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THROUGH NEW EYES RECENT CORNISH PAINTINGS BY ANDREW TOZER

By Cath Wallace

It is rare these days to find a contemporary artist who has such a strong understanding and knowledge of their artistic heritage. Andrew Tozer, as a plein air impressionist painter, has always acknowledged his interest and following of the French Impressionists such as Sisley and Monet. In this special exhibition of Cornish places, at *Beside the Wave*, Andrew has been inspired by the artists who made Cornwall famous in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries.

The paintings made by Norman Garstin, who was one of the leading members of the Newlyn School in the 1880s, were of particular interest for Andrew. He has taken Garstin's famous *The Rain it Raineth Every Day* as the starting point for several works done on Penzance seafront. Andrew has taken the idea of a wet and stormy day by the sea and translated it using his own contemporary impressionist style.

What motivates Andrew to paint is his great love of painting outdoors on the spot and that gives him this strong connection with the plein air painters in Cornwall over one hundred years ago. It also means

being willing to paint in all weathers come rain or shine. Andrew soon discovered that along the seafront at Penzance are dotted a series of shelters, so he was able to paint the promenade on the wet days, just like Norman Garstin did, in some safety from the elements.

2008 was a particularly wet and windy year, but the rain and stormy weather made for dramatic conditions that Andrew has translated into a dynamic, visually exciting collection of paintings for this show.

Andrew's painting *Wet and Windy, Penzance* captures all the nuances of grey in the sky, sea and buildings with the white water crashing over the seafront adding to the drama of the scene. Andrew's rapid mark-making style lends itself to capturing the sense of movement created on a stormy day by the sea and his muted, almost monochromatic, palette conveys the coolness of the temperature as the rain splashes down on the few holidaymakers willing to brave the outdoors. When the sun does come out, everyone's mood changes completely and so do the mood and colours in Andrew's paintings. Instead of greys, he uses bright greens and blues to capture the rough seas as seen from the cliffs along the coastal path. The grey skies are now dotted with cotton wool clouds which appear to have silver linings.

Another artist Andrew has been inspired by, who was strongly associated with St Ives in the 1920s, is John Anthony Park. Andrew has painted the pier and town of St Ives in the same painterly expressive way as his predecessor. Park was famous for his paintings of fishing boats in St Ives bay. These are not so prevalent today, but Andrew still conveys that working life by the sea as Smeaton's pier features in his paintings and he captures

all the movement of the cars and lorries used by the local fishermen to get in their catch.

The so-called 'Father of the Newlyn School' was Stanhope Forbes and so Andrew made his pilgrimage to Newlyn and found some of the exact vantage points that Forbes would have painted from in this working fishing port. Andrew was particularly taken with the view in Forbes' *Gala Day at Newlyn*, looking down to the south pier.

Andrew has also travelled to the village of Mousehole, further along the coast from Newlyn and painted the village from a similar view to the painter Frank Gascoigne Heath.

Andrew's collection of work for this fascinating exhibition is a continuation of the passion for place and painting outdoors shown by the artists that preceded him. By following in their footsteps he brings a new approach and perspective to familiar places in Cornwall that we all know and love, helping us to see them through new eyes.

Through New Eyes: Recent Cornish paintings by Andrew Tozer starts 15 May, 6-8pm, with a Private Viewing and continues until 27 May at Beside the Wave, 10 Arwenack Street, Falmouth, Cornwall, TR11 3JA. Telephone: +44 (0) 1326 211132 www.beside-the-wave.co.uk



opposite: *Sunshine & Heavy Seas, Island Path, St Ives*, oil on paper, 16 x 24 cm

left top: *Wet and Windy, Penzance*, oil on paper, 16 x 24 cm

left bottom: *In the Harbour, St Ives*, oil on paper, 16 x 24 cm