all, encased within our own perspective of the world. What we see through





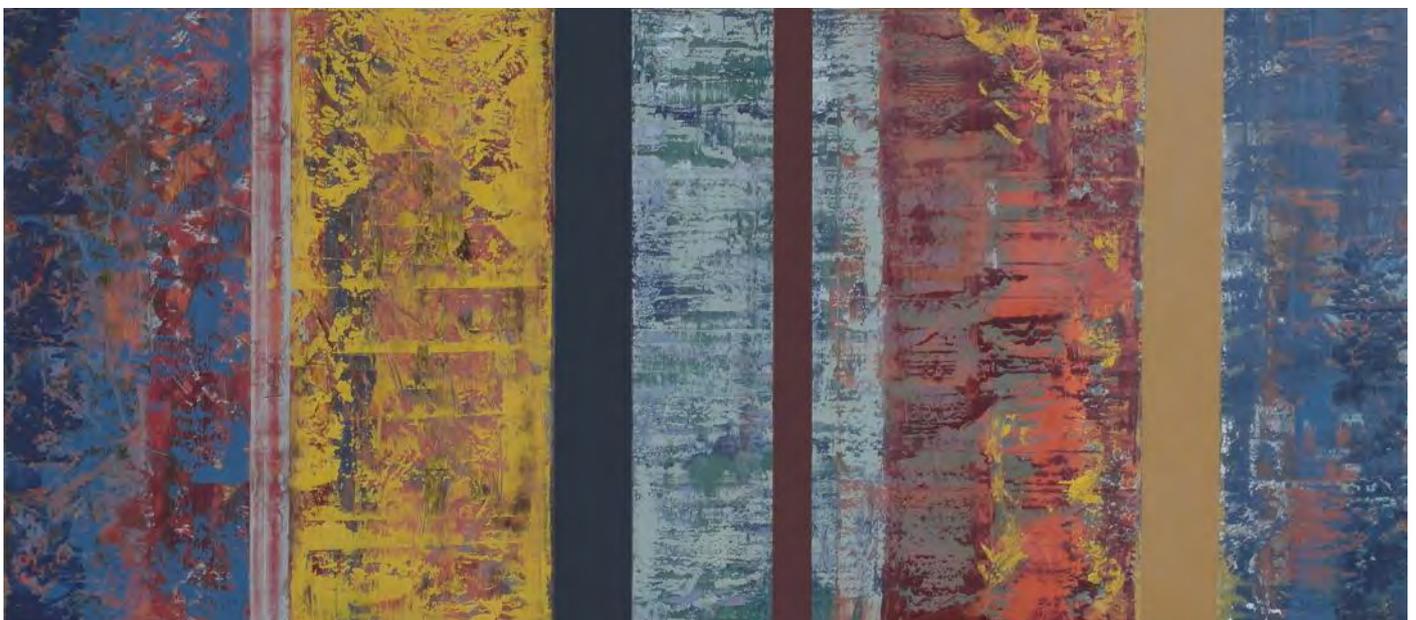
our senses is unique to us. To be able to portray that uniqueness through creative self-expression is one of our greatest achievements, and one of our most fundamental rights.

In our present culture so much of life is understood as a closed interpretation. Life is seen to be strictly material, it is physical, and defined, there is no space for the intuitive, for the emotional, therefore these elements are seen to not exist, or are seen at best as marginal to life.

However, there is a rich, broad, and multi-layered expanse of a deeper, non-material understanding, that all of us are a part of, but so few have been encouraged to explore, except for artists such as David.

David has searched out and then explored this world of the subjectively understood. He has intuitively and emotionally felt his way around this world of the submerged, of whole ranges of immersed layers of meaning that are not material, not physical, nor were ever meant to be.

David believes that each of his compositions is imbued with its own particular atmospheric mood, its own unique ambience, the ambience as seen by him as an artist, and as an individual. If our perspective of the world is unique, then so is our view of the world through every different moment of our lives.





We see and interpret, always anew, so each new moment produces a new vista for us to examine, appreciate, and explore. And each new moment allows the artist to build up a composition of that moment, that unique vista of experience, which is what David does through his work.

This is an artist that strives to create an authenticity that is on the one hand both sensitive and meditative, whilst on the other hand resonates and stands fixed within the contemporary.

As with so many artists who work in the ambience of the abstract, there is an element of immediacy, tempered by limitless and specific focus. A system of working that incorporates spontaneous expression and continual editing, a balance that when achieved creates a perfect harmony within each composition.





The physical layering of paint in David's case, is an important part not only of the process of his particular approach to creativity, but of completing connections with his perspective on the different moments that he has personally experienced. The singular composition is for him an acknowledgement in the physical of his intuitive journey.

Each layer of paint is a part of the story of that particular composition, that particular moment in time, and is therefore a vital memory of the **pathway of that particular creative journey. Seeing David's work in this** way allows you to begin to understand the intensity of his projection, of the singular composition as projected journey that the artist delivers through layers of paint.



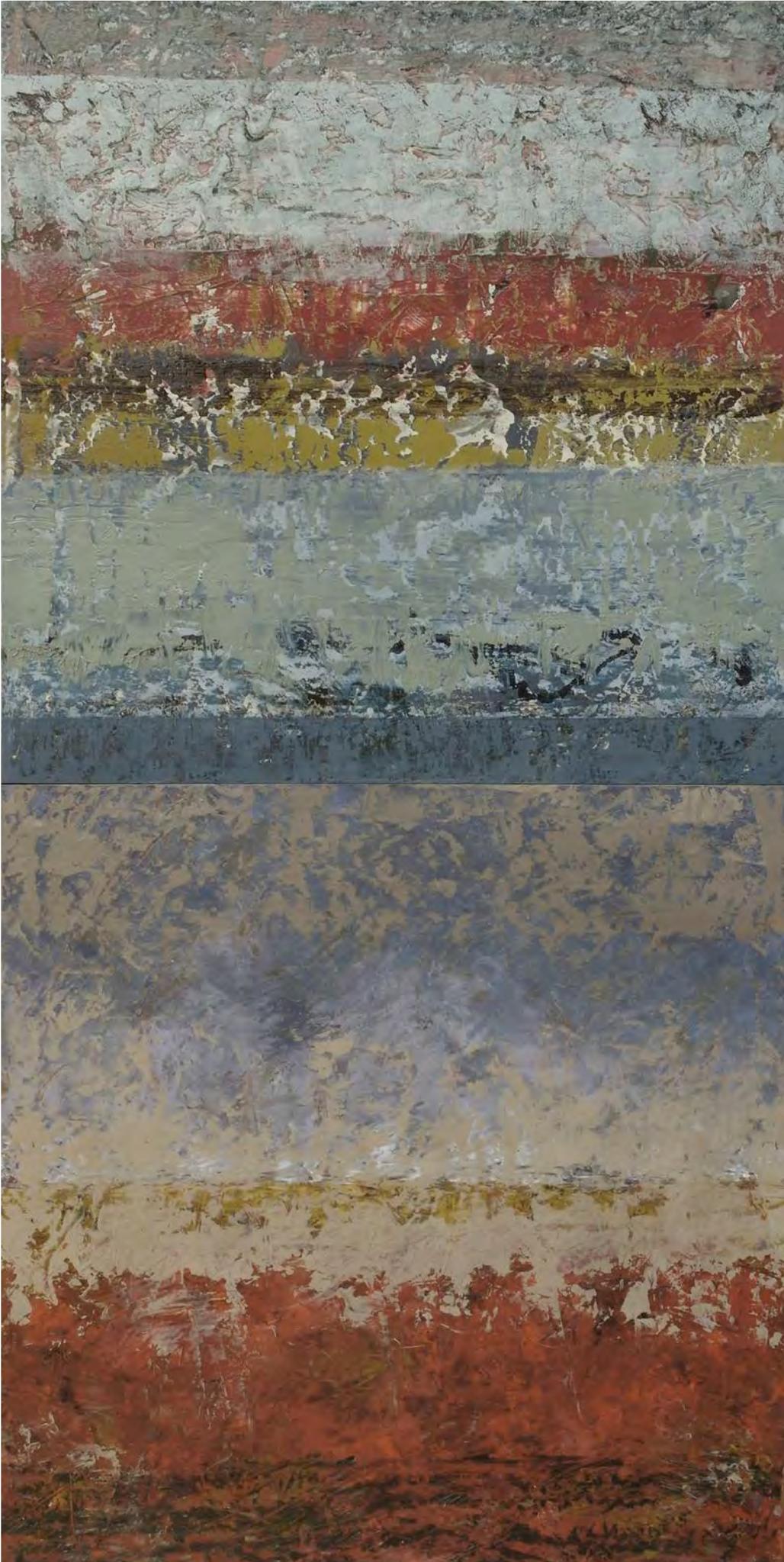


Through his work David often seems to remove as much paint as he adds to compositions. There is an importance to the intuitive process of addition and removal, a process that is not necessarily governed by the practical and the material, but instead governed by a form of subjective understanding by the artist, so that the revealing of painted layers becomes as important as the addition of those self-same layers.

The artist uses the simplicity of colour, tone, line, in order to build up, through this simplicity, a complexity of ambience, one that draws in contemplative and emotional strains that are then projected out and onto the viewer. It is this balance between simplicity and complexity that **makes David's paintings such an experience.**

There is always a particular nature to the differing experiences we accrue over our lifetimes. Some are best experienced with the head, whilst others are better experienced with the heart, so to speak. This comes into particular focus when we are experiencing creative artwork.



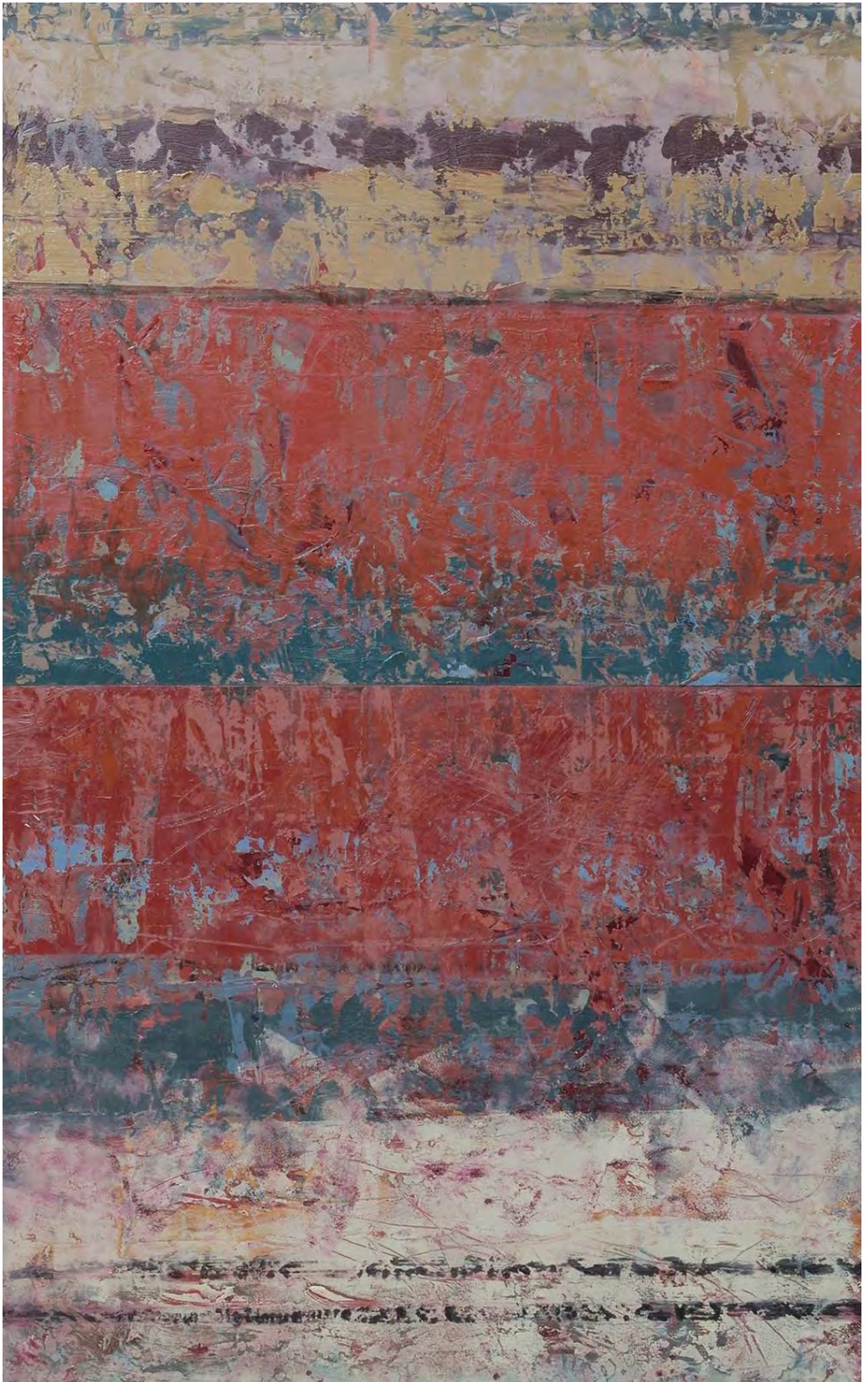


Different artists, hope, but rarely insist, that the viewer will see and experience their particular artworks through head or heart. How compositions are worked on, often influences how they will be interpreted.

David hopes that people will experience his work through heart, rather than head, that they will search for the intimate identity of connection with his paintings, he also hopes that contemplation will be an integral part of that search, and in that I think that he is spot on.

David's work takes you deep into the essence of landscapes, deep into the life blood of land and belonging, of identity and empathy with colour and texture, but it also takes us beyond ourselves, beyond the physical



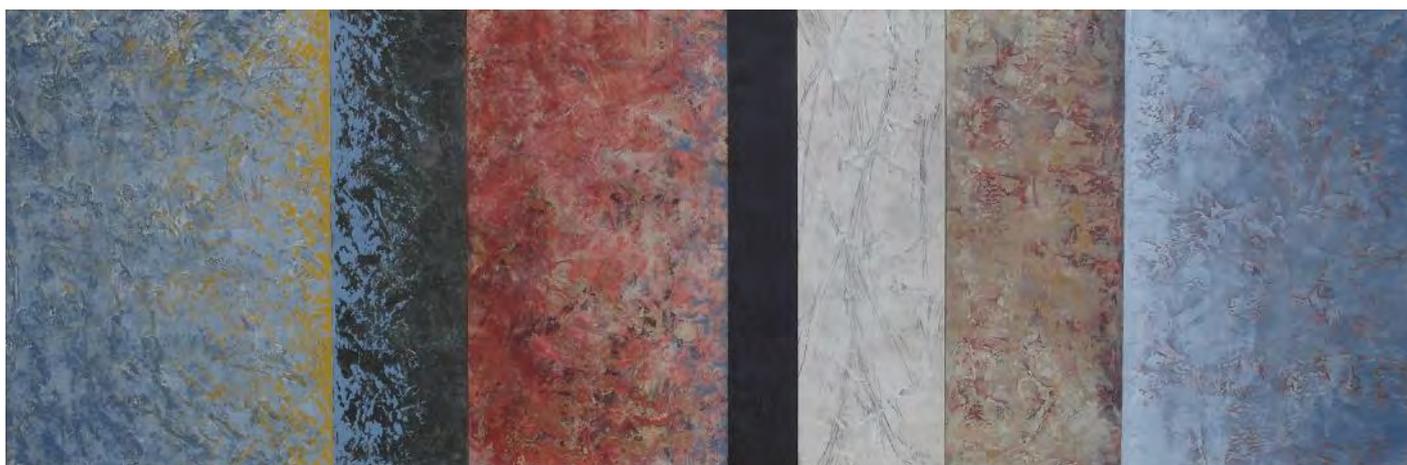


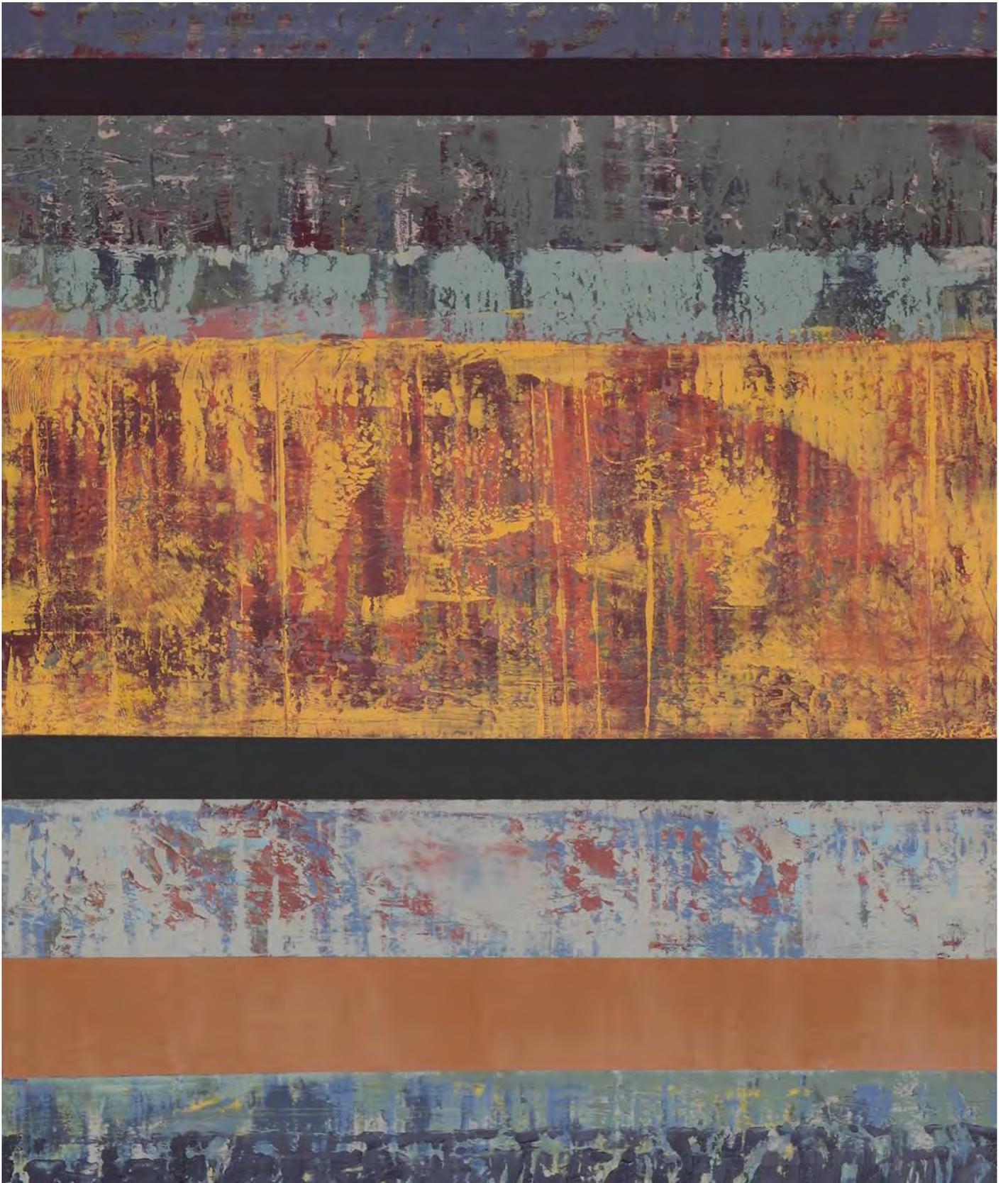
and the connection with the material, taking us to a higher understanding with interconnectivity to place and to space.

David is by definition a visual artist. For many years he was an award winning documentary filmmaker and video artist, he also pursued an interest in fine art photography. His acute visual eye was honed by observation and connection with a large and varied canvas, through film documentaries he grew to understand and appreciate the rich and vibrant cultures and landscapes that make up the planet.

This diversity, this mosaic of colour and texture of land and people, laid the foundations for creativity to flow through paint instead of a lens. Not as fundamental a change as you might suspect, the two can and often do live within comfort of each other. It is perhaps more a progression of artistic understanding, than of movement from one discipline to another.

