



AFTER THE RAIN BY JANE GOSNEY

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After the Rain is dedicated to Wallace Stevens
who sadly died in January 2012.

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The author and the publishers wish to thank the artists in residence for access to the Porthmeor Studios owned by the Borlase Smart Trust during St Ives Open Studios 1991 and permission for the original photography for the digital artwork illustrations pg^s 13-16.

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Personal thanks from the author to Sophie Bowness and The Hepworth Estate for permission to reproduce the photograph taken by the author at noon on midsummer's day 1991 in the Hepworth Garden: illustration, pg 17 "Two Forms" ("Divided as a Circle" – bronze 1969).

With thanks to Rosemary, Ellen and my Mother
for all their support both during the writing and
production of this book.

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Note: the Porthmeor Studios are undergoing a full refurbishment and will be converted to offer more smaller studio units. The titles of the artwork just refer to the building windows as the subject (the artists rotate and move).

INTRODUCTION

(This essay was first written for my mother Betty Gosney in her eightieth year in 2009)

When I started writing I set out to describe my enjoyment of the unique Cornish landscape and how the light has inspired my work. As the piece developed I realised that I was not writing as a solitary observer but recounting shared memories. It is also a study of change: change in my feelings about a place (as I and my family have aged) and new developments in my work.

After the Rain describes my own discovery of South West Cornwall. I first visited St Ives whilst working in London and came to love the surrounding landscape of Penwith, the sea, the sky and the sun. This is not a book about a picture postcard or painted scene but about a dynamic landscape. Here with the extremes of weather there is a heightened sense of the annual cycle. Magnificent sunsets when day becomes night and the turning tide are reminders of seasonal patterns of change.

The essay recounts times spent in Cornwall with my mother: our first summers in St Ives and our holiday rituals. Later when I came to live here I had to adapt to the winters but continued to explore and make discoveries of more beautiful places on walks around the coast of The South West with new friends. Visits to these new places and my new life are also described.

The techniques and tools I have used for image making have changed during the time I have been working. After starting a career in mainstream architecture I chose to specialise in architectural lighting. Taking photographs and making images to represent light became my main preoccupation. Innovations in technology have transformed the records I can keep of completed architectural projects and the media for my artwork.

My passion for lighting design has always been fired by looking out at sunsets over The Atlantic. Looking through diaries, portfolios and photographs has brought memories into sharp focus. Writing has given breath to new ideas. More examples of my work can be viewed in colour on my website <http://www.janegosney.co.uk>

A JOURNEY

I left home in the Peak District and spent a “year out” (of formal education) living in Athens, Rome and Paris prior to going to University College in London where I initially read architecture. My parents were anxious about a “country girl” going to the capital city and had encouraged me to travel. After visiting many architectural and archaeological wonders I was even more enthusiastic about going to university in the capital city.

London was never home: it was a place to study and work. Although the moors were where I felt I belonged I stayed in London to take advantage of the rich opportunities to fill my portfolio for twenty five years. I was driven by ambition and wanted to put what I had learnt into practice. When I won my first job as trainee architect at the BBC my parents knew they had temporarily lost me to “the big city” which gave me the opportunity to explore my creative skills.

When I started work I took great satisfaction in improving my technical drawing skills. Plans and construction details were produced at my drawing board in black ink lines of precise thickness made with “rottring isograph” pens. The crisp measured lines were drawings of buildings: ordered rectangular forms soon to be realised in brick or stone. In my leisure time I enjoyed life drawing with the freedom to make bold lines and observe the soft curves of the model at my

easel. The colours and smells of artists' materials were a great temptation to escape from the office to the studio.

London life was full of contrasts. Although I worked in Regent Street I lived near the large open space of Hampstead Heath. At weekends friends and I would walk from South End Green past tall Victorian red brick terraces on to the grassland of The Heath. From the top of Parliament Hill the City skyline appeared far away like a distant model village. We enjoyed watching kite flyers running downhill towards the ponds. Often we would have a dog in our group. His delight was to paddle to fetch a stick causing toy boats to capsize and ducks and geese to take flight.

