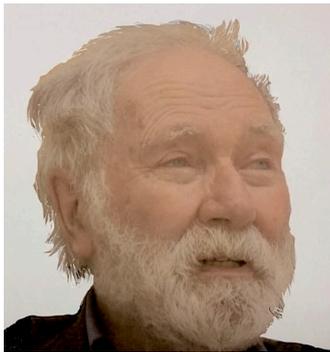


Derek Hyatt. Age 81



"I think you should look at them, and I think you should talk about them — and you should dream about them, and tell yourself stories. But there is no right answer. My answer's no better than yours."

(From Derek Hyatt's talk at the Art Space Gallery, London, 2012.)

(Image adapted from a 2012 Space Gallery talk.)

On that December day in 1970, the train ride from the UK's Midlands was on the LNER train service from Banbury to Birmingham (New Street Station - change), Doncaster, Sheffield, and onward to Leeds. ... On arrival in the city I found I had a splitting headache. It was not because of the hard northern winter of 1970 with its icy pavements, not the train ride north, nor was it the fact that it was raining on the offloaded arrivals to the city. In the grey cold of that West Yorkshire city afternoon the rain felt more like shedding sleet. I decided that it could not be any of these things that was giving me a headache. I did though think that it might be a growing feeling of displacement now that I had arrived in this northern city, far from what I knew. I did not realise it then, but that headache was to grow and become permanent during the rest of that day, and then into the evening — my first migraine.

... Now after the train journey, in hindsight, it was a big mistake to go to the cinema on that wet December afternoon in Leeds. I was there to watch Alfred Hitchcock's *"The Birds"*. The (Technicolor) film had just been released, and I was eager to experience the visual effects I had heard so much about before it arrived in the UK cinemas. Hitchcock's direction struck me as a masterclass in creating dystopian imagery on film — even before we fully understood what the word 'dystopia' implied, or how it could be applied to birds! In a way I couldn't stop thinking about it afterwards — migraine or no migraine.

As for migraines, this was of course the very first really bad headache that I had ever experienced. The headache developed into what I now recognise as a migraine. (In later years these took me to hospital more than once.) Fortunately they are now in the past — but it took me some time to recognise that it was my body's response to conflicts of aims, or conjectures, unresolved and conflicting problems, work overload — and generally self-imposed stress! Not exactly ideal preparation for an upcoming important interview for a lecturing position at Leeds College of Art. Seeing *"The Birds"* only increased the stress of my Leeds visit.

The interview on the following day was to be at 9.00 am at the College and the position for which I was applying was as a lecturer in Graphic Design. With headache subdued, and Hitchcock and his birds temporarily forgotten, I was keen to get the job. The College entrances looked daunting. It crossed my mind that architecture, more often than not, defined the nature of the activities therein. I also knew that older buildings were more flexible than a new polytechnic or university. This made things interesting. There were three flight of stairs into the College. I might have thought I was entering *Valhalla*, but then I wasn't looking for death in battle — just to get the chance of a lecturing job at one of the UK's best art colleges.

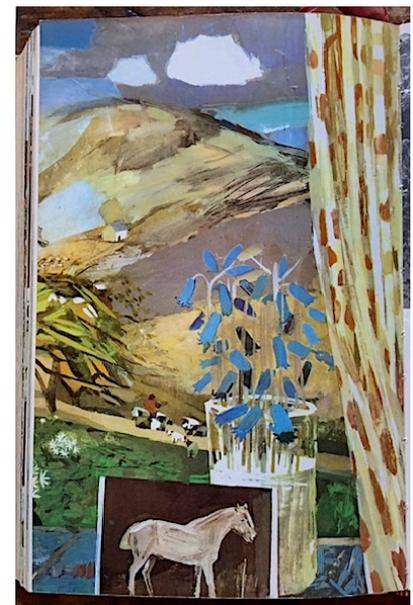
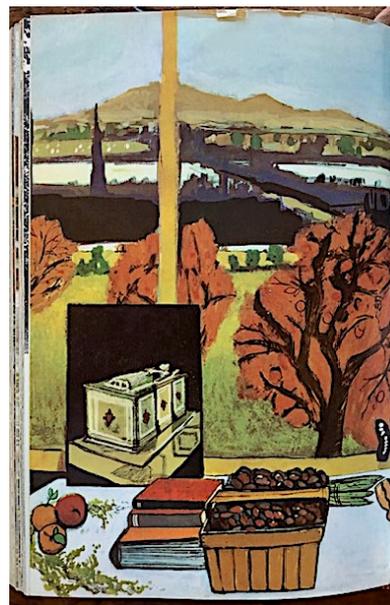