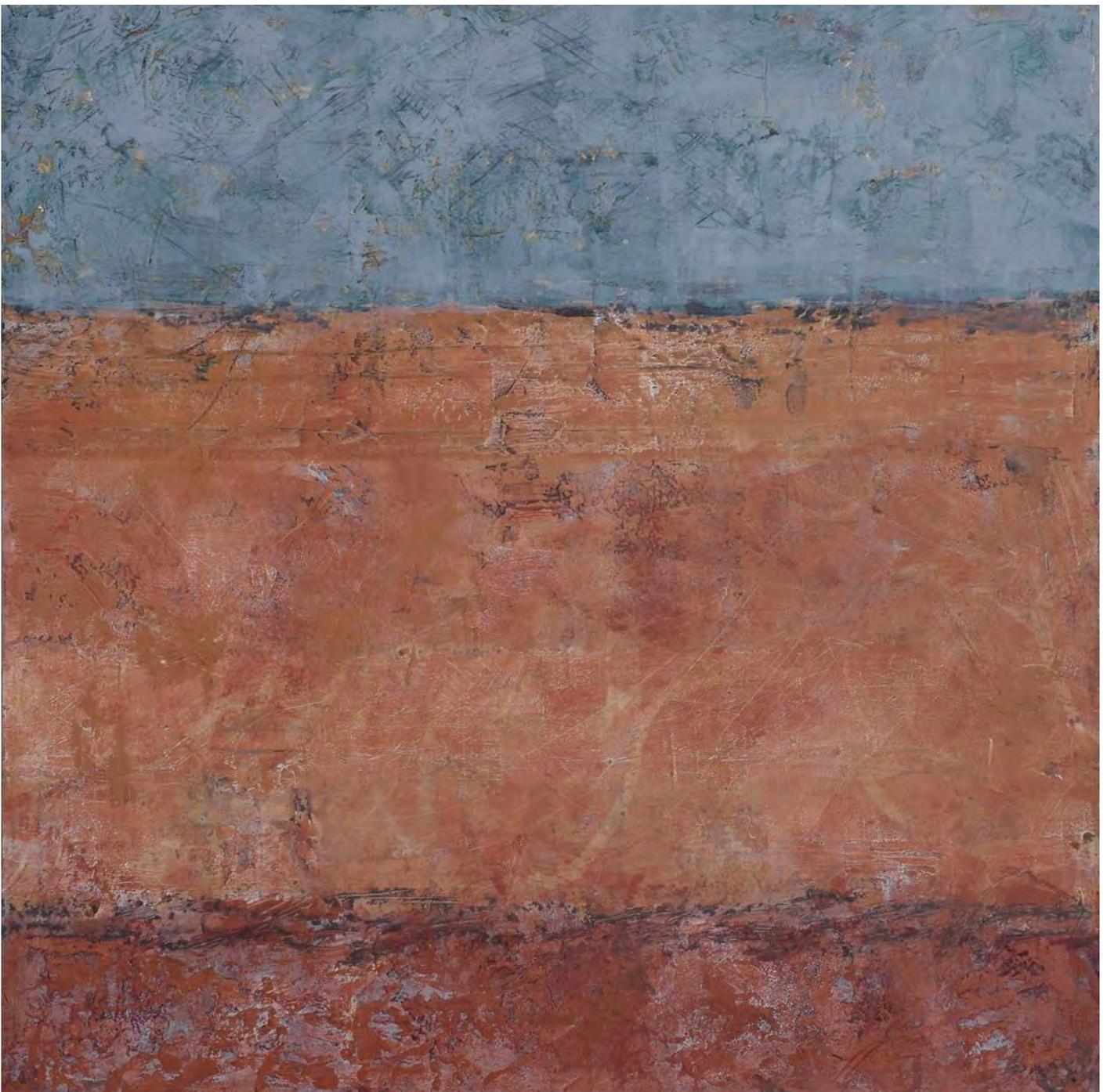
In a world where the snapshot is instant and self-flattering, where the expression of the written word has been reduced to chat, visual art has become a near meditative practice, with artists being teachers of contemplation, prophets of the process of looking deeper, of finding more intention, stillness, a quietude that is often increasingly difficult to find in our daily lives.





To be able to visit a space of the complex, of the richly overlaid, of the meaningful and contemplative, but more importantly, to be able to create **that space as an artist, is an increasingly important element of an artist's** creative life, and for the work of individuals like David, we should be truly grateful. Grateful that such spaces exist, and that artists are still ready to create such spaces for us.

More of David's work can be viewed at his comprehensive website – [David Skillicorn](#) - he can also be followed on – [twitter](#), [facebook](#), [tumblr](#), [instagram](#)



Jennifer McCurdy



Sculptural art, the three-dimensional representation of the thoughts and ideas of a creative artist, come in so many forms, using so many different raw materials, it runs down so many different avenues of exploration and discovery that it can be hard to define it as an entity in itself. But then again, why should we have to define something as free-floating and dynamic as creative art in the first place?

The work of the artist Jennifer McCurdy lies firmly within the three-dimensional sphere. She may well use ceramics as her medium, but she is an artist that works well within and indeed beyond the usual constraints of definition so often encapsulated within the traditions of a medium.





Jennifer expresses herself within space, a sculptural space. It can be a rewarding and demanding form of expression, and it is one that only three-dimensionality can ever truly give you the tools in which to express yourself fully within that space.

If you have the confidence, the experience, and depth of understanding that allows you to explore the world that lies between spaces, as well as the connection between those spaces, then you are truly a sculptural artist of note.

There is a definite relationship to be found between seeming opposites in space, between the material and the non-material, between space and non-space, between what can be seen and what cannot be seen, and it is **this relationship of seeming opposites that fuels much of Jennifer's work.**





Jennifer has brought together two opposites in an intriguing relationship. She has encapsulated the worlds of the concave and the convex, brought them together, wrapping the two systems of expression around each other, in order to give a depth and meaning to her unique world of creative exploration.

The concave and the convex. On the one hand the dipped, the hollowed, the curved, on the other, the arched, the rounded, the bowed. Both form a dance of opposites, but opposites that are constantly renewing their **acquaintance through Jennifer's work.**

This is an artist that can play with the delicate balance that we find between opposites, effortlessly turning them into partners of harmony. There is little tension, little straining between concave and convex, there is instead a meeting of differences, a joining of forces in order to create something more than the separate parts, and this is where the skill and foresight that Jennifer imbues within her working process, really pays off.





There is a slow spin that can be seen in Jennifer's work, a spin between concave and convex, between space and non-space, between guided and non-guided. Most of her vessels are physically self-supporting, but the base from which they seem to arrive full-grown is such a small and delicate one that it seems as if the weight of her works are being carried by the surrounding space itself, rather than by gravity.

Many of Jennifer's vessels are vertical structures, structures that are reaching upwards. Although to an extent, the vertical has a practical constructive purpose to it, part of the process of making, there is also an elegant subliminal purpose to the vertical structures that Jennifer produces, above and beyond the most obvious.





Her work is given a seemingly light touch by the artist, it appears effortless and graceful, it carries itself with an ease and with a sustained poise as if captured between two fluid movements, one just passed, one yet to come.

This is an artist that produces the most elegant of structures. Her work often takes on the appearance of graceful ethereal creatures, ones that are willingly locked in partnership as they slowly spin out of the ground, caught up in the moment of being together, caught in a motion of expression, creating a dance that is the dance of life.





Others however, are more like skeletal structures, frameworks of creatures leaving earthly remains, bleached bones that have been hardened by the incessant rhythmic movement of an oceans surf, or the slow caress of a desert wind. They seem to represent creatures long gone, no longer amongst the living, but still managing to leave an elegant reminder of their living selves. They are a form of sculptural remembering of a life lived in its fullness and in its zest.

All of these connections that Jennifer makes knowingly, or unknowingly to the world, whether as indeterminate space, or of the practical material, are rooted within her own perspective of the world, and it is important to always remember that an artist is firstly and foremostly involved within the personal experience of the individual.





Within that, Jennifer is emotionally drawn towards, and emotionally captivated by what she sees around her, the perfect forms of nature. Of course, perfection in nature is always personal, subjective, always in the eye of the beholder, and always should be, so Jennifer, as an artist, sees perfection in a cracked conch shell on a beach, one that, through its imperfection, shows the perfection of its inner beauty, its perfect architectural spiral. She finds perfection in a milkwood pod as it bursts in a field, its seeds becoming instantly airborne, streaming into a sunlit sky.

These are only two examples of a plethora of moments that emotionally touch the artist, they are part of the panoply of natural life that the artist draws in from her immediate environment, from the natural world.





Jennifer is drawn as an artist towards the perceived ordered symmetry, and the disordered asymmetry of life and its forms in nature. These expressions of the natural environment instantly and constantly reveal the passage of life, part of the great wheel of birth, death, and rebirth that is the foundation of life on the planet.

Jennifer lives on Martha's Vineyard, just off the coast of Massachusetts.

She is constantly aware of the islands drift through the daily path of nature, observing through the passage of a day, a week, a month, through to the larger cycle of the seasons. She is sensitive to her immediate environment that surrounds her as it changes, fluctuating and adapting to the daily and yearly changes in life.

Her work reflects the infinite balance of life that she observes and engages in. It is important to her as a creative individual, a creative artist, that she integrates her observations, her feelings of pattern and rhythm that she finds in constancy around her, and integrates those into her work, into the very essence of the forms of her work.





Jennifer uses translucent porcelain as the body and form of her work. She admires the material not only because of its surface beauty, but also because it conveys a quality of light and shadow that is rarely found in other forms of clay. It is this unique harmony between light and shadow that gives Jennifer's vessels such an allure, such a singular beauty, of elegance and poise.

After throwing a vessel on the potter's wheel, the artist alters the form in order to produce a movement of soft shadow. When the porcelain has become 'leather hard', halfway between wet and dry, it is in this state that she hand carves into the work in order to add to the dynamism of the piece, she then fires the work in order for the vessel to become both non-porous and translucent.

Some of the artist's pieces have the addition of 23 carat gold leaf being added by Jennifer to the interior of the vessel. This gives the piece an added capacity to both draw and reflect light, and draws attention from the viewer into exploring new aspects of the vessel, on top of the original features of light and line.



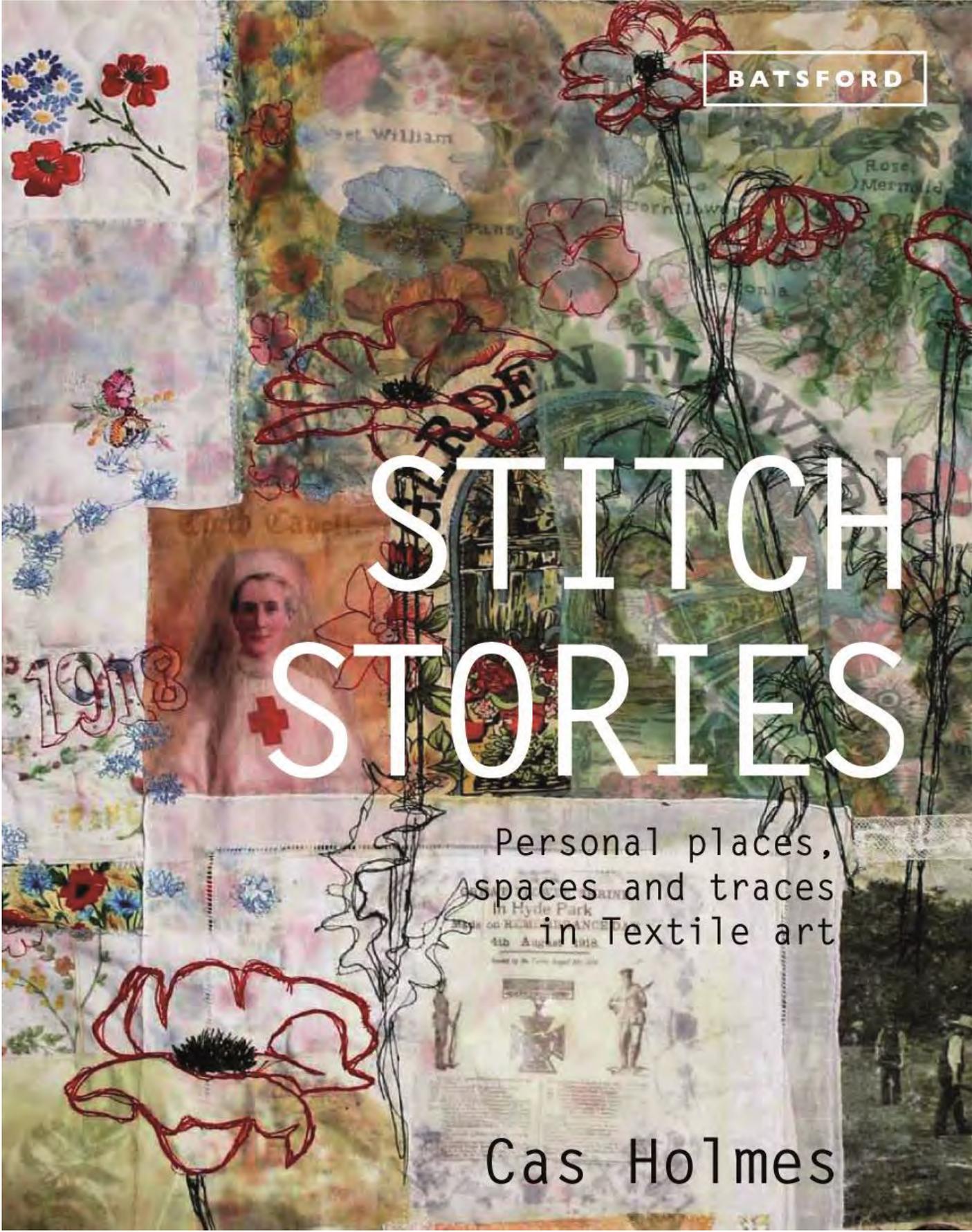


Each finished piece that Jennifer produces is unique and lives in a space of its own. Because the concave and the convex are such an integral part of her repertoire as an artist, these two themes create subtleties that are often picked out between their play with each other, with light both being absorbed and reflected on different surfaces on the same vessel.

It is this combination of intricacy, light, and line that helps to propel **Jennifer's vessels into the league of three-dimensional art pieces**, each with their own character, inhabiting their own space, their own moment in time. Her work has created such a fine balance, such an effortless poise, vessels seemingly unveil themselves from the ether, from a space beyond our seeing. Jennifer reveals to us a rare beauty with each and every work that she completes, and for that we have to be truly grateful.

More of Jennifer's work can be viewed at her comprehensive website – [Jennifer McCurdy](#) - she can also be followed on – [facebook](#)





BATSFORD

STITCH STORIES

Personal places,
spaces and traces
in Textile art

Cas Holmes

Where do ideas come from? Where can interesting source material be found? What is inspiration and how can it be developed? How can you sustain interest in your work from source material to finished piece? How do you tread your own authentic and unique creative path? What can you add to the world of creativity that is a definition of you? Who are you as an artist, and where are you going?

These are just some of the questions that are answered in Cas Holmes new book ***Stitch Stories***. It is a book full of headings, sub-headings, lists of intent, ideas, prompts, and helping hands. Each segment of the book goes into great detail on its particular method, expanding to incorporate a wealth of tried and tested, as well as novel ideas, in how to approach a level of uniqueness that is the role of the artist in us all.

Stitch Stories is aimed at a textile and mixed media audience and is therefore geared towards artists who work, or intend to work, in those fields. The book is full of rich colour photos of Cas own work, as well as the inspiring work of many other artists as well. There are full colour photos of completed works, as well as many works in progress, and most importantly photos of sketch books, one of the areas of work in progress that so many either get stuck on, or are unclear as to what they should contain.

To run through the different chapters of the book in order, will probably give you a good inkling as to why this book is such a valuable addition to the artist. It is often a difficult task looking for rich and useful inspirational starting points in which to pursue a series of work, the journey that those inspirational points should take in order to produce work that is both a reflection of those starting points, as well as being an important part of who you are as both an individual, is perhaps the hardest of all.

Places, Spaces, and Traces - deals with the recording of your experiences, your observations, your feelings of the world that you observe around you. This segment deals with creating a journal,



sketchbook, or other form of recording, such as photography. Collecting information is always the starting point of any form of creative development, and choosing what appeals to you personally is a large part of whether your work will develop or not.

Seizing Inspiration - explores a range of potentials for inspiration and exploration, and includes such ideas as using memory and history as reference points, using drawing and simple collage as valuable exercises in focused or unfocused inspiration, allowing the mind to wander, allowing it to draw inspiration from a line, a colour, a texture, all vital elements in the creative journey.

The Natural World - gives a number of starting points, with the idea of nature being their source. Nature is all around and within us, so it is equally relevant and a ready source of inspiration, whether you live in a rural or urban environment.

Studying and observing the natural world, whether it be in a woodland, or a backyard, is connecting with that natural world. It can be observing, identifying, and recording the differing elements to be found in a canopy of trees, reeds along a riverbank, or indeed tough weeds growing out of an urban wall, all are relevant and all have value to the environment as they do to the artist.

Cas also makes it clear how important the cycle of seasons is to anyone interested in using the natural world as a source of inspiration. To observe the same environment through the change in seasons is to understand the layers of change and meaning that can be found within that framework.

All in the Detail - deals with the details that are so much a part of any piece of artwork, those details often come from source material themselves, or indeed from the ambience in which those materials are found.



The world is a complexity of meaning, and we are part of that complexity. Cas gives us a range of artists work that deals in those details of intricacy that they find in inspirational source material, and that they then project out through their work.

Off the Beaten Track - looks at the artist and their responses, through work, of personal themes and interests, rather than generic. A number of artists show their self-expression through an interest in personal family history, social history, comments on historical or contemporary society. Cas gives us a range of artists who have used textiles, both specifically and generally to make a point.

Telling Stories - the last segment continues from the previous, but gives examples of how you can tell your own story, how you can express what you need and want to say, through a range of helpful examples and that is what it is all about, giving you a range of tools in order to effectively express yourself.

It is so important that self-expression be encouraged. Your own story, your own viewpoint, your own perspective on the world, is a constantly unique one. There may well be seven billion people on the planet, but there is only ever one of you. Cas is fully aware of this and has spent a large proportion of her art career guiding and encouraging others to express themselves through creative paths that only belong to them.

If you have the tools and you have the vocabulary then how you use them is up to you. This book is not a book that wants to show you how to work like Cas, how to produce work that copies where Cas has been and where she is going artistically and creatively, it is a book that shows you how to work like yourself, to find your own centre, your own creative strength, to be able to express yourself as your own true self, and not like another, and for that reason, amongst many, I highly recommend ***Stitch Stories***.