In the woodlands in search of a more tranquil route we would walk for over an hour sheltered from the noise of traffic. A favourite track led us to Kenwood House with formal gardens and well kept lawns. The elegant building had a stable block converted in to tea rooms. Here city dwellers could spend an afternoon "in the country". On the cultivated sloping grass several twentieth century abstract sculptures seemed to have landed like meteors: quite incongruous in front of the elegant white Palladian Villa.

Some of the pieces had been loaned as part of an open air art display: some were part of a permanent collection. At the time of our visits most were bronzes. An exception was a tall man sized limestone piece with two rough holes, like the eyes of a giant darning needle, its shadow spilled across the grass. A brass plaque revealed that the sculptor of "Monolith" was

Barbara Hepworth. I began to read about her life and wanted to see where she had produced the work. I would have to go to St Ives in Cornwall.

I was glad to board the train and leave the crowds and chaos on the concourse at Paddington station behind. My mother was in good spirits due to the fine June weather so allowed me to choose the window seat. We became aware of the start of the journey as silently the neighbouring train appeared to move backwards. Every seat was filled as the last passengers to board settled in their seats. Newspapers and books were opened to define their personal territory. I was full of anticipation as I had not made the journey before and could not concentrate enough to read so I gazed through the window.

The railway line ran through west London past the stations of The Central Line where the underground ran over ground. Outside was grey urban sprawl. Graffiti covered buildings when viewed through the safety of the carriage window appeared like props on the set of an action film: not real. Reading was only half an hour away. After leaving the cluster of modern office blocks we were soon looking out at a rural scene. The trees, hedges and fields became an endless green ribbon. It was difficult to gain a sense of speed and I drifted into a doze.

We rolled through Berkshire and Somerset then on to Devon. It was well over two hours before our stop at Exeter St David's but as we left the station the first view of the sea

appeared. A fleet of boats was moored on the mud flats in the estuary of the river Exe. This was the point at which our holiday began and all memories of London were forgotten. We sped through Dawlish and Teignmouth stations with barely enough time to read their names on the platform signs.

An hour later as we left Plymouth the train crossed the River Tamar on the Brunel suspension bridge: the Gateway to Cornwall. “Kernow a ‘gas dynergh” Welcome to Cornwall with its own language and flag. We were still some way from our final destination but with the changes of scenery it felt like we were going to another world. The track ran inland again and our progress became much slower as the train stopped to service every local station beyond Liskeard. The signal boxes, wooden platform shelters and ticket offices might have belonged to a miniature railway set.

The first time we heard the announcement to “Change at St Erth for St Ives” we had expected to be greeted by a spectacular view. Instead all we could see was another small rural station. The intercity train was too long for the platform so there was a rush from the rear of standard class to find the open doors. A herd of tourists with suitcases, surfboards and a common sense of purpose spilled out and jostled up the stairs and across the bridge to look for our connection. A two carriage train could be seen on Platform Three.

Our journey was nearly over. We had seen the advertisement for “the branch line with the most stunning views in the whole of England”. It was less than five miles to St Ives and in

fifteen minutes we would be there. The collection of industrial sheds at St Erth was far from beautiful but as the small train turned into the Hayle Estuary there was no disappointment. All the passengers made reverent observations as they looked out of the window at the vast expanse of silvery water and pale grey silt.

From Lelant station herons in the wild fowl reservation could be seen at the water side. An abandoned boat made the scene more picturesque. In the early evening the water of the estuary was calm like a mirror. The reflection of the low angle sun fell across the contours of the soft sand where the estuary met the sea. The vast unspoiled expanse of Porth Kidney Sands came in to view with the shoreline then suddenly disappeared behind the dunes.

Carbis Bay was the next stop with its own sandy bay. A hotel, bungalows and flats had all been positioned to get a sea view. From here we saw the first glimpse of Smeaton's Pier in St Ives. In a few short minutes the picture postcard view of St Ives Harbour and The Island could be seen from the station. Here I was to find a secret place and palette of colours which were to become a reference during all of my future working life.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET

Our accommodation on that first visit was away from the harbour in a quieter part of St Ives near Barnoon Cemetery. It was a part of town which became “home” in later years. My memories are always of the first sight of “our beach” and the The Island. Before unpacking I ran down the hill to see the full expanse of Porthmeor Beach. A barefoot stroll in the sand along the water’s edge allowed me to unwind. This became a ritual. The turquoise of the Cornish Sea and cornflower blue skies above the horizon were calming and allowed me to relax.