Above: The Entrance to Leeds College of Art as it was in 1970.

Artist, Patrick Heron, writing in the Guardian, UK., described Leeds College of Art as *"the most influential art school in Europe since the Bauhaus."* It was little wonder, as I climbed the steps into the College, that I should notice on the third level of stairs, the Principal of Leeds College of Art, Eric Taylor, sitting in a side office. Eric, who would have been about 61 years of age then, was sitting in a wood panelled office, behind a large wooden desk, with a board propped up in front of him — completing a painting! I mean, what else would a Principal of an art college (later to be a deputy director of Leeds Polytechnic) do in his office? This was my first introduction to Leeds College of Art in 1970.

(I realise that I have not mentioned Derek Hyatt yet. This is because I have to set the scene of this 1970s Leeds art community for you to understand the times, and the place, the environment and the practices of an art college — of which both Derek and I were part of.)

The Graphic Design Department was on the first floor of the College. The candidates for the position of lecturer in Graphic Design were gathered in a room that I later found out was the Department's staff room. It was a very small room, and the six of us (I think there were six) were sitting in two rows of three directly opposite one another. I knew none of the other candidates. They all seemed older than me, apart from one. The Head of the Department, Ron Holmes came and gave a short introduction to the procedures that were to take place. Apart from that, it was just a question of sitting through the time slots as each candidate was interviewed. I believe I was the last to be called. Can I



Above Left: 'Worcestershire' p. 449. Detail from the 1966 *"Shell and BP Guide to Britain"*. Ebury Press in Association with George Rainbird, London. Artist: Ian Henderson. 1966. **Above Right:** 'Lancashire' p. 545. Detail from the 1966 *"Shell and BP Guide to Britain"*. Artist: Derek Hyatt. 1966.

remember anything of the interview — absolutely not. But, what I do remember

is the waiting period afterwards, while candidates remained silent in anticipation, and decisions were made behind closed doors. Ron Holmes returned looking reasonably mollified and thanked everybody for attending — asking us to wait, and for Martin Salisbury to be recalled. Those of us who were familiar with interview processes, probably would have guessed that this was the moment candidate Martin Salisbury, who I considered to be the youngest of the applicants, was to be offered the position. Ron Holmes came back to the small staff room still filled with the remaining apprehensive candidates, that included myself. Ron explained that Martin Salisbury had been offered a "Fellowship" within the Department, that he had accepted. I knew nothing of this Fellowship offer and I am sure neither did any of the others who were waiting the outcome of the interview proceedings. A feeling of deflation would be the correct way to describe my feelings at that moment — or at least until Ron Holmes asked that I attend once more before the interviewing committee. My shock, my surprise. I was offered the position of Lecturer in Graphic Design at Leeds College of Art, commencing at the beginning of the new year. Migraine miraculously gone, I accepted. I only really knew that I had the job, as I returned to the staff room to find it empty.