Gopika Nath

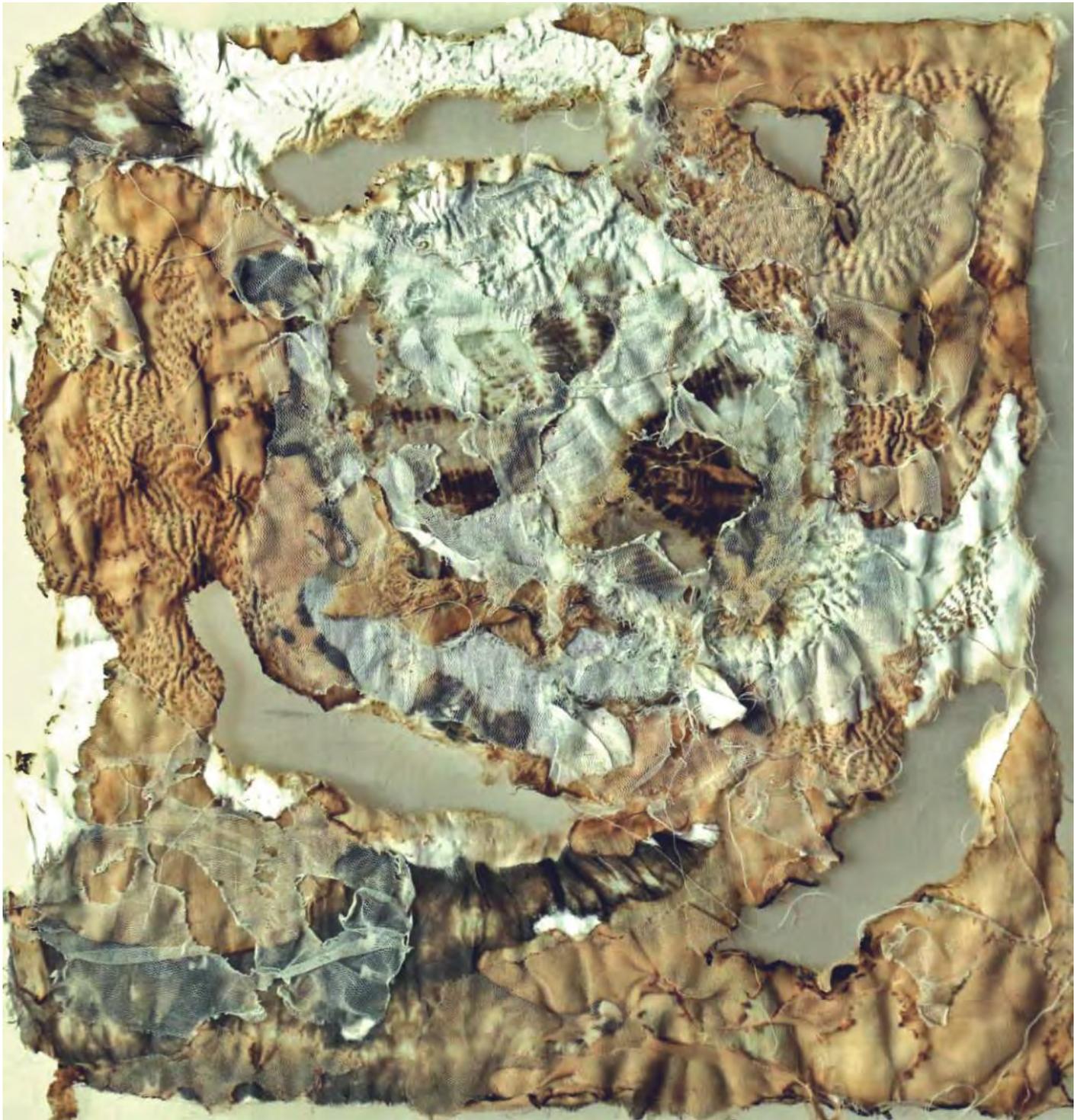


Tradition within art or creativity generally, can be a problematic dimension. On the one hand it allows the artist to tap into the vocabulary of seemingly endless successive generations of creative individuals, all of whom have added to the sum of knowledge, technique, understanding, that are available to the contemporary artist.

However, on the other hand, tradition can be a constrictor, a straightjacket of the senses, leaving the artist with a feeling that they can only travel down the narrow routes dictated by countless generations of artists, that the vocabulary is limited, and the freedom of expression curtailed.

To balance the two extremes, to create a relationship between contemporary freedom and the custom of tradition, is a hard one to get right, many artists have tried, few have succeeded to the level where the balance produces a satisfying harmony between the two.





Gopika Nath is an artist whose perspective sits comfortably within the concepts and ideals of the contemporary art world. However, she is also an artist whose perspective sits just as comfortably within the rituals and practices of the traditional world. She is one of those rare artists that can embrace the understanding that is the foundation of both worlds. She can take the concept of tradition, redefine it, and then allow it to embrace the contemporary world.

This is an artist that stands between traditional practices and contemporary concepts, and as already stated, whilst this space between historical and contemporary, tradition and modern, can be a difficult one to balance properly, Gopika manages a harmony of intent between the two, creating work that takes the best of both worlds, forging new concepts with old frameworks, old traditions within new directions.

She is an artist who has taken the gift of hand-craft tradition in which she has steeped herself, and made it part of her vocabulary of creative making, in her case it is the discipline of embroidery. In many ways, she can be seen as the expression of tradition that lies within the framework

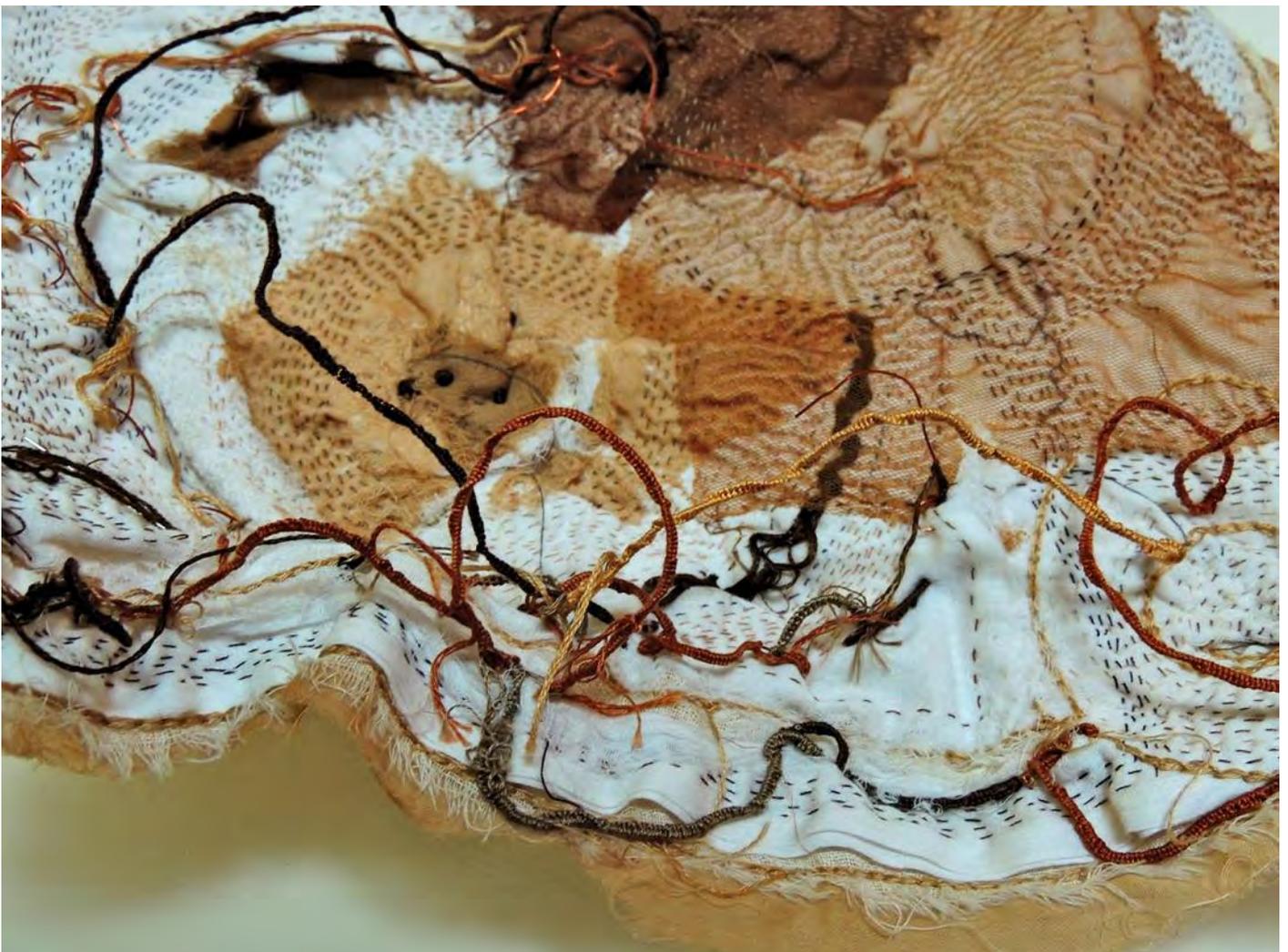




of creative art. However, it is important to note that it in no way implies that Gopika is an individual that is frozen in time, a creative artist that dwells within pastiches of historical tradition, far from it.

To have value in this world, you need to be able to transform yourself from a craft maker into an artist, you have to be able to take tradition and imbue it with an individual and unique creative energy and conceptual thinking. It is a lesson and direction that many are still reluctant to follow, let alone admit to, but it is one that more and more creative individuals with traditional skills are willing to follow.

It is a direction that can only add value to the art world, imbuing the contemporary human creative perspective with generations of the learnt ritual and repeated practice through craft. It is a lesson well-learned by Gopika and one that is vital to pass on to future generations, if the present struggling hand-craft traditions are not to be forgotten entirely.





Although Gopika is duly proud to be part of an ancient tradition, proud to be at the present end of a long line of skilled embroiderers, she is not entrapped by the tradition or longevity of history. She highlights the continuity of hand embroidery, as well as honouring the debt owed the generation upon generation of makers that are part of that tradition.

However, this is an artist that uses the embroidery stitch as an artistic marker, and the needle as a natural substitute for a pencil or a brush. Gopika is a contemporary artist that uses a needle and thread, she is not a traditional embroiderer that struggles to maintain herself in a contemporary world that does not value her. In this, Gopika has fully understood the dichotomy between craft and the contemporary world.

Using the needle as her focused tool, a tool that signals her creative perspective, has allowed her to forge a link with the traditions of hand-crafting in India, but more importantly, it has led to the notion of hand-





crafting as art, rather than skilled labour, to see the work of the hand as part of human creative expression, rather than merely mechanical necessity.

Although hand-crafting is part of the history of who we are, it is also the result of who we are. In many ways, we would not be the people we are today without the generations who went before us, and in turn, we would not be able to pass on who we are to future generations that will come after us, we are at the same time both receiver and giver.

Embroidery is by its very nature a timeless skill, one that Gopika uses across her creative work to great effect. She sees it as a fundamental element of India, one that has enriched countless generations, a skill that has played a significant role in human communities, both large and small, ancient and modern.





She uses the language of embroidery, giving a dimension to stitch as spiritual metaphor. Needle and thread is therapy. The making of stitch is one moment of contemplation in a long line of such moments. **Embroidery can be a cathartic healer and in Gopika's case, the embellishment of embroidery is used in her compositions as a form of healer, or at least balancer.**

Taking her deconstructed surfaces, those that have been burnt, pulled, torn, Gopika brings all together through the healing process of stitch. Her stitches reconstruct the fabric that has been traumatised, wounded, in shock, and through intensive embellishment of surface, through the healing of stitch over that surface, she both cleanses and heals with that very same symbol of the fabric of life.

Life can pass through a journey of difficulty, through trauma and neglect, through active abuse and difficulty, whether self-imposed, or imposed from without, seeming to be beyond the reach of healing, but through small steps, the small accumulated moments, wounds can be cleansed



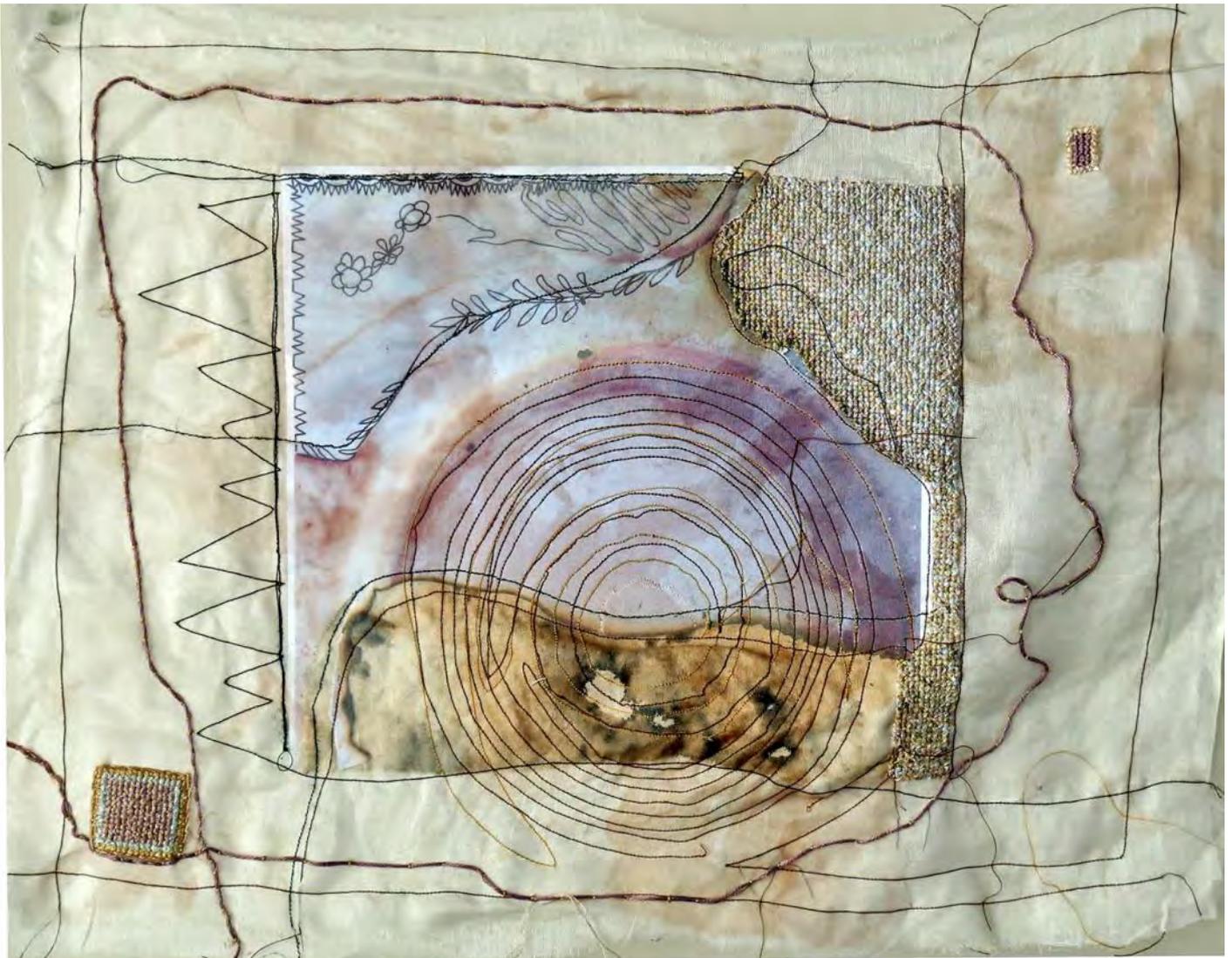


and trauma can be transcended. Stitch can be metaphor for both the healer and the harmonic balancer.

Gopika's working process, her narrative, and completed compositions take into consideration both craft tradition and contemporary conceptual undertakings. Her work is made up of a complex surface of stitch, colour, tone, layer, a surface that is at once both a fragment of detail, and an overall map of definition.

In detail, Gopika stitches, tears, burns, pulls, and then stitches again. She both deconstructs and reconstructs fabric as part of her overall working process, and as an integral part of her composing.

The overall marks and stains, the burns and rips that appear in the **artist's embroidered surfaces can be seen as the marks and stains left on**





memory. Marks on the psyche of memory can be the embarrassment, guilt, shame that we experience throughout our lives, that we inflict upon ourselves, and that diminishes our sense of self, our sense of purpose.

The unravelling of fabric, the deconstructing from whole, is part of the **artist's management of her creative path, as well as of herself.** Gopika sees the deconstruction of fabric as symbolic of the deconstruction of the fabric of life, with the resulting reconstruction, being the reformulation of that life.

In some respects, Gopika's surfaces can be seen as maps, maps of memory. Through the process of creativity, by the passage through composition of art Gopika can enable narratives to become meditative, even cathartic.





Even though Gopika is an artist that embroiders, rather than paints, she is adept at managing to imbue her work with the same aesthetics as can be found in fine art painting, producing the same finesse, the same sensibility, and the same result, the aesthetic of understanding between hand and canvas, between mind and image, and between perspective and result.

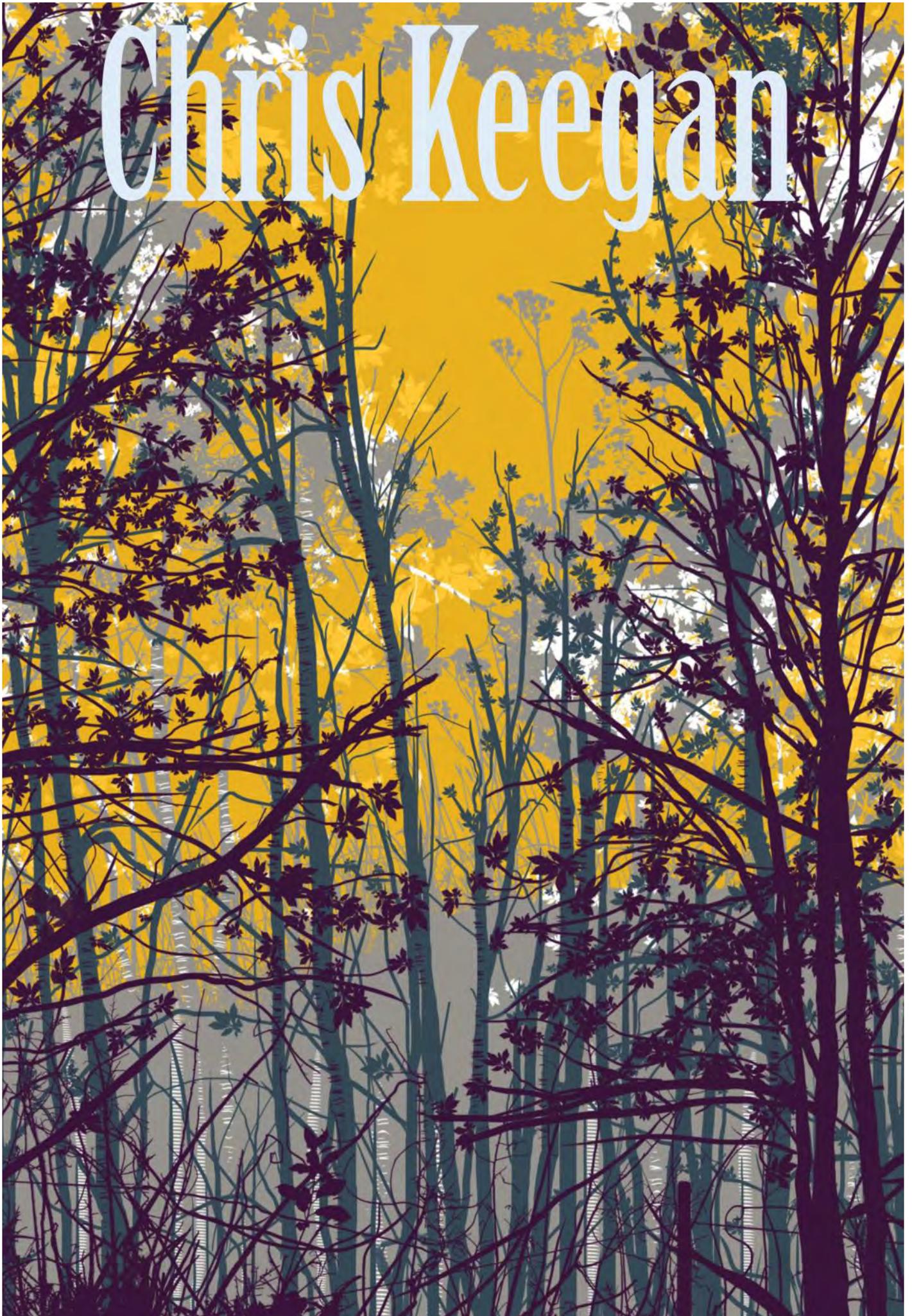
Gopika and her work have evolved from the not always easy transition that bounds the journey from designer to artist. In some respects, the two worlds are similar so the journey would seem to be an easy one, but in other respects, the worlds are so vastly different as to have few common connectors. It is a testament to the integrity of Gopika as a creative individual that she has been able to make this path between designer and artist, her own.

By embracing the art world, craft comes home to its original position at the beginning of the human story of creativity.

More of Gopika's work can be viewed at her comprehensive website – [Gopika Nath](#) - she can also be followed on – [twitter](#), [facebook](#), [google+](#)



Chris Keegan



Layering is such an integral part of the repertoire of the artist, because it is such an integral part of life. Everywhere we look there are the physical levels of layering, whether it be mountains rising one behind the other, bands of trees silhouetted against each other, or the outline of buildings in a cityscape. It is a part of life that we find normal, comforting, part of who we are.

However, layering can also be part of a much subtler level of understanding. There can be layers of reality, layers of meaning, layers of consciousness, layers even of life itself. We tend not to look for layers of the practical, or layers of the meaning, because they are always there with us, but artists do.