The view inland was just as special. I had not seen buildings on a beach before. Their walls seemed to grow right out of the soft sand. The vernacular architecture of the small community at Porthmeor represented the groups who shared the town. The beachside elevation was made up of old granite sail lofts with studios upstairs, holiday flats from “The sixties” and long rows of beach huts with identical blue doors. Despite the man made elements there was still a sense of wild openness.

My mother and I both enjoyed visiting the beach in the evening to collect shells. This was something I also liked to do with other friends. Those shoreline walks watching the waves were times to talk, reflect and enjoy nature in peace. At six o’ clock hired deck chairs, windbreaks and wet suits had to be returned and the beach emptied. Then it felt like our own private beach. The island car park would be deserted and

sometimes our walk would continue on around the headland up the hill to the St Nicholas' Chapel.

Another of our favourite walks was out along the coastal path beyond Man's Head towards Zennor. This outcrop of rocks with a distinctive human form was on the edge of Porthmeor beach on the opposite side to the island. Benches and a purpose built shelter near the rocks allowed comfortable and convenient places to picnic and sketch virtually undisturbed. We were visitors long before The Tate was planned and I have many sketches made from the rocks looking back towards The Island and along Beach Road with just flats and the cemetery.

Many abstract artists in St Ives have been influenced by the vivid stripes of contrasting colours along the shoreline and the effervescent surf. We preferred to focus on the wildlife on the cliff top with the beach in the background. Mum mixed her watercolours to match the sea in the distance. The waves were with applied later in acrylics. Colourful flowers, shells and seagulls filled her sketch books mine had dark architectural shapes of the rocks in graphite and ink. I would also take photographs to capture those forgotten details for reference back indoors.

New preoccupations in my life away from St Ives changed the way I observed the sky and the coastline. I had been fortunate enough to spend time in the employ of Sir Denys Lasdun working on a new office building near The Barbican. The surprise of that project was that the genius of concrete architecture had chosen to work in green glass. There my

fascination with transparent materials began and I decided to return to UCL to study Light and Lighting. Windows were no longer external architectural elements in a wall to determine period or style: they offered views and natural lighting

After making sketches of landscape forms “en plein air” I wanted to make images of the same scenery looking out from Porthmeor Studios. On open days it was possible to visit the artists at work but my interest was not just to see the artists’ world but to ask if I could discretely photograph their windows. There was a rich variety of subject matter. The wood which held the glass was badly weathered and in need of repair but the corrugated plastic patches and peeling paint made the subjects more interesting. The beach and infinite blue landscape beyond were mesmerising.

Success meant that retreats to Cornwall became even more important. I was privileged to work on many iconic projects where daylight was the main driver in the design. Bristol Airport, the Jubilee Line Extension and the Serpentine Gallery all had different challenges and were landmark projects in my career. Sky contact and emergence into daylight were sensory experiences to be built into a project so I wanted images of natural light to convey that drama. I always spent midsummer in St Ives. Not only were the sunsets the most splendid but reflected light on the sea provided a complimentary spectrum of colour