So I got to know the Vernon Street entrance to Leeds College of Art as a destination commencing sometime in early January 1968. I think I was still driving our Morris 1100 at the time, and it wasn't too difficult (then) to park in some parts of Vernon Street or Woodhouse Lane. In any event access to and from the Graphic Design Department wasn't a problem. Ron Holmes was in charge of the Department, Tony

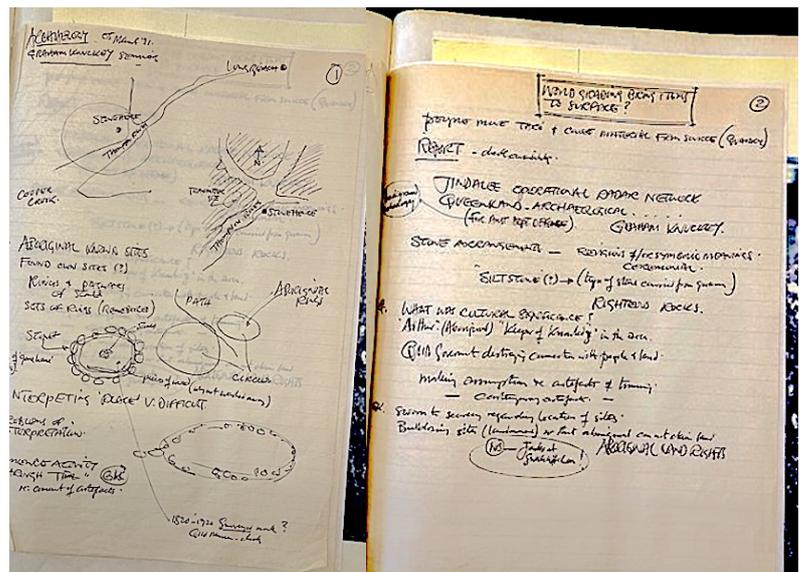
Connolly was in charge of the first year intake and, apparently, I was in charge of ambiguity and nuance in the work of first year visual communication students. I am still not sure whether these last two attributes were required as part of core areas of study.... and as Tony Connolly once said to me, *"I never know what you are thinking."* I could have responded *"Rightly so"*, but I didn't — although I did think that part of my contribution to design students would come from the idea of the rejection of the obvious, and the encouragement of independent patterns of study. I had no idea at that stage that this was exactly what Derek Hyatt was doing with illustration students one floor above in the second year studio.

So in the 1960s, it was Derek Hyatt who introduced the subject of *'visual studies'* into the Department's curriculum. He had done this with the express aim of increasing graphic communication and design understanding. The importance of the visual elements of design was something both of us were encouraging in the students we taught. As an extension of 1920s *Bauhaus* philosophy, Derek Hyatt developed strategies for guaranteeing that visual art students developed visual awareness to the maximum. The Spanish filmmaker and producer Albert Serra made the following comment regarding visual awareness: *"...This is the power of images, the ambiguity. — You are never completely sure of anything."* I think Tony Connolly was now beginning to recognise this.

Days at Leeds College of Art went by measured by morning meetings of coffee breaks, and staff members. Afternoon breaks followed a similar pattern, with different combinations of staff. Derek Hyatt was one of these new encounters.. He appeared for the first time at one of these staff coffee mornings. He came down from the floor above, coffee cup in hand, leaving his students in the studio above amid copious project trial illustrations. As a thirty-seven year old Derek already carried the authority of a recognised and respected artist that indeed he was. I understood this immediately from the reactions of the other staff members in the room. They greeted him with questions about his West Yorkshire activities — while shifting chairs to allow him to join us in the cramped staff room. I had known Derek's work and his north country landscapes through both his illustrations and paintings. I also knew Derek from his *'Shell County Guide'* work — completed it appears. at the same time as mine. Now I was meeting not just the educator, but the painter himself.

I could tell that Derek enjoyed his teaching. We had that in common. I could also see, or thought I could see, both the inclusiveness and the disparity between his own work and his teaching. I recognised so many similar aims and objectives in Dereks and my own work. In many ways we were on the same path. His was a Yorkshire inspirational route, while mine was not any less inspirational, but less tied by destination. Derek worked in his studio at his farmhouse near Bishopdale, whereas I travelled at weekends to my studio at Steeple Aston in Oxfordshire. We were both on similar tracks, but progressed in different directions.