All the subtle and not so subtle layers of life are so often part of the **artist's interpretation of their own perspective on the world, one that is** forever unique to each and every one of us. Layers are indeed interpretations and not forgone conclusions, how we interpret those layers makes all the difference in both how we perceive the world, and just as importantly, how we project that interpretation.





The artist Chris Keegan who specialises in illustration and screenprinting is a creative individual that fully understands the nature, importance, and power of layers in both the physical and the non-physical world.

Chris's work abounds with the complexity as well as the infinite simplicity of multiple layering. Some of his work forms dense, painterly compositions, each layer significantly adding to the one beneath it, each is important, and each has a role to play within the finished composition.

Often his work will throw up seemingly strange yet intriguing combinations and relationships of colour, line, shape, all is in a constancy of connecting and interacting with each other, and all adds to the dynamism of the composition.

Some of Chris's layered work appears sedate and calm, with each layer complementing and connecting with the others around and through it.





However, some of his compositions are more dynamic, producing flow and action, where colours bounce off each other, whether they are fields or lines of colour. It very much depends on the narrative.

A woodland scene may well lend itself to a seemingly quiet build-up of layers, whilst a scene depicting the surface of moving water might well need to be more dynamic. But whatever the narrative, layering is an integral part of each composition, and multiple layering makes each viewing of Chris work the rich experience that it is.

This is an artist that works with transparent and opaque inks to form striking montaged imagery. He is able to combine his style with his chosen subject matter, creating vibrant, contemporary images that share both a sharp graphic nature, as well as a painterly sensibility.

Chris's work revolves around a system that includes both photomontage and careful and thoughtful layering. The process has served him well, and





continues to do so, whether through his commissioned illustration work, or his portfolio of hand produced screenprints.

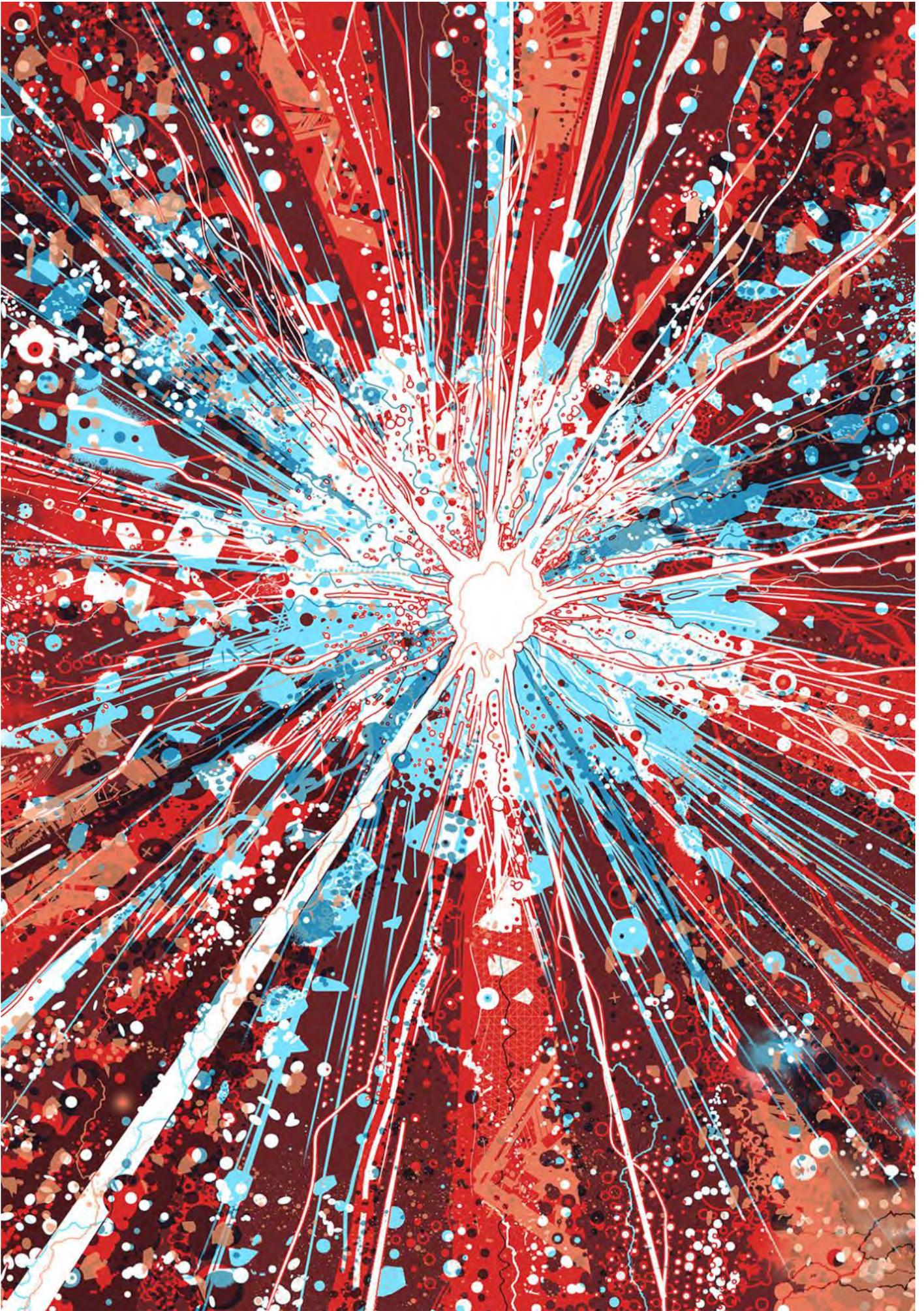
The images shown in this article are all examples of Chris's hand printed work, they are screen printed images, and therefore layering is a vital element in the process. There is a crispness to the work that reflects the nature of his careful handling of colour and light, of tone and transparency, of line and space.

Colour, and particularly light, are an important part of Chris's work, whether it is colour and light through ambience, or a more strident colour and light through direction and movement.

His silhouetted figures for example, pulse with colour, light, line, and direction. They have purpose and understanding, spirit and nature, a pulse that is dynamic and purposeful, one that highlights the dynamism **of life. Chris's silhouetted figures tend to both frame and highlight his multi-layers, often leading to the silhouette producing a world within itself, a contained space of colour, light, and direction.**

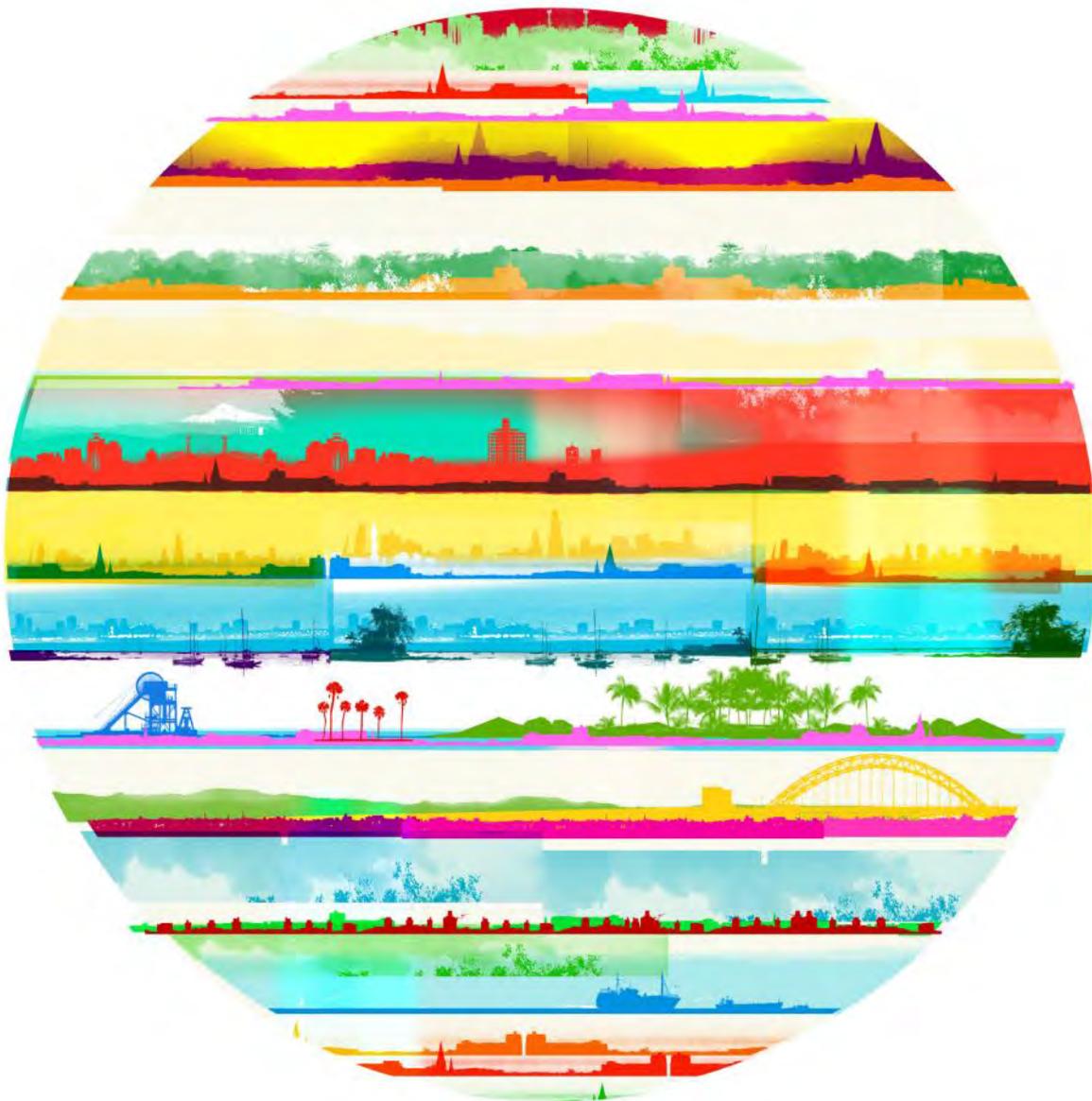
Inspiration for Chris seems to come primarily from two environmental worlds, from the natural and from the human world, from nature to urban and back again. Often the two seem to overlap in his work, with the natural world being superimposed on the human and vice versa.





These two environments obviously have importance and relevance to the artist, but nature in particular seems to have the more profound, the more foundational influence on Chris's work. There is a real sense of wonder and appreciation in the artist's nature-based compositions that is hard to miss.

Chris's work based on natural landscapes and themes from the natural environment, seems particularly instinctual. There is a definite element of experienced ambience in the compositions. Details are everything and the multi-layering takes particular effect, as the true nature of woodland is exactly that, a system of constant layering between tree and light, tree and tree, tree and individual.





Some of Chris's woodland landscapes in particular are beautiful and sensitive renditions of the ambience and understanding of these most fundamental and natural of environments. Trees not only overlap through foliage, they layer each other, with differing tones, differing elements, a woodland becomes a surface of dimension, an interconnection of life through that woodland.

There is often an element of nature that is introduced as layering within **Chris's work**, with layers of foliage and flora often being introduced within an interaction with the human figure, as in silhouetted foliage being integrated into a human face or body, or human figures playing small, but significant parts within the natural landscape.





Many of Chris's compositions have no formal perspective, many being taken as single figures out of their surrounding context. This tends to give on one level, a disembodied, perhaps even isolating relationship to the viewer, but on another level there is a celebratory factor involved. The celebration of the individual plant, animal, human, embracing light, colour, line, showing the depth, understanding, and uniqueness that can be found in every element of life, small or large, short or long-lived, energetic and dynamic, or settled and quiet. All have significance and all are part, yet still unique from the whole.

Chris's work with layers and montage leads us to question the perspective we have of separate entities. We live in a world where we are told that we are separate from all things, that we live in our bodies, always disconnected from the rest of the world by those physical shells. Yet, Chris asks us to question those defined assumptions. He shows us that the boundaries between ourselves and the world around us can easily become frayed, that multiple connections are perhaps more the **norm than we are led to believe.** Chris's work shows, through layers and montage, that life itself is multi-layered, multi-dependent, that we live in a world where we touch and are touched by everything.





Chris is one of those artists that has been able to straddle the worlds of the contemporary and the traditional. He works well in both contemporary digital illustration, and in traditional screenprinting. Both bring their own techniques and working practices with them, and both affect the creative aspect of the artist in different, but purposeful ways.

By exploring the more traditional fields of screenprinting, Chris has been able to evaluate and add to his experience as an artist. Contemporary and traditional methods are often seen by some as an anathema to each, **but that doesn't have to be so, they can often help each other to explore** and experience new avenues of creative thought.

Chris has shown, by example, that the life of a creative artist can be enhanced by both those contemporary and traditional worlds, that they can complement and more importantly interact with each other, producing work that is stronger, more accomplished, and more directional for the experience of both worlds, contemporary and traditional.

By analysing the working practice of digital illustration in order to reconnect it with screenprinting, and vice versa, is not to highlight the limitations in either process, it is to lead the artist to explore the possibilities that are unique to each field of work. That brings a strength and power to artists that are willing to embrace working practices irrespective of their relative newness, or their longevity. It is a matter of using the tools at hand in order to express your unique perspective as an artist, not necessarily the expression of the tools themselves. In this Chris is indeed a master, and for that we are grateful.

More of Chris's work can be viewed at his comprehensive website – [Chris Keegan](#) - he can also be followed on [twitter](#), [facebook](#), [tumblr](#), [instagram](#), [flickr](#), [soundcloud](#)



Polly Jacobs Giacchina

Nature imbues so much of human creativity, for as long as we have been creative we have had the natural environment as our mainstay. Even today with so many human-made distractions, many artists still see the connection with nature as their prime source of inspiration, their connection with reality.

It is the natural environment that allows us to see the world beyond our imaginings, beyond the carefully constructed illusion that we have engineered for ourselves, the world of the human. By connecting and reconnecting with the timeless and endless physical projections from nature, we help to maintain reality over artifice, connection over isolation, celebration over commiseration. We are the engine of our own perspective, how we see the world comes down to our connections with that world.

The artist Polly Jacobs Giacchina has those very connections with the natural world at both the heart of her artistic world, as well as of her personal world. It is always hard, and probably fruitless for an artist to



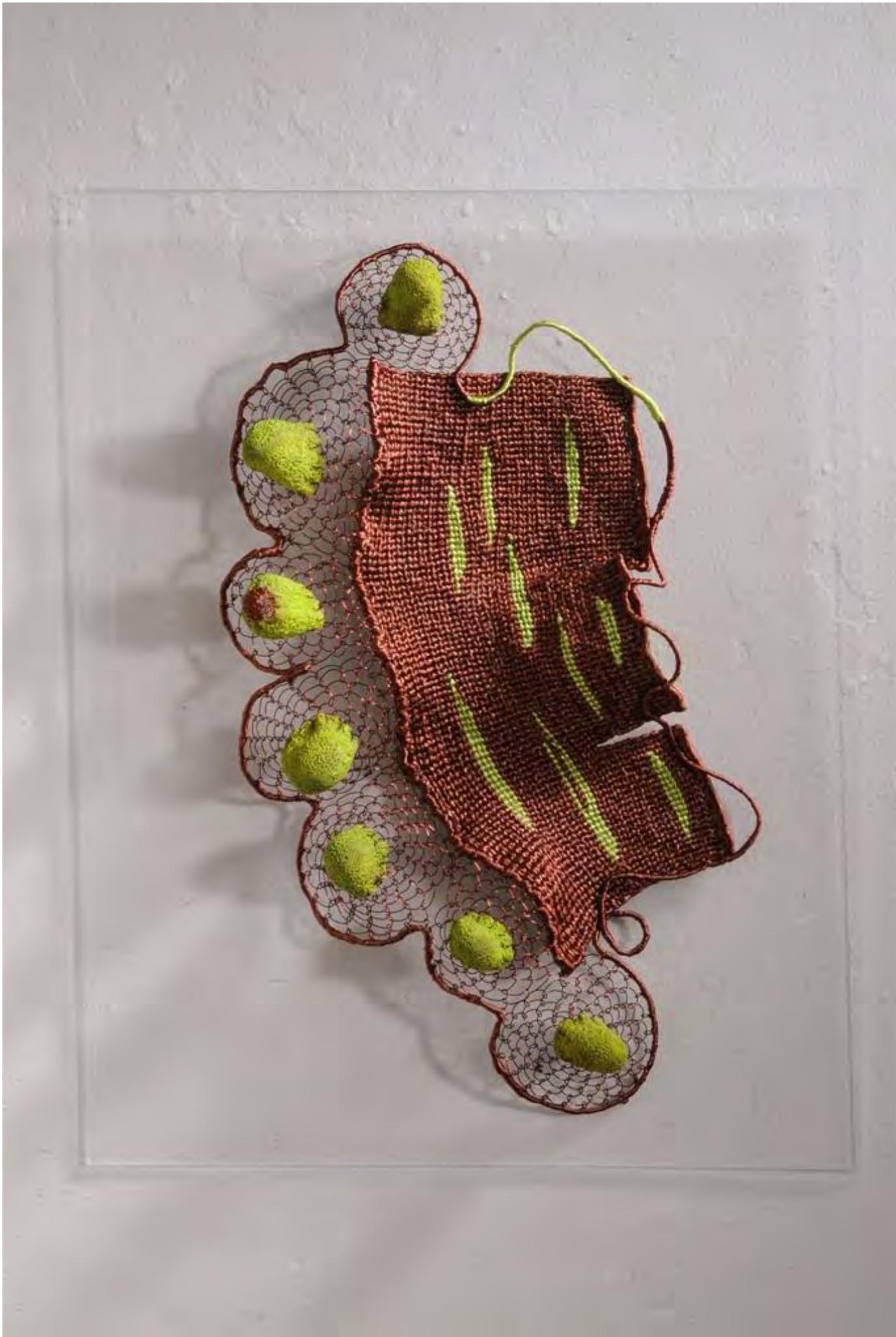


attempt to separate creative and personal life, the two are so forever intertwined that one influences the other, as one needs the other. This is true for Polly as both an artist and as an individual.

This is an artist that finds a constantly rewarding and self-renewing source of inspiration within her natural environment. She continually finds herself absorbing, interacting, and corresponding with the kaleidoscope of sensory examples that nature gives her on a daily basis, from the large to the small, and back again.

She is constantly intrigued by the natural world around her, from the silhouettes and contours of rocks and trees, to the subtle outline and colour produced by a single flower. From the repetitive and cyclical rhythm of waves breaking on the shore, to the myriad patterns imprinted on sand. All are of value to her as an artist, as they are to her work, with many finding their way into her compositions.





Polly has a passion for her work, from the initial source inspiration, through the physical construction, to the outward projection of the composition. She is immersed in the possibilities and the probabilities of where each piece of ongoing work can take her, and what part that piece may play in the longer creative pathway that she guides herself along, and is indeed guided along.

Polly is very much an artist that has a great admiration for the materials that she works with, they are very much at the seat of her artistic creativity. She admires the strength and vulnerability of some materials, as she admires the tenacity and forgiving nature of others. She is in a continual journey of exploration with her materials, discovering ever new intrigues and revelations along the way.

Her material of choice started with natural fibres such as the date palm, which she found gave her a strong textural quality in which to work. She enjoyed its colour, an earthy quality, a colour that rooted itself to the soil and to the environment. This particular material had a way of constantly





and consistently connecting and reconnecting with the natural environment which is of course her personal choice as to foundational source of inspiration.

However, from her initial woven work, Polly has now expanded into working and interacting with a whole range of materials including metal, stone, glass, wood. All of which are infinitely important elements that interact with both the artist and the composition. However, there is also as an interaction that occurs with the material elements that are part of the composition, a relationship that forms between the materials that Polly incorporates into her work.

Material gives Polly the connection with nature that she needs in her work, but being able to manipulate that material, adding her own elements when she needs to, supplementing, connecting, personalising, increases the relationship she has with her materials. It allows her to add that unique perspective, the dimension that is so much part of the singular artist. By adding to the foundations of her work, Polly is giving another voice, another layer of meaning to her work.





It is this ongoing development between the discovery of aspects of the natural from which the artist can gain inspiration, working with the materials from that natural environment, and then expressing in finished form through her work, that this particular artist moves forward along her creative path.