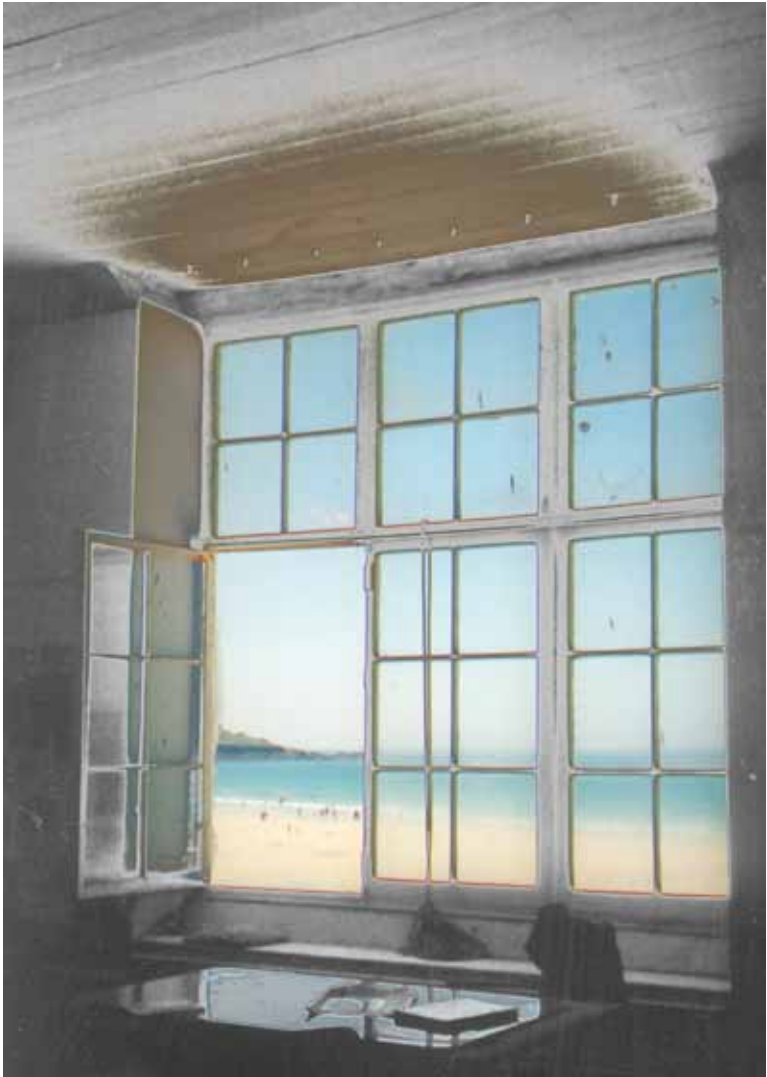
Each summer solstice there were silent gatherings on Porthmeor beach as the shadows lengthened and evening

arrived. The dark shapes although human looked more like rocks. Those gazing out to sea either with cameras or just to enjoy the moment were all reverentially still and quiet. As the angle of the sun on the water became shallower the ball of fire hypnotising us all became more intense. A golden path of light would fall on the water and stretch across the ripples in the sand to make an intangible connection back to the mainland.

A chosen “spot” above the beach huts opposite Man’s Head allowed me to view the sun from behind dried grasses where birds nested. This was an ideal vantage point to capture a bird in flight as a seagull would often swoop across my field of vision. From sun down to sunset the changing colours of the sky were as unpredictable as they were magnificent: the soft end of day glow became flaming oranges, reds and yellows, violets and purples. The sun seemed to be sucked into the sea. Its disappearance was fascinating to watch.

Darkness crept over the cold sand. The show was over. People started to leave all at once like a cinema audience when the credits roll. In the morning they would return. As the sun rose and the shadow line retreated the golden beach was ready for the new day. Surfers, swimmers and sun worshippers all enjoyed their recreation together but in personal zones marked out by their towels. At midday the sun was hot and burned the backs of our necks as we looked out to sea. We would seek refuge under a café umbrella for lunch. I wanted some cool greenery and thought about my “secret place”.