After Derek's death in 2015, The Mode Gallery in London wrote: *"Derek Hyatt was an artist who shunned the London limelight, preferring instead to immerse himself, personally, psychologically and actually, in the North."* I was aware of Derek's love of the Yorkshire he knew. We both thought Paul Nash an artist we admired — but I suspect now it was for different reasons. At the time Derek and I met in Leeds we were



Above: Sketchbook studies by Ian Henderson. (These sketches and studies were similar in intent and style in both Ian' and Derek's work. as they were both using similar methods and ideas to explore the landscape.)

both, I believe, producing similar work with so many similar objectives. Of course we had little time to talk about these things in our daily teaching commitments — however later on, when I had moved away, and Derek didn't, we corresponded by mail. It is sad that I have none of the letters, drawings, packages, etc., that we exchanged, mainly in the 1980s. In Australia I mailed visual research information about this (older) land to Derek, and he reciprocated with the visual research he was making into his Yorkshire landscape. Our individual research, and the ideas and techniques that we used were similar — consequently some of the imagery that we produced arrived as parallel thoughts from two different countries.

The painting *'Evening Farm'* (Ian Henderson) and *'Landscape'* (Derek Hyatt) are shown below. In both it is possible to see the nuances in the landforms. Sky and land are reflected in one another, each referring to the totality of the scene. The colour range in each painting differs — but the intent remains.

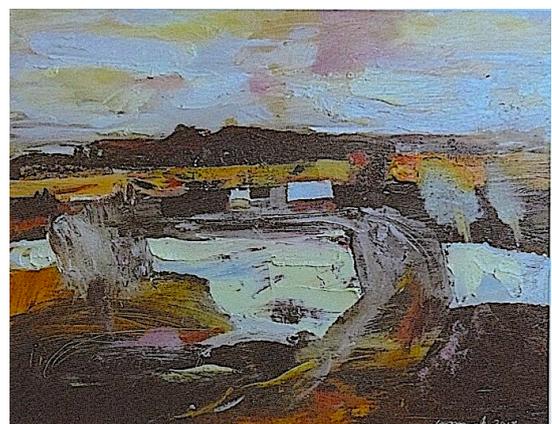
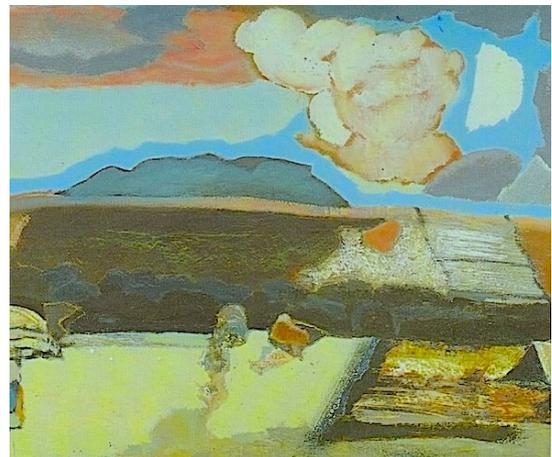
Both Derek and I were working with landscape forms, following similar patterns, recognising similar symbols. I wonder what would have been the situation if we had been physically closer, looking at the land with the searching eyes we both would have had? The painting illustrated below *'The Landscape near Brailes'* was painted in 2019 in Goulburn, New South Wales. It was a memory of an Oxfordshire village re-examined from afar — It could have been a Hyatt painting but it was one of mine, so similar to his. The processes, Derek's and mine, were the same. The ideas so similar. This must have been significant, as we both appeared in the *'Shell'* sale catalogue at Sotheby's Olympia, London in 2002.



Above: Details from from Ian Henderson's painting: *'Time in a Winter's Place'*. Acrylic and collage on canvas. 1991. (Private Collection,)



Above: *'The Landscape Near Brailes'*. Oil on board. Ian Henderson. 2019. (Private Collection, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.)



Above: *'Landscape'*. Oil on board. Derek Hyatt. (c. 1967). Exhibited Gillian Jason Gallery, London.
Below: *'Evening Farm'*. Oil on board. Ian Henderson. 2013.