Polly likes to bring in the natural work of nature, highlighting some of the factors that drew her to the material, whether it be shapes, lines, colours, tones, textures of a particular stone, or the self-same factors found within other incarnations in the natural environment. All share these factors, but of course all are infinitely unique. All are singular textures of life, all are expressions of the natural environment around the artist, so it seems only expected that the artist include them in an integral and intimate way within her compositions.

It is this **self-renewing relationship between nature and Polly's creativity** that engenders the cycle of inspiration, interpretation, and eventual revelation. She is in an intimate and integral partnership between herself,





her materials, and her surroundings, which see fruition through her creative works. It is a continually ongoing process that Polly both enjoys and finds constant challenges within.

Although the physical is of fundamental importance to her work, Polly is also intrigued and influenced by the conceptual as well as the material, and so words for example can have a big impact on the initial stages of her work, on the inspirational roots of composition. For the artist, words can drive her creativity, with single words sending thoughts along the paths of creativity, joining with her thoughts and ideals concerning nature and the natural process that are so much a part of her artistic life, bringing a constant stream of new meanings, new interpretations, new revelations along her creative path.

There is a connection to her creative work and the material that encompasses that creativity that is to all intents and purposes emotional. This is not the work of an artist that sees experiment and construction as a purely intellectual problem to be solved. This is an artist that feels





connection with her work, and feels that connection as an emotional bond, a significance that goes well beyond material and structure, towards a sense of empathy, of belonging.

Polly is always collecting and absorbing materials and textures both old and new. The environment is her playground allowing her to test, experiment, indulge, but it is also her teacher showing her through endless examples, the multi-layered textures of life, whether through the physical, or through the implied, all are real and all are absorbed by the artist as source.

Polly sees her creative path as being endless, certainly not contained or blinkered by expectations or limitations. Hers is a pathway of endless expression, using the natural world around her in which to gather inspiration and materials, in which to reflect back, through her work, the wonder and intrigue that she sees as a constant around her.





It is this feeling of connection with her environment, her capacity to intuit the surfaces, textures, lines, shapes, colours of the natural environment that has given her work a significance in the creative world. That she has wanted to share those elements with her audience, with the viewers of her works, is a great boon.

Like many artists Polly wants to share her discoveries, to share her understanding that all in the natural world is, and has significance. Whether it be the rich earth colours of natural fibres, the glint of light reflecting from a small stone, the slight tremor seen fleetingly on the surface of water, all can be seen as a constant renewal, a new exploration with every visit.

Through manipulation of raw material, through constructive technique, Polly can give herself a continuity of interest. By building on the connections she finds within nature, new textures and surfaces can appear in her work, these in turn give inspiration to her as an artist, which inevitably leads her towards challenging and exciting creative directions and expressions.





To the viewer, Polly's work can also highlight the familiar as new. Surfaces, colours, textures, and identities, interpretations and revelations of the old, can be seen within a different context. It is a means of understanding that human creativity can add to the whole, that elements of the natural can be readily reinterpreted by the artist. By emphasising the integration of human and nature in her work, Polly is emphasising the integration of human and nature in life.

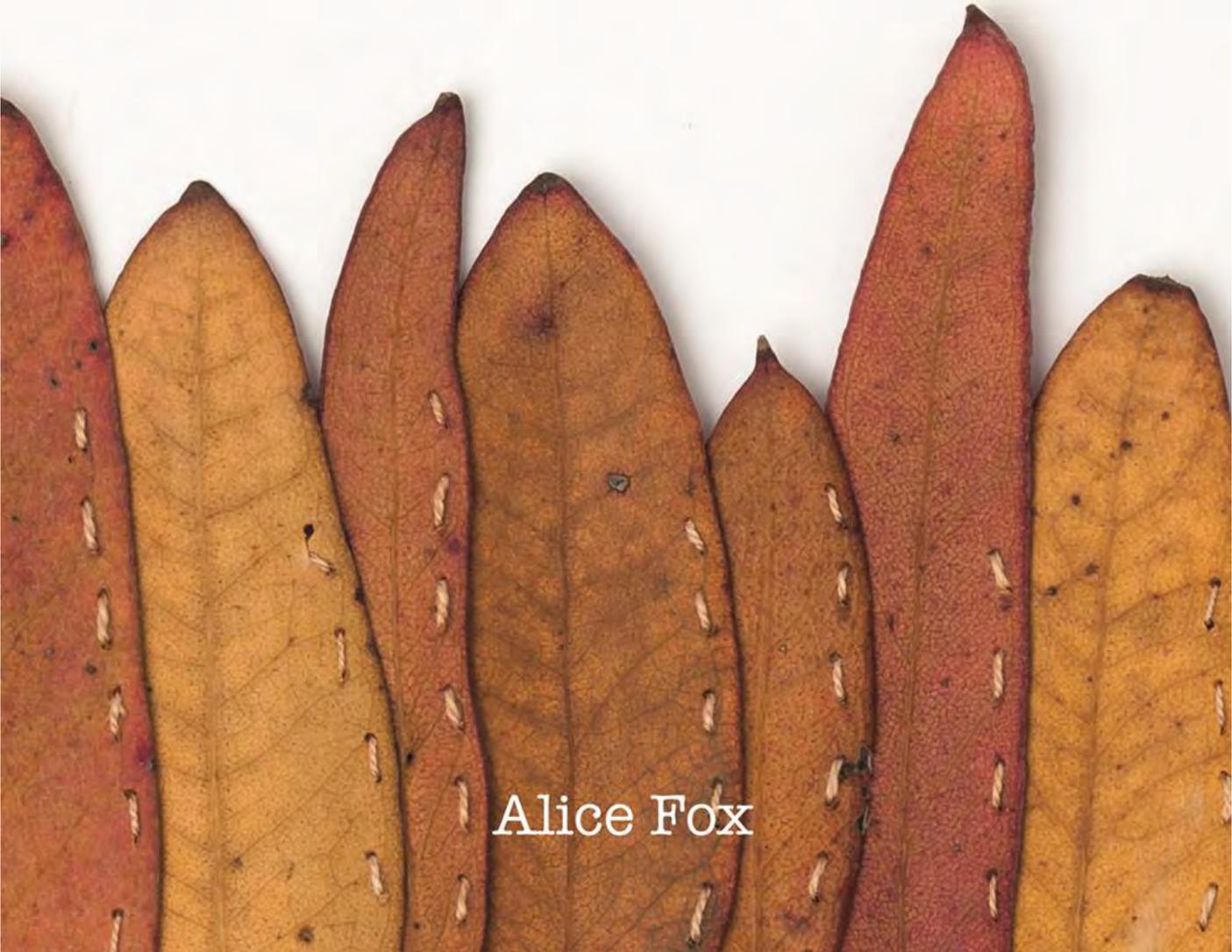
More of Polly's work can be viewed at her comprehensive website - [Polly Jacobs Giacchina](#) - she can also be followed on - [facebook](#)



BATSFORD

Natural Processes in Textile Art

From Rust Dyeing to Found Objects



Alice Fox

The embroiderer and textile artist Alice Fox has produced an excellent new book entitled *Natural Processes in Textile Art*. To give some idea of the field of exploration that Alice's new book covers, its sub-heading is *From Rust Dyeing to Found Objects*.

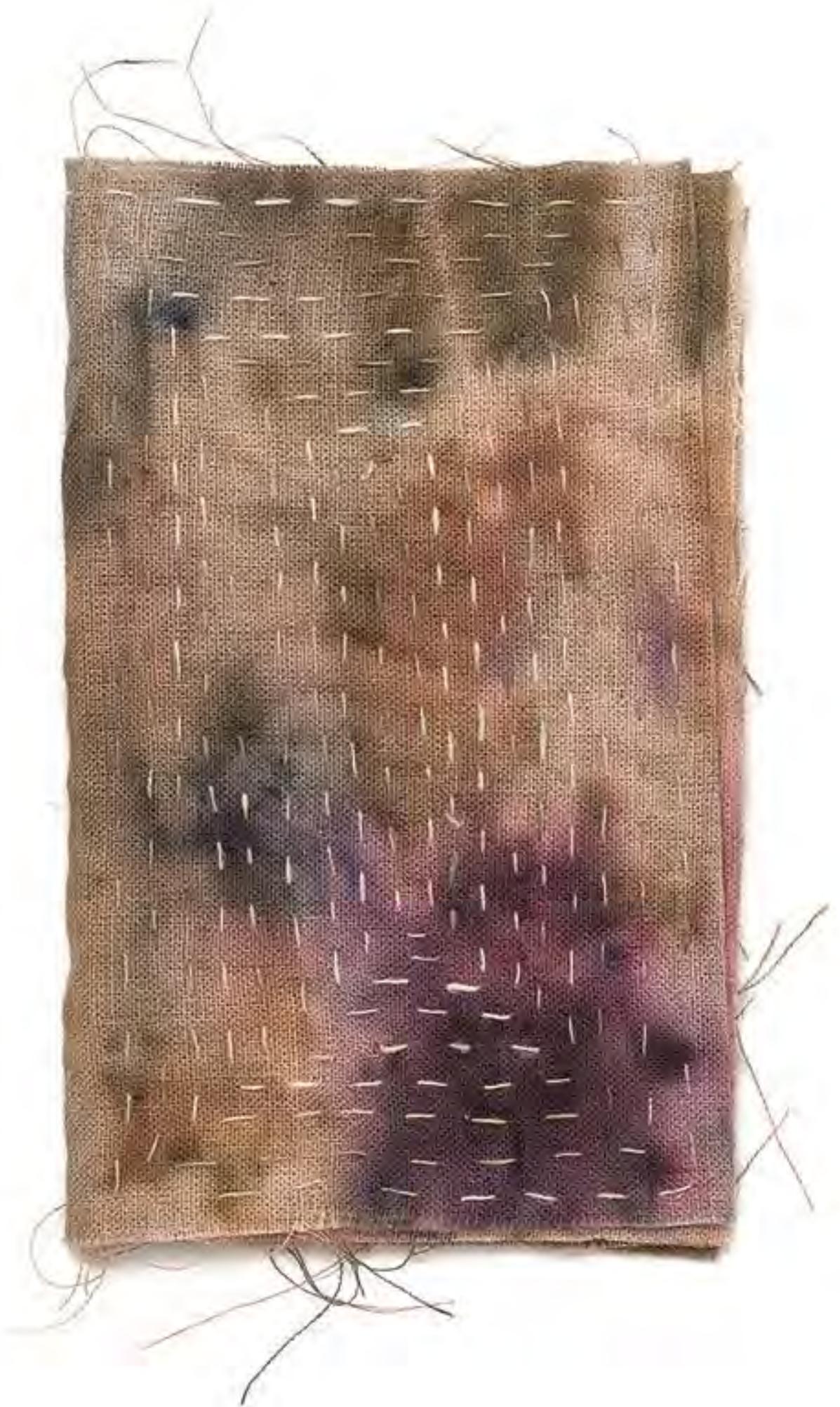
Working within natural processes, and projecting those processes through the discipline of textile art, Alice shows how to work creatively with your immediate environment, whether by using raw materials that have been gathered from seashore or garden, woodland, or city street.

Alice encourages by example, her book shows through simple explanations, how to work in time with natural processes, bringing together the rhythms, complexity, as well as the simplicity of nature into textile art.

The book covers such processes as eco dyeing with garden fruits, seaweed and other easily gathered raw materials. Alice shows how using embroidery as a natural process can become an integral part of the work rather than an imposed embellishment, she shows that weaving with beachcombed fibres can add integrity and provenance to a composition, and how printing with found objects can add a depth and direction to the working process.

Alice encourages the fostering of a real connection with nature in order to help the creative process. The integration of nature as a driving force in the process of making has become an increasingly important part of the contemporary creative world, and no more so than in textile art.

With the textile industry and its subsidiary industries still being one of the planet's largest polluters and degraders of the natural environment, it has become a particularly pressing concern for designers, as well as artists who involve themselves with textiles, to start looking for alternatives to the norm.



Of particular concern is the use of chemical dyes, their strength, reliability, and endurance once seen as a positive step forward in the world of textiles, is now being seen as a liability at best, a contribution to ecological degradation at worst.

The rise in local dyeing, in personal dyeing development, particularly amongst textile artists, has produced a whole movement of experimentation in materials, from leaves and flowers, to fruit and vegetables, from metals, to teas and coffees.

Experimentation seems to be the order of the day and Alice encourages, through examples, the fostering of a theme of exploration, of taking a personal journey through the realm of raw materials.

All traditional textile processes, whether dyeing, sewing, weaving, and others, can be supplemented or even replaced by materials both ordinary, and indeed extraordinary, that can be found in the natural environment, from fibre for weaving and sewing that can be harvested from the natural world, from grasses, leaves, and plants, to fishing line washed up on a shoreline, all can be used as material, for use in the process and composition of work. All that is ever really needed is imagination, and of course that is an endless and always renewable resource for the artist.

To scavenge and forage is part of the human condition, it was a large part of our lives for much of our human history. Hunters and gatherers combed the environment for the useful as well as the intriguing, and the ornamental, and although we may seem to be far removed from our early ancestors, we are not as far removed as we sometimes believe ourselves to be.

There is much to be foraged and collected both in the natural and urban environments that can be used as a stimulus for artwork, as well as being integral to the working process. So for example, Alice encourages the collection of leaves, nuts, seeds, lichens, and feathers from

woodland, shells, seaweed, plastic twine, and pebbles from the seashore, as well as bottle tops, screws, rubber bands, squashed cans, train tickets and more from the urban environment.

Alice is keen for us to not dismiss what could be used as potential, merely because we have never before considered it. To use your imagination, to think about how you could perhaps incorporate the environment around you within your work, is to express that environment, to see its potential, and to celebrate its life.

Of course, Alice does make it clear that gathering within the natural environment in particular, has to be done with caution and with understanding. To be in harmony with the environment, to use the gifts of nature, does not mean denuding that same environment. Some plants now have legal protection against random harvesting, and when you are free to collect and harvest, Alice encourages you to show moderation, with nuts and berries for example, you are often sharing a crop with the wildlife who depend on what you are harvesting to sustain them, either immediately, or through the long winter.

It is all a matter of empathy and understanding. If you are going to use the environment around you then it is a good idea to try and make sense of that environment, to see it as a complicated interaction between



countless species, of which you are one. By all means gather raw materials for your work, but remember that you are only one of the creatures in the complexity, so show compassion to your fellow spirits, be generous, and the environment will be generous back.

Natural Processes in Textile Art includes examples of the work of a number of leading artists who are well known within the field of eco textile processes, whether that be through dyeing, construction, printing, stitching.

Although this book is aimed at textile artists, and those wanting to pursue or expand their repertoire within the textile field, it is also an invaluable resource for anyone wanting to include and incorporate an element of textiles within their own work, so would be ideal for those working in some of the connected disciplines such as mixed media, basketry, jewellery, ceramics, and as far afield as 3D sculpture and fine art painting.

A great book to own, and a great resource in which to look for other means of approaching the world of making.

Russell Tomlin



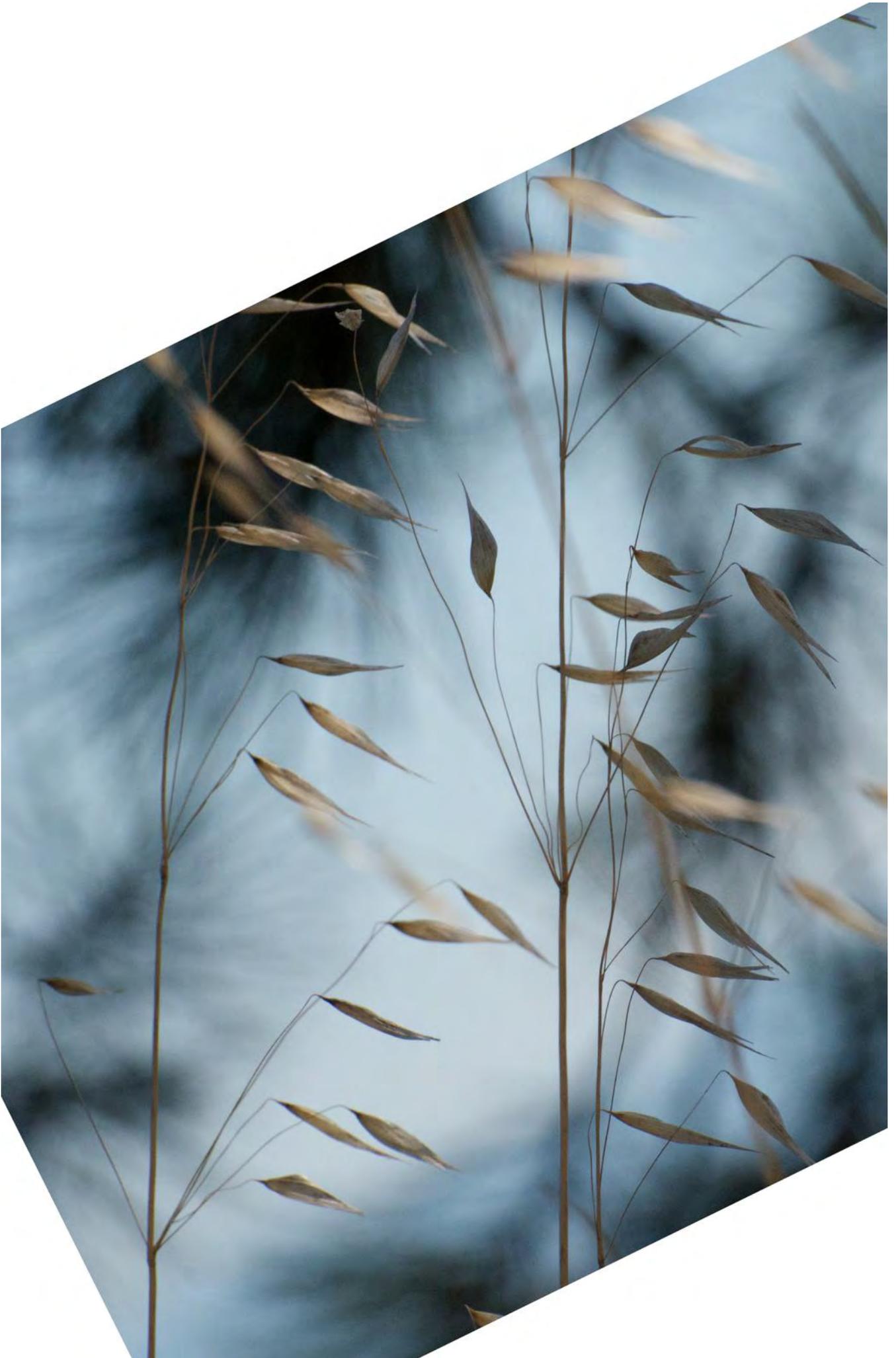
The role that nature plays in our lives is one of such overpowering fundament, it is our foundation for being, and one that is so integral to who we are that it is perhaps not so strange that so many of us barely notice or acknowledge it in our daily lives.

However, that is rarely true as far as creative artists are concerned. Many are aware of the infinite balances within the natural environment that help make up the moments that are their lives. Singular events that mark the coming together of layers of meaning, emotion, understanding.

It is for the artist to naturally take note of these events, these moments of happening, and for them to observe, record, and then project them outwards, in one form or another, towards those individuals who are open to seeing, listening, feeling the artistic results of that personal and unique perspective that is the lifeblood of the artist, their work.

An artist who has an acute affinity to the ebb and flow of nature, to its rhythms and cycles, to its silences and its slow layering towards movement, is the fine art photographer Russell Tomlin.



