

ESSAYS

Thoughts – and some extracts from essays adapted to capture the essence of the subject.

"We lived in the rain lashed, damp, coal-soaked, building that had been dated 1693 in the scrawled numbers in cement on the plaque above the front of this once loved shepherd's cottage. Coal was delivered by the former owner of the farmhouse (who had apparently sold the disintegrating building to the development corporation at an early opportunity). We lit the fire in the sitting room and tried to ignore the damp and flooding in the back room where the river Tawd almost took up residence."

'The Great Lancashire Wet' Ian Henderson. 2024.

"I paint what people overlook; it's usually where the truth is hiding."



"What our tutors and lecturers provided, at least in the years when I was paying attention – was love of the subject, and discipline. This was never in the sense of rules for rules' sake, but a sense that vision and creativity needed to have a grounded base. We learned that you cannot think your way into good drawing or painting; you must work your way through it. I've never trusted artistic shortcuts, although I have been guilty of these at times. Everyone wants to be expressive without learning the basics, but expression without structure is just pure commotion. The past knew this, along with our heroes from the past. We may forget it at our peril."

"...Monsin Hamid in the magazine National Geographic has written "We experience the constant drama of the new and the constant sorrow of the loss of what we've left behind." In this book the essays are a mixture of truth, recollection, and invention. The author has alluded to friends and people he once knew, as well as other individuals and places that have been invented to help the narrative flow and become the stories he wants to tell. "



When I think about other artists, those who are the painters I admire, I find that the written word often accompanies their creative endeavours. Carel Weight, in charge of painting at the UK Royal College of Art in the 1950s, wrote of the creative process in his catalogue for his 1982 retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy: "I like in a way what my friend Roger de Grey said that all good paintings are battlefields. Mine are a bit like that."

(Ian Henderson in 'Flying Under The Radar'.)

"The world is full of places that never get noticed. These are places where landscape nurtures the overlooked. The vistas shape you in time's past. These are the industrial towns, the half-finished estates, the communities that existed to be changed – and then to vanish. My thoughts have always been through painting and in writing, to give place its due along with those who inhabit it."

"The reader should note that the essays have not been written or illustrated in any chronological order. It seems that the creative mind tends not to think in a chronological manner in the development of ideas. In fact often it is helpful to dig elsewhere rather than in the same place. The difference here is between 'getting off track' as being a creative activity, compared to 'getting side-tracked' being a negation of this main thread. There may appear to be esoteric differences, important ones as they are to the author. "

(Ian Henderson in 'Flying Under The Radar'.)

"Places vanish quickly, but their weight lingers."



"A portrait only succeeds when the sitter recognises themselves without saying so."

"I was an art student with a knapsack and a good pair of walking shoes (with studs). The walking shoes allowed some exploration of the centre of Oxford."

(IH in memoir, 2018.)