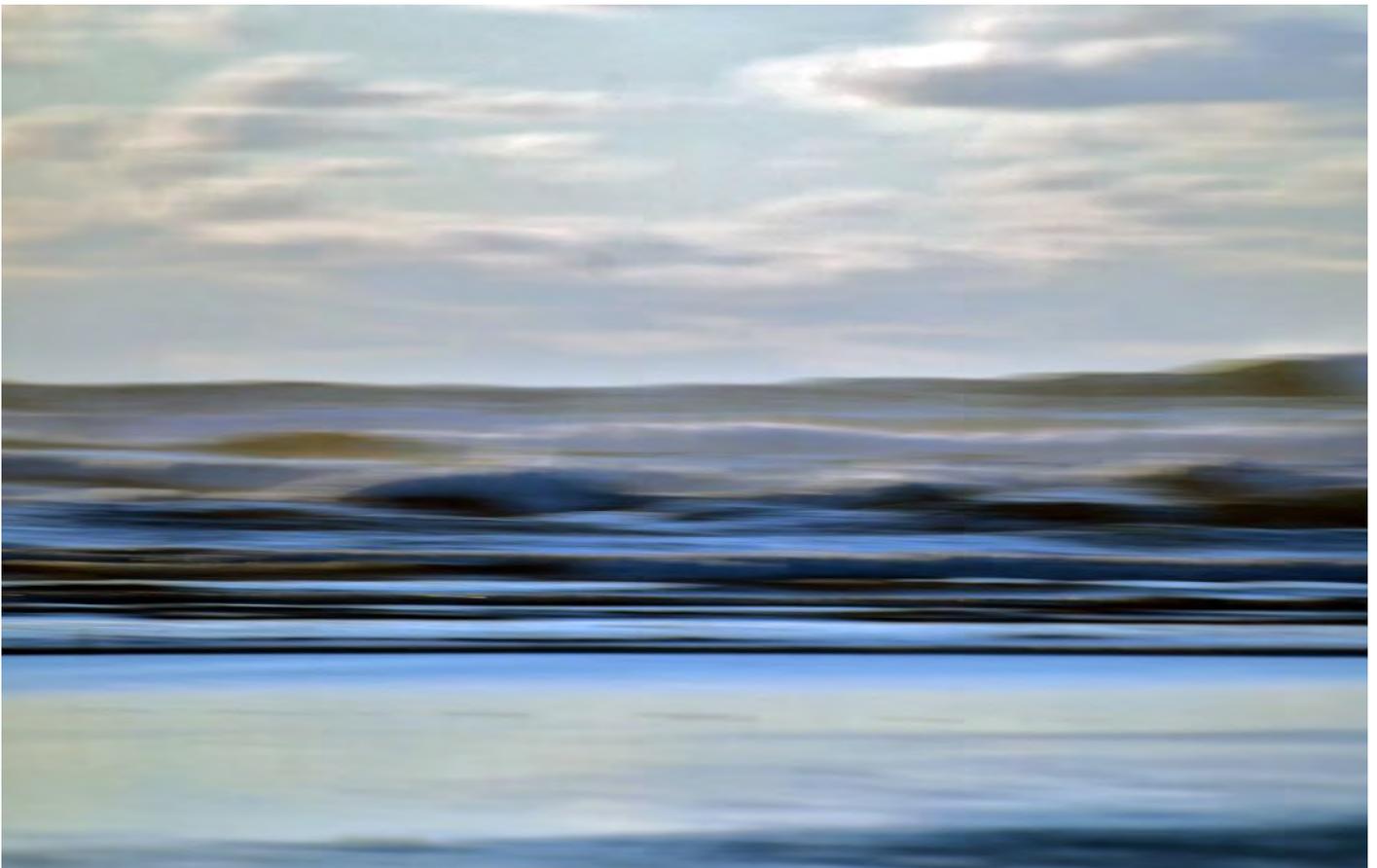


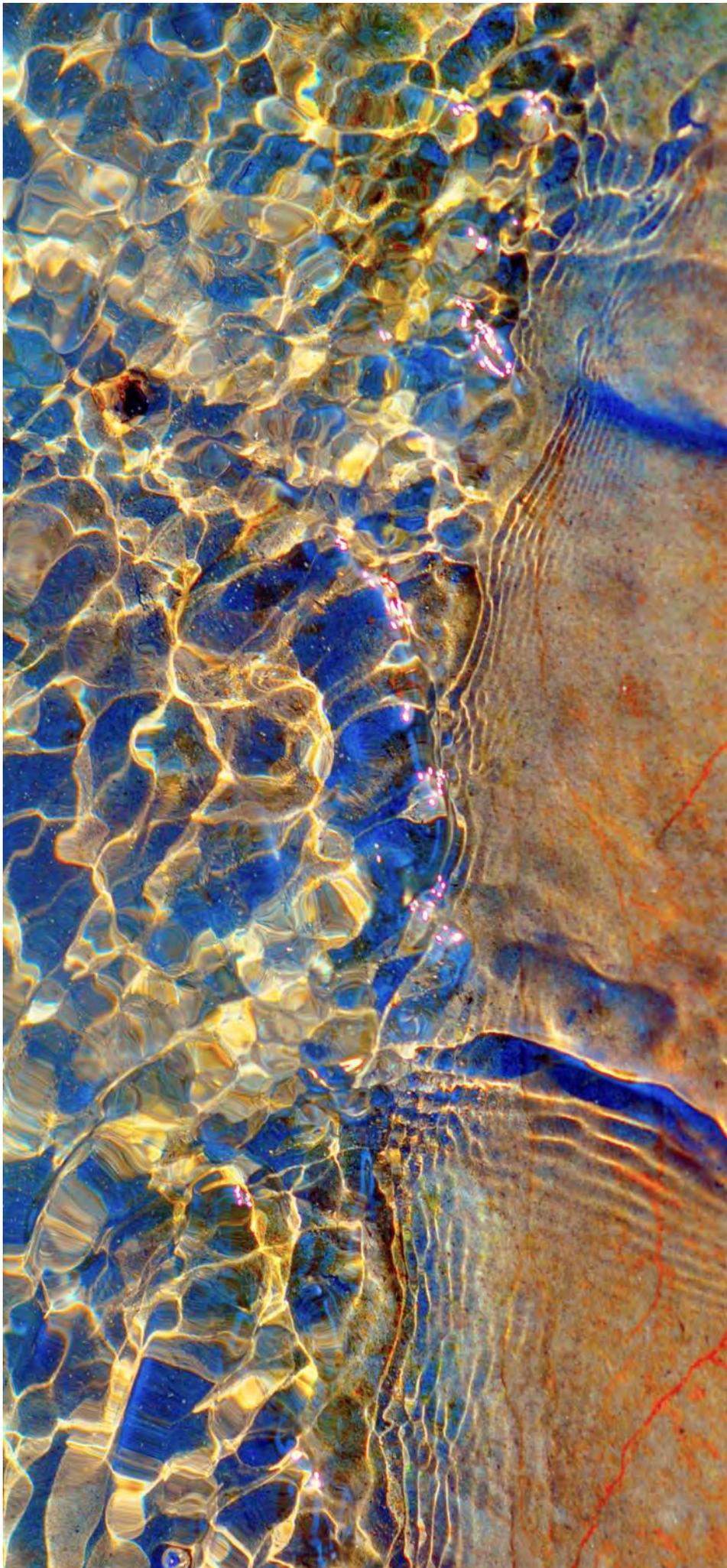
Russell is an artist that has made his creative life one in which he wraps himself around the truth of the natural world, and has allowed the same natural world to wrap itself around him. He lives in a world of understanding with nature, one where the tones and ambience of the natural environment have become his artistic signature.

Russell is an individual who has acute observation skills, but those skills are not used merely to frame a good photograph, to compose a pleasing narrative, nothing as simple as that. This is an artist that feels, that understands, that is in complete connection with his environment.

Observation is part of an active pursuit, rather than that of a passive one. Going for a walk with a camera, is going for a walk with your senses, it is taking a walk in an ambience, one of both your own and the environments making.

Observation is forming a relationship with the observed. Nature, in the **case of Russell's work, is unfolding itself, allowing the artist to help project, not a pre-arranged image, but one that the artist formulates**

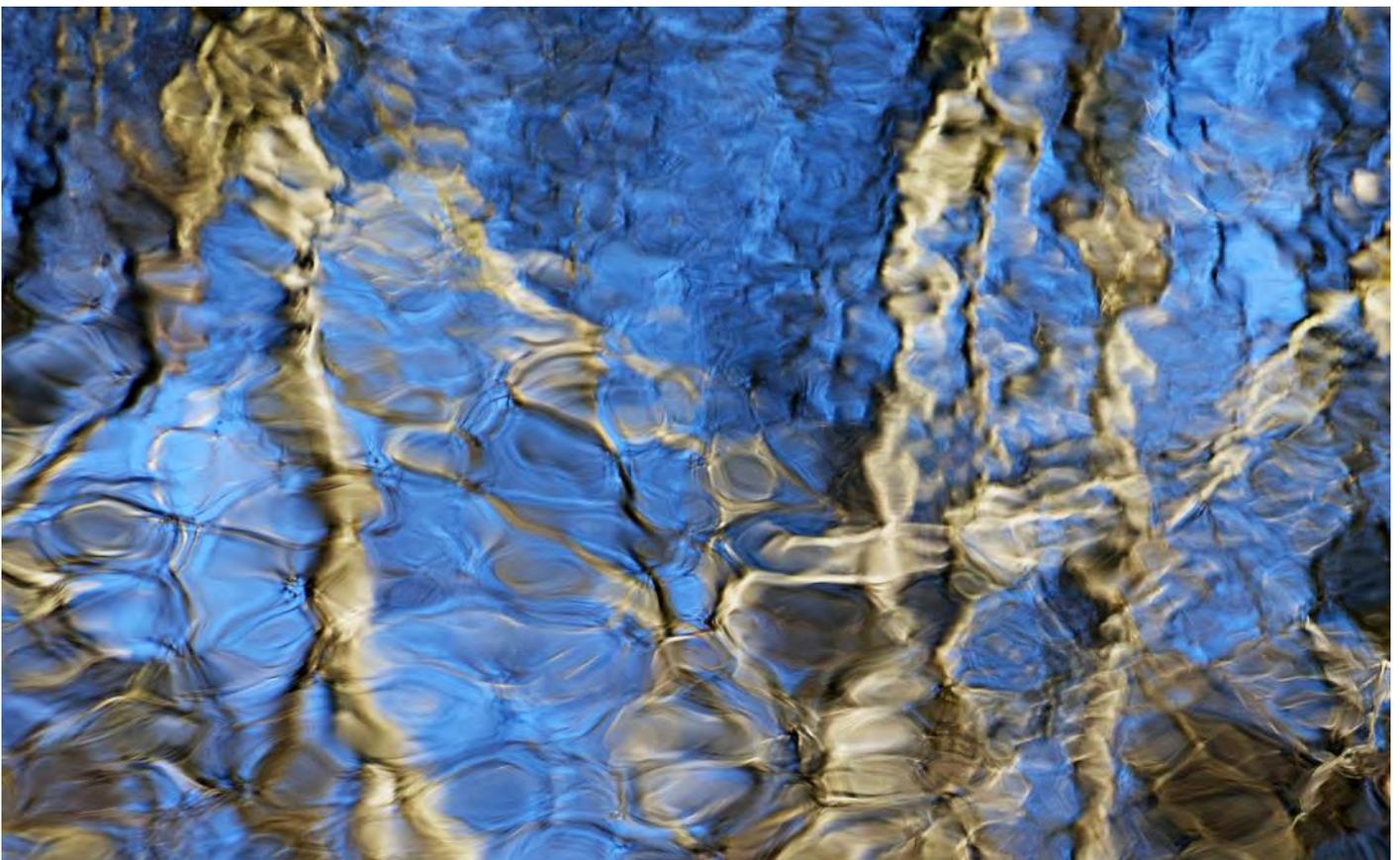


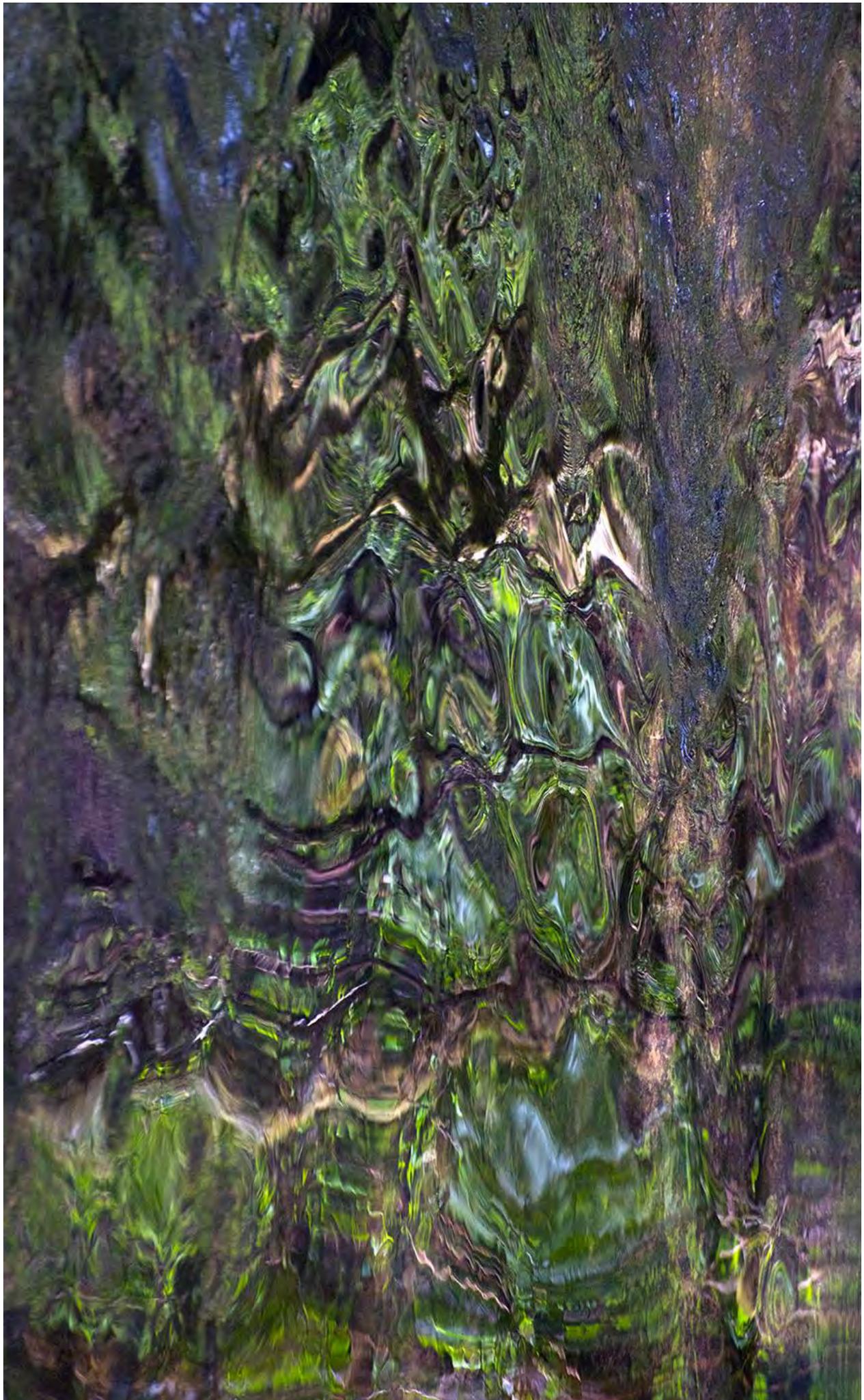


himself from his own unique position, his own unique perspective, a combination of material and emotional, physical and spiritual, that can only ever come together in as unique an entity as one individual.

To walk in nature is to immerse yourself in nature. It is not a matter of dominating or surrendering to the experience, it is more a matter of opening yourself to the experience, of being happy to be a receptacle of choice for the connection with the natural world. To be a vehicle of revelation if you will, the revelation of nature, but also of yourself as an element of that same nature, one and the same.

One of the major themes that runs throughout Russell's creativity, is water. This is an artist that has made the definition of water through photography, his work. Whether still, or flowing, whether an ocean, river, or stream, whether in the form of wave, rain, snow, or mist, Russell is intrigued and acutely observational as to its properties, its flow, its ambience with itself and with its surroundings.

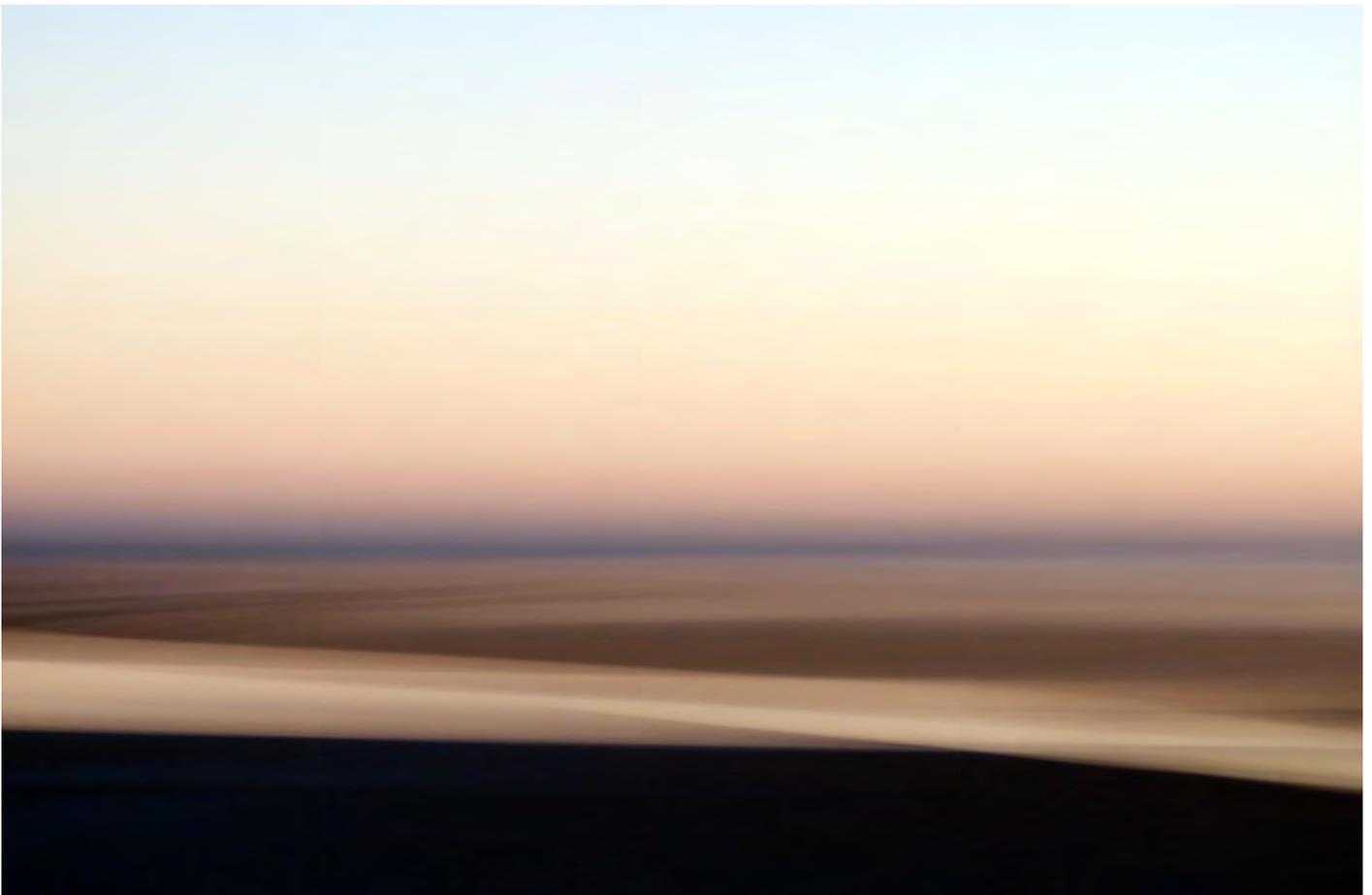




Water, by its very nature cascades, crashes, flows, but water can also be still, silent, tranquil. It can be deep, or shallow, melancholy, or playful, it can follow, or lead, it can be benign, or deadly. Mood seems often to follow and define water, as much as it defines ourselves, we are often at one with the lifeblood of the planet.

To Russell, water is a canvas of light, an infinitely variable reflection of its surroundings. It often reflects the large expanse of sky above it, producing a paler, but no less fascinating reflection of that big sky. This concept of water being the great reflector, has so caught the imagination of Russell that he has aptly named his studio the Second Sky Studio, and **frankly it couldn't be better named.**

Following water, following its undulating course, following its shorelines, observing its roar or gentle lapping as it hits the land, its gurgling and splashing over rocks as it passes on its endless journey, watching raindrops fizzle lightly in a breeze, or falling heavily on outstretched leaves, all are sensory experiences, and all are ongoing narratives within **Russell's work.**

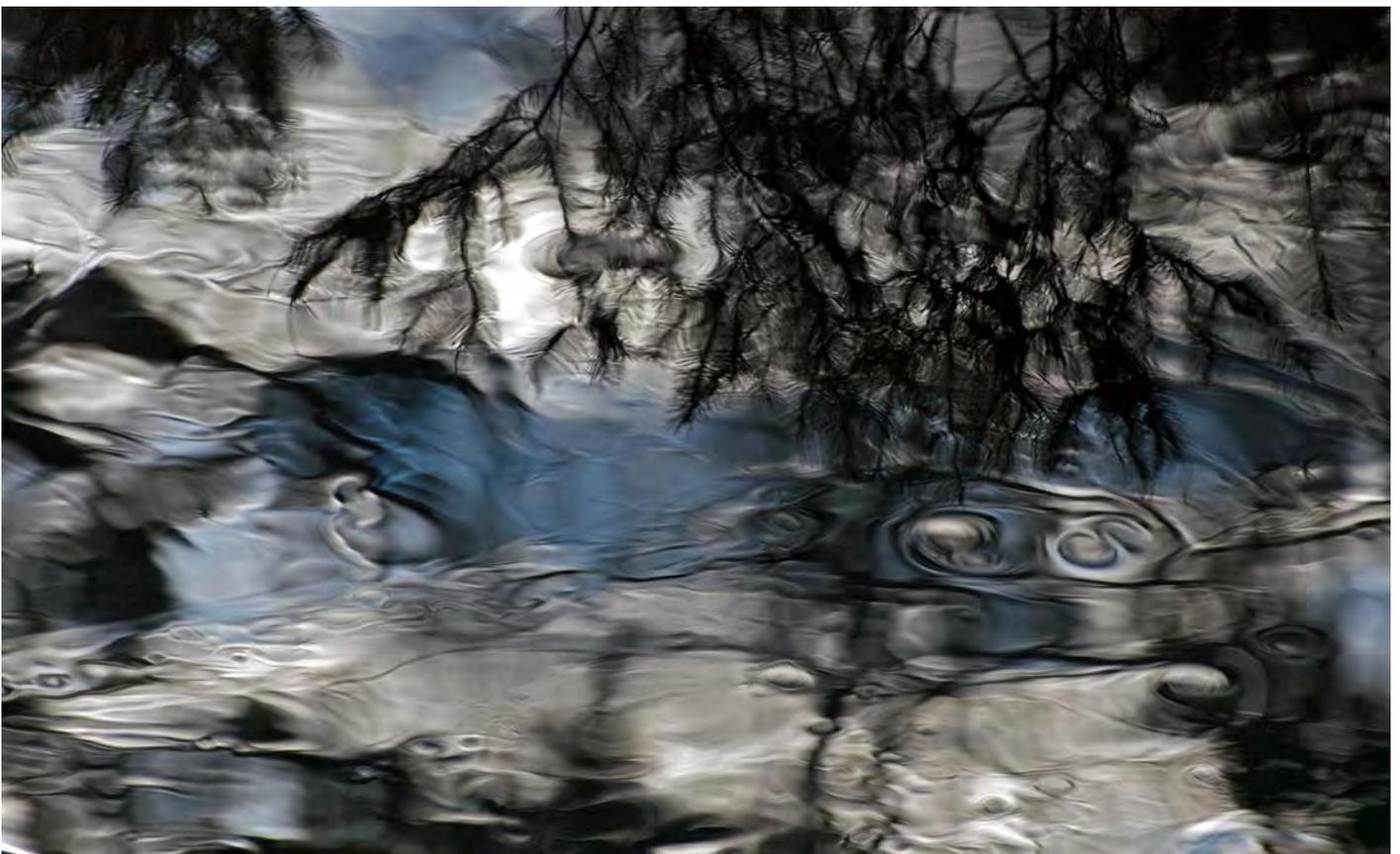




By concentrating on the passage of water in its infinity of means and ways, Russell is able to seek the same infinite variety of ways of observing, interpreting, and projecting those ways in which water interacts, reacts, and connects with its own environment, as well as within the larger landscape.

This has led Russell on into the realms of abstraction and minimalism, portraying the different moods of water in a range of interpretations, from the enclosed and encompassing realm of the abstracted close-up, to the more formal, but no less enticing minimal landscape, where ambience seems to permeate his compositions.

Interestingly for a photographer, the abstract appears to be just as important to his work, if not more so, than any sense of clarity and **composed structure**. Even Russell's more formal landscapes seem abstracted in one form or another. There are glimpses of reeds encased in water, their stalks appearing out of the surface of the stillness. There are willows that hang over the surface of water, never quite touching, but at the same time becoming intimately enmeshed in their own reflection, giving the impression of an unseen connectivity.





There are also larger landscapes that Russell produces, where the definitions have been deliberately reduced to colour, tone, texture, as if in some way the artist is showing us the real essence of the environment, rather than the construction of lines that we so often depend on when we interpret the visual reality that so many of us believe to be real.

The abstracted minimal imagery that Russell conveys in his work is a means by which the artist can help to display to the viewer, the detail of the natural world as he understands it. A deeply fundamental interpretation of the underlying connectivity of life, one in which the artist is intimately aware of when observing the environment around him.

The fact that Russell uses water as a conduit for his interpretation, his perspective of life around him, is all the more fascinating. Using interpretation, seeing various images through the different reflections and connections made with the surface of water, it may appear as if the artist is creating a muted, subdued interpretation.



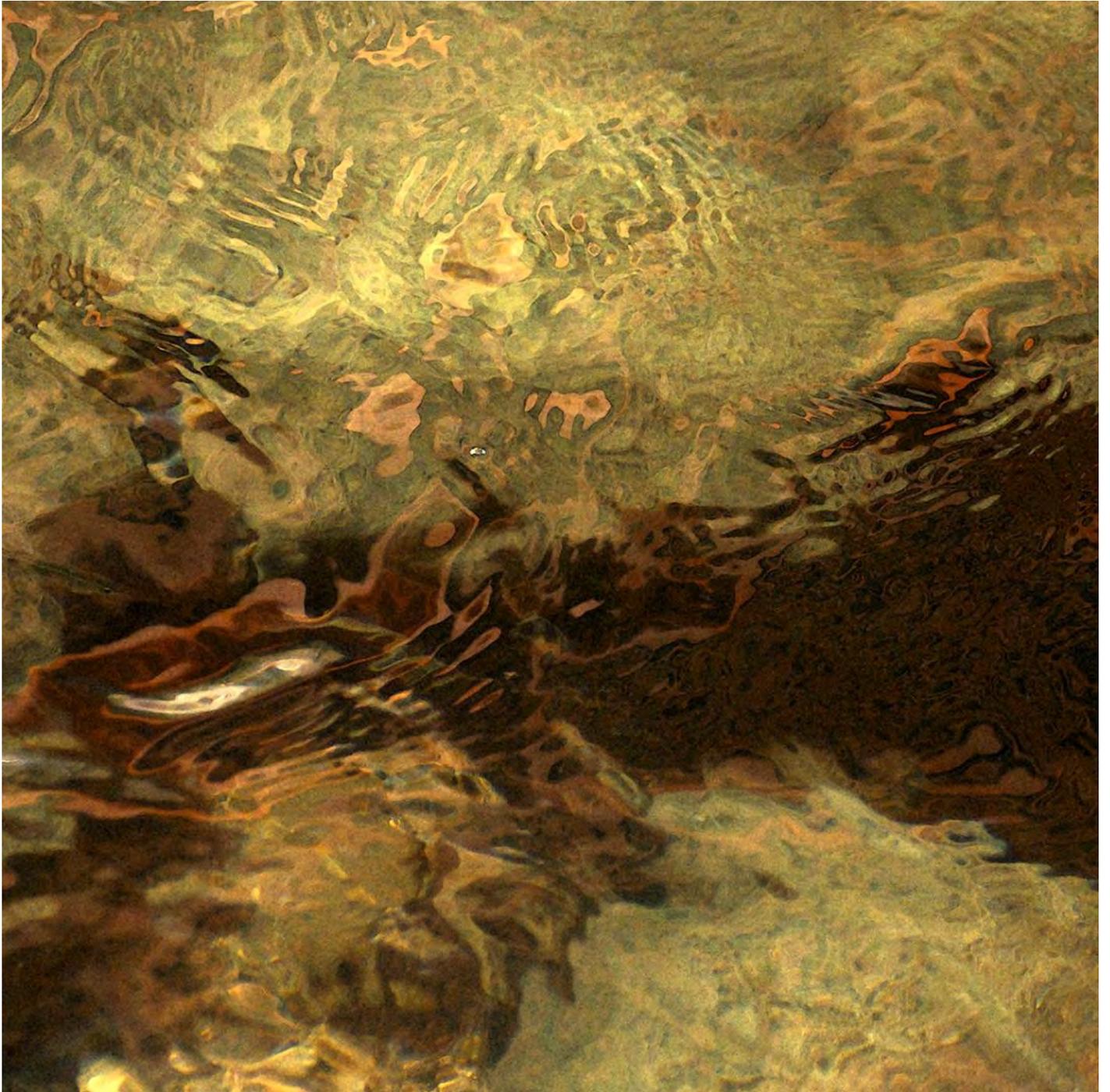


However, in other ways it could be said that the artist is perhaps allowing us to see a more realistic interpretation of life, life without the hard edges, a fading of the linear, the process of delineation where we try to interpret everything in the world by its separateness. It is a factor that has led us to separate ourselves from the natural connectivity with our environment.

In Russell's blended abstracts, all life becomes a transmogrified whole, a reflection of life through the surface of water true, but in many ways an altogether more harmonious one, a breaking down of barriers in order to reveal the endless connectivity of life, which is after all, the true reality.

Russell has produced a selection of work that helps to define the natural environment. Through his photography we see compositions of the larger landscape, its majestic beauty, the flow of colour and tone, the drift of water over and through compositions of space. However, these larger landscapes are also settings for the finer details of stillness that Russell also records.





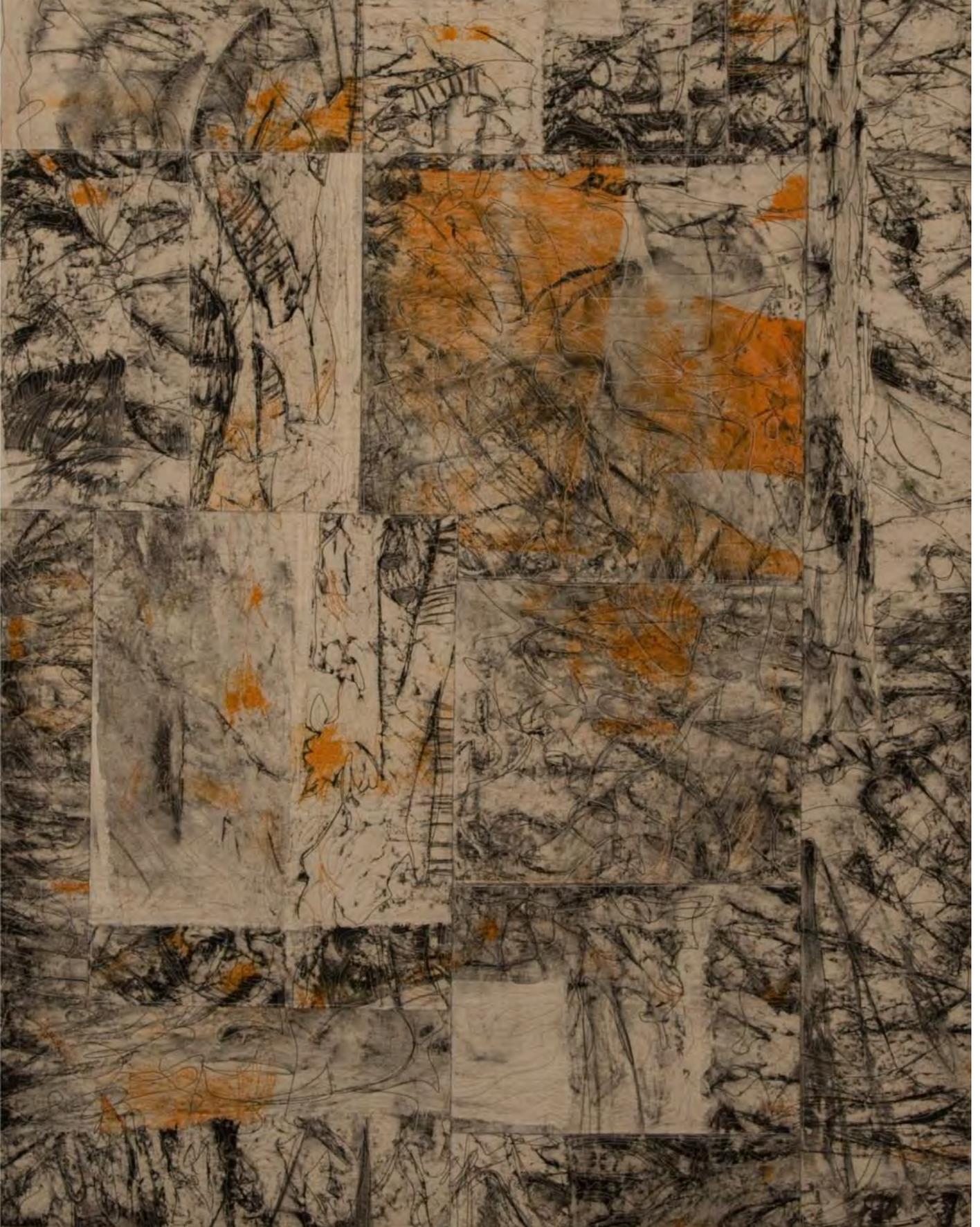
There is a definite zen-like quality to Russell's compositions, whether he is looking at the large, or the small scale. There is an inner calmness, moments of stillness that may well be surrounded by a seeming swirl of chaos outside of the picture, but within the artists compositions there is the experience of calm, centredness. This zen-like quality is such a large part of Russell's work that it is unmistakable, and unmissable.

There is something quite special about a photographer who has the sensitivity to capture moments of the natural world, but Russell goes well beyond that definition. This is an artist that is in the process of recording the core life of nature, the elemental beat of the heart of the natural environment, that we are able to share in his vision and his perspective, is something we are forever grateful for.

More of Russell's work can be viewed at his comprehensive website – [Russell Tomlin](#) - he can also be followed on – [facebook](#), [google+](#), [tumblr](#)



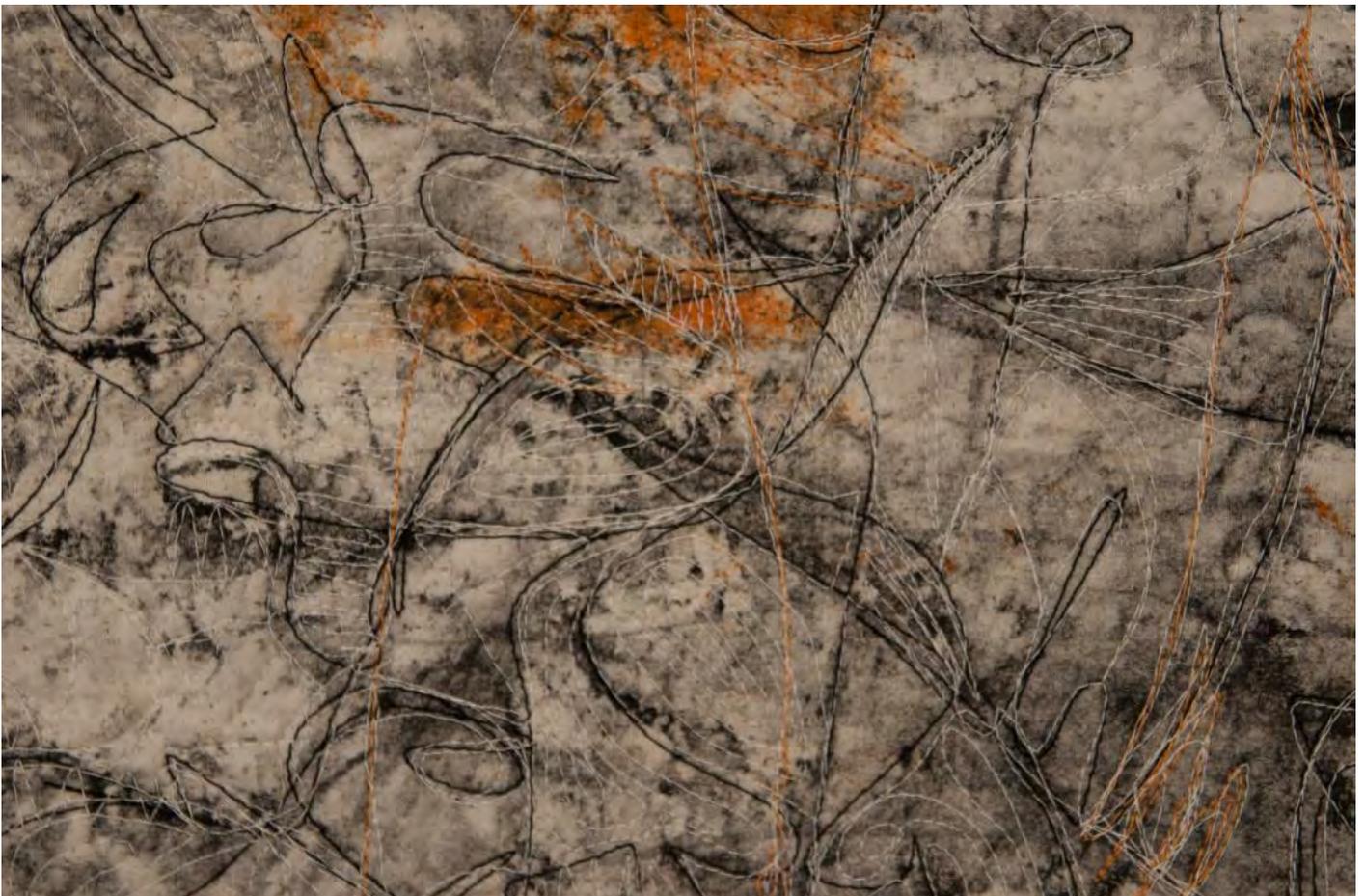
Terry Jarrard-Diamond

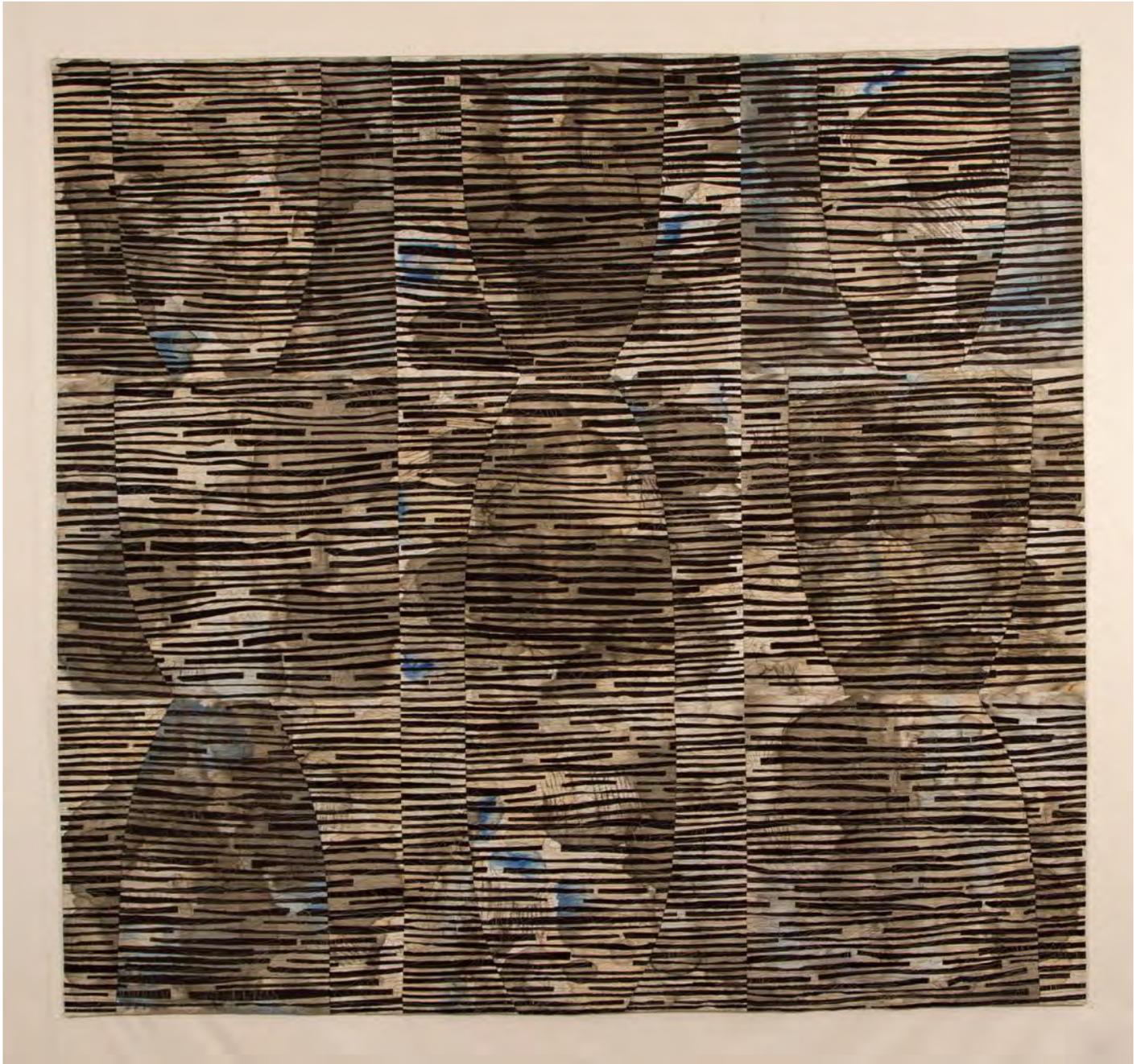


Creative self-expression is part of what it is to be human, it is an integral component of our character as a species, and of our character as an individual. We are in many ways the sum of our self-expression, which is why the creative arts as the core of that self-expression, is so important to our wellbeing as a species and as an individual.

A core element of creative self-expression is mark making. The definition of mark making is a series or sequence of lines, patterns, textures used to build up a piece of artwork on a surface. But of course mark making is so much more than just a dry description of a practical technique.

Mark making is one of the most fundamental forms of human creative expression. We have been producing marks ever since we have recognised ourselves as being human, and we will no doubt carry on mark making until we cease to exist as that human species, it seems as if nothing can stop us from our love affair with the mark of self.





Artists of course, are the great channellers of self-expression, and the fundament of an artist is the mark. Lines, dots, patterns, textures, all are used to produce artwork, and all are used in order to project the unique and individual perspective on the world that is so integral to us all, but it is the role of the artist in us to perceive and to communicate that unique perspective.

The artist Terry Jarrard-Diamond has taken the role of mark maker as her creative driving force in her present creative path. Terry is well known for her use of large minimal abstract shapes in which she explored spatial awareness through form, line, colour.

She is now producing work that appears to be rooted in much earthier elements, having a much more immediate and direct impact. Her use of mark making has allowed her to break up her previous minimal abstract shapes, and whilst that element is still there, as is her interest in the same spatial awareness of form, line, and colour, by bringing mark making to the forefront of her work she has begun to create whole compositions of undulating fields of marks.





Surfaces now abound with a complexity of intention by the artist that is **quite staggering**. There is so much to see in Terry's work, the visual field is literally covered in a narrative of movement, in an exciting symphony of personal perspective that gives purpose to each and every mark making moment.

To some, the artist's present course of creative self-expression may appear to be a departure, or a new phase in the creative career of Terry, but is it? For those who are used to seeing the large blocked shapes of **Terry's work up until now**, the stark contrast between those earlier blocks of colour, and the complexity of textural mark making that she is producing now, may appear obvious, but underneath that seeming obviousity, still lies the exploration of space, and the space between space.

Terry's work has added more complexity compared to her earlier work, but in many ways it has become more immediate, more intimate and



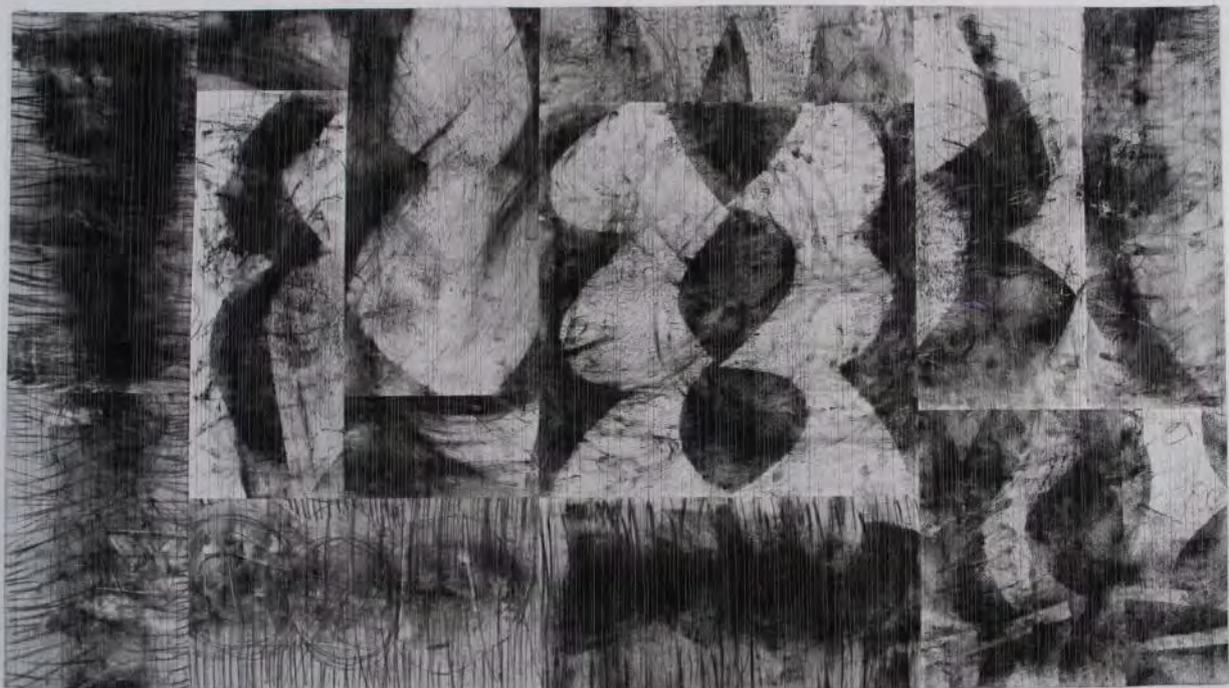


certainly more connected, both to the artist, her work, and perhaps more importantly, to her audience.

The exploration of surface that seems to be such an integral theme in **Terry's present work**, is also the exploration of connections along that surface. The artist is discovering so many aspects of the surface quality of mark making, and so many of those discoveries are so immediately and visually present in her work, that we sometimes forget that as an artist she is also exploring the quality of surface itself.

Terry is working intuitively across a surface. She is using mark making as her vocabulary, but using intuition as her guide. This is an artist that often approaches her work with a freedom of expression, a freedom of movement. Within limits Terry is happy to flow with her work, allowing ideas to move where the work and her intuition leads her.

Although at times, like many artists, Terry may be partially unaware of where her artistic instinct will ultimately lead her within a specific piece of work, what eventualities will become apparent in the piece, and where



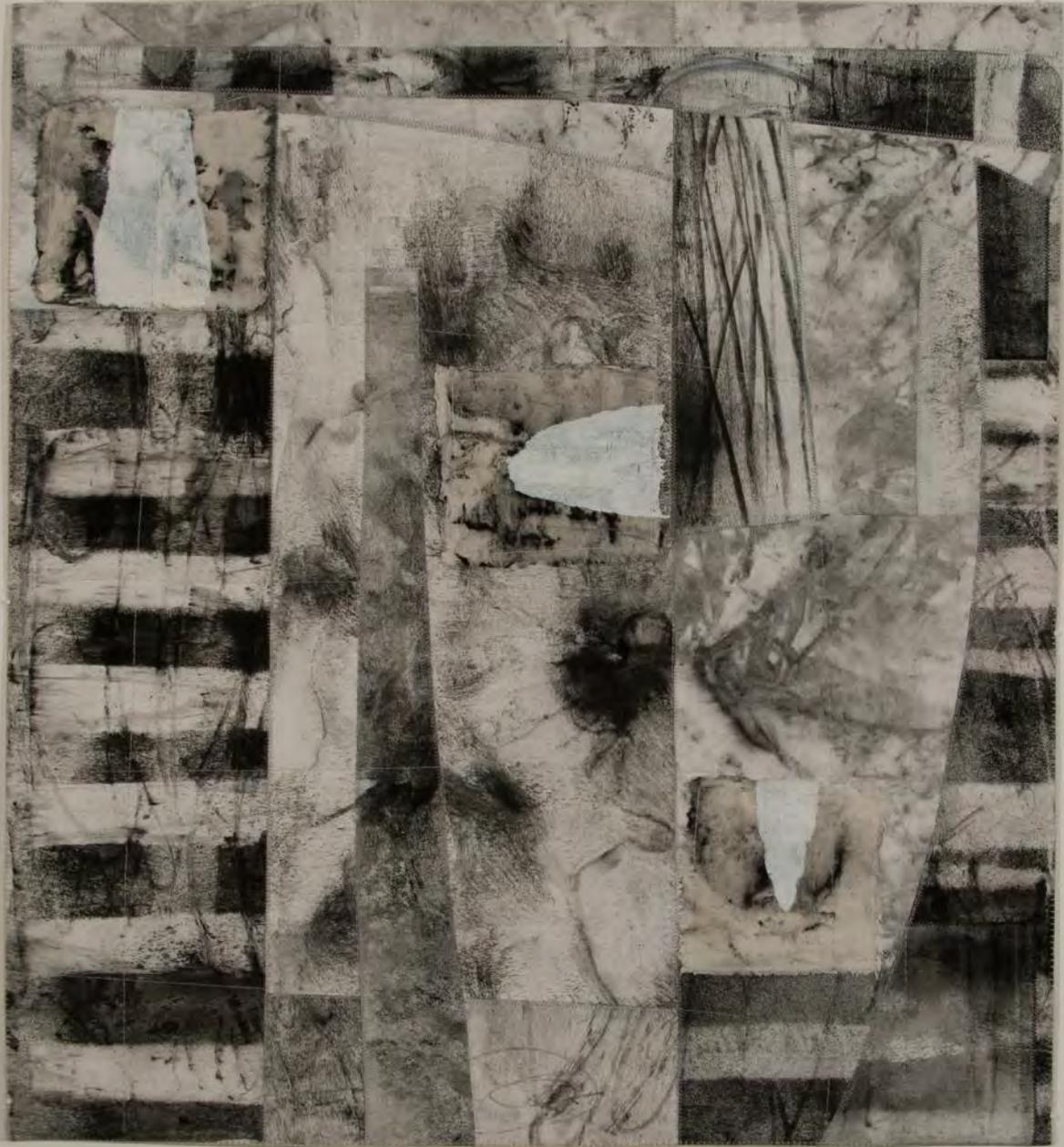


that singular revelation will lead her next, she is ultimately in control, by not being in control.

In other words, by letting go and acting intuitively she, as an artist, is allowing her inborn creative awareness, her honed instinct, to use mark making in order to create a pathway of exploration and intent. It is only by being fully within the process, and by following that due process to its natural end, is Terry able to reveal the narrative of each succeeding piece of work.

Her overall, as well as specific artistic output, is a testament to her creativity, but it is also a testament to the choices that she makes within the creation of a particular piece of work. The marks that are made by Terry within a composition are a demonstration of the uniqueness of her perspective on the world, and through that, the uniqueness of her creativity.



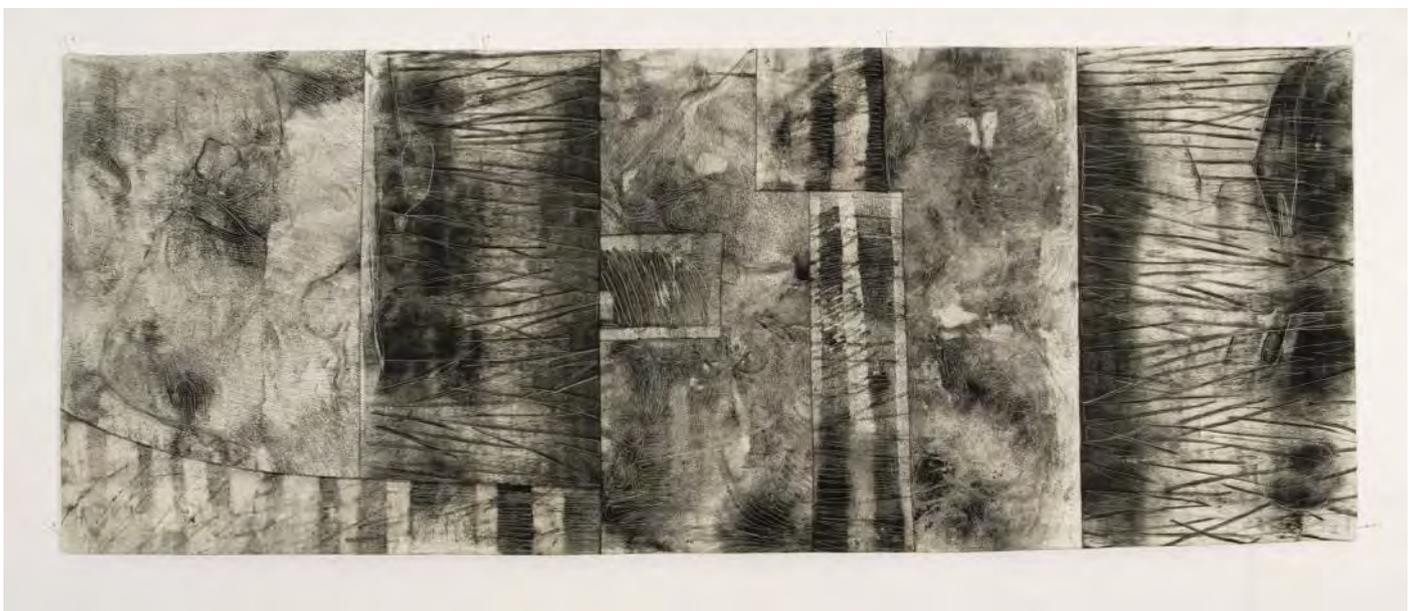


Terry's work is an expression on many levels in how she interprets the world around her, her work being a conduit of intent, a channel of understanding. Through the lines, dots, patterns, and textures that she uses in her artwork, she signifies the marks made and left by her singular artistic passage, her sequence of choices within a piece of work.

Each of Terry's compositions is a sole journey. The events that create that individual composition cannot be repeated, nor will they, they are a moment in singular time. In her mark making, each mark signifies a moment of choice by the artist, whether she does this, or whether she does that, whether she goes here, or whether she goes there, decides where that individual and specific composition goes.

Her compositions of marks are her journeys in life, they are the markers of her living through a piece of work, and in that regard they are in many ways the diaries of her creative path. It could be said that Terry is using her mark making to interpret elements of her creative life, that the marks she makes over a surface are an expression of her life as an artist.

Mark making by its very nature can be both broad and unconfined. Marks can be made with pencil and brush, rubber or charcoal, paint or ink, stitch or stamp, hand or foot, the possibilities of the vocabulary are as limitless as are the intent of the marks themselves. This gives the process its attraction, artists are drawn towards mark making as a





practicality, but also as a means of freedom, and unhitching from processes and technical details, for the love of making marks is part of our human nature, part of our freedom of expression.

Within that broad spectrum of vocabulary that is mark making in its fullest capacity, Terry is fully aware of the potential she has in being able to step beyond the confines of labels, beyond the traditional framework of the discipline. She is by consensus a fiber/textile artist and she is well known in that capacity.

Although to many, Terry will remain a fiber/textile artist, she personally does not necessarily want to be limited by that designation. She is first and foremost an artist, a creative individual that is not defined by what mediums she chooses to work in, her only definition is that she is an artist. In that I fully support her as I am very keen to see artists like Terry move into the much larger world of art, and not to be confined by sometimes meaningless labels.

Above all, it is every artist's wish that their work should in some way transcend the everyday, that the viewer should in some respect be able to achieve something of value from the projected perspective of the artist. For the artist to wish to pass on their gained knowledge of intuitive understanding, their learned freedom of self-expression, is a selfless act,





and it is an ever recurring act. That artists such as Terry wish to share those projected moments with their viewers is a gift that keeps giving, and for that we should be forever grateful.

More of Terry's work can be viewed at her comprehensive website - [Terry Jarrard-Diamond](#) - she can also be followed on - [twitter](#), [facebook](#)



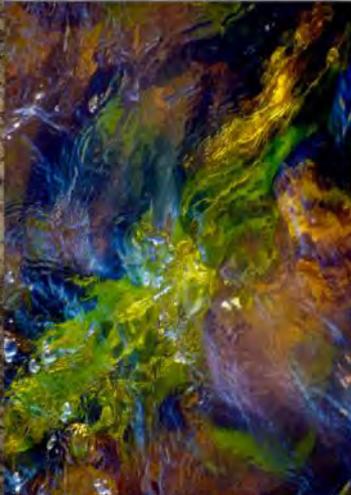
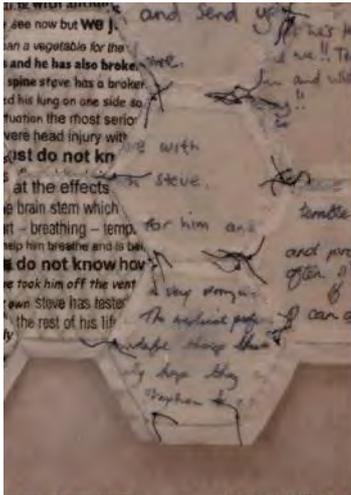


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Gopika Nath article: Gopika Nath, Amitabha Bhattacharya

Chris Keegan article: Chris Keegan

Polly Jacobs Giacchina article: Rodney Nakamoto

Natural Processes review: Michael Wicks

Russel Tomlin article: Russell Tomlin

Terry Jarrard-Dimond article: Tom Dimond

Last Word: John Hopper

Back cover: Gary Miranda

Last Word



A big heartfelt thanks goes to all of you who are reading these words. It is so important that I thank you, in the first place obviously because there would be no Inspirational project without you, but also I have to thank you for taking the time to explore the artists featured, their exceptional work, as well as my descriptions of each of the artists, their unique perspective, and their work.

I would also like to give out a warm thank you to all of those individuals, those I know well, not so well, and not at all, who have taken the time to selflessly promote this issue of Inspirational across websites, blogs, and **the social media world. You don't know how important your contribution** has been, and how much it is appreciated by myself.

It is not easy putting each of these issues together. It can be stressful, tiring, and at times all-consuming, but I think that it is important to get Inspirational out there, and every issue I believe at least makes some kind of difference, however small. Therefore the help that others give freely is such a boon, and can never be repaid apart from a continual thank you.

I would also like to thank the eight artists that generously and genuinely gave permission to feature their work in this issue. So I would like to thank Christine, David, Jennifer, Gopika, Chris, Polly, Russell, Terry, all stars in their own right, and certainly stars in my book.

I would also like to thank Batsford for supplying the two books by Cas Holmes and Alice Fox for me to review, as well as Cas herself for suggesting me as a reviewer to Batsford. What a great individual Cas is!

Finally, Inspirational issue 7 will be on sale from November 11 2015. Details about the launch of the next issue and its progress, including the eight artists that will be featured, photos of their work, the first glimpse of the cover, will first be seen by those lucky enough to have signed up for the [Inspirational newsletter](#).



Inspirational news will also regularly be featured on the [ttb site](#), as well as the ttb social media outlets of [twitter](#), [facebook](#), [google+](#), [pinterest](#), [tumblr](#). These social media sites have become an important part of the daily life of myself and ttb, they give a steady stream of inspirational and intriguing work by contemporary artists across the planet in a range of disciplines. I would be more than happy to have you join me on any, or all of the sites and by all means drop me a line, I would be more than happy to hear from you.

All issues of Inspirational are instantly available as downloads from the [ttb site](#).