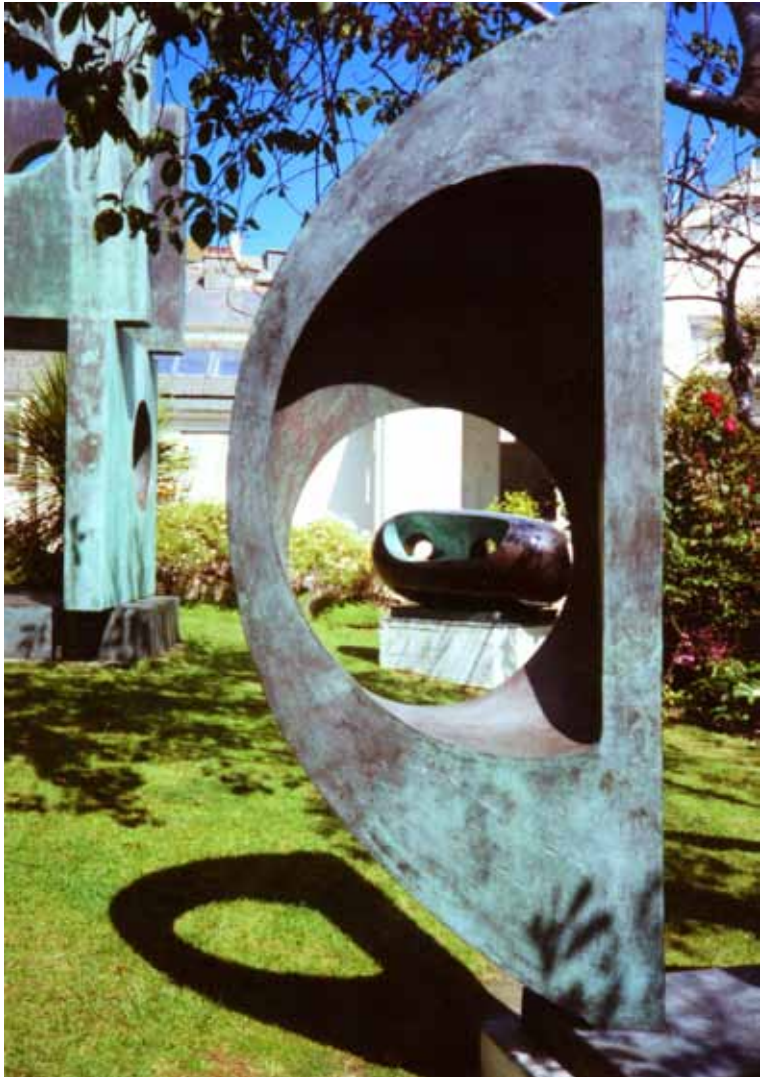












TWILIGHT

The final chapter from “Reflections on Light”

(Rewritten for New Horizons this piece describes a walk around The Hepworth Garden and the artist’s former workplace. I often wander alone and use the oasis on as a place of retreat: my secret place)

Cornwall has not only been a place to capture inspiring landscapes and sunsets on film. The short sharp summertime shadows have focused my interest in sculpture as a subject. It is the place where I rediscovered the work of Barbara Hepworth. I had seen her limestone work *Monolith* on Hampstead Heath and wanted to follow a Yorkshire woman, like myself, who had worked in London, on her journey out to Cornwall to see her studio and the landscape influenced her work.

With this piece of writing I hope to share my enjoyment of this most beautiful place where sculptures are enhanced by nature and change with the sunlight. The most magical patterns of light are seen on her sculptures. The holes and hollows of her powerful forms are a delight. It is wonderful to see how the seasonal plants in the garden and changing incident light envelops objects made by a human hand and make them appear integral to the landscape. There is also a wish to celebrate the idea of leaving behind a memorial to one woman’s working life.

It is in St Ives that Hepworth’s work can be most enjoyed. Trewyn Studio is where she lived from 1939 until her death in

1975. The local rock forms and the sea inspired her. Several pieces by Hepworth in are on public display in St Ives in very different places; a small “Madonna and Child” (marble 1954) is in St Ia’s Church; by contrast with a backdrop of the sea is a bronze piece called “Pierced Form” (“Epidaurus” bronze 1960) on the Malakoff headland. The largest is “Dual Form” (bronze 1965) outside the Guildhall. Hepworth presented this piece to the town in 1968. At that time she was an active member of The Friends of St Ives, now the St Ives Archive Trust.

After walking around the winding streets of the town nothing could have prepared me for the visit to Trewyn Studio and the Hepworth Garden: behind the high fortress like stuccoed walls is a real oasis of green. Once inside, it is difficult to believe that the harbour and the bustling shops of Fore Street are just a few steps away. Barbara Hepworth set up a project in her twilight years to dedicate her home, studio and garden as a permanent display space to provide access to carefully selected works after her death.

The setting of Hepworth’s sculptures outside in her tiny garden amongst palms, ferns, flowers and rockeries (there is even a display in the greenhouse next to her workshop) are part of the marvel. Sculptures are not dead on plinths in a sterile museum: they are in Nature.

Some forty six pieces are here in different media but the weathered bronzes are the most powerful. The smooth dark faces and contrasting verdigris surfaces seem to have

responded to the browns and greens of the garden.

Over the years since visiting on winter mornings and summer afternoons and watching the shadows of the curves and hollows grow across the lawn I have been captivated by the idea that although the sculptures are solid and timeless each visit offers a unique glimpse of their settings dependent upon the season and the time of day. I have visited the garden in every season. The beauty of a new day for each visit means there is an enjoyment of the forms and the colours of the various materials of the sculptures against the plants whether in bud or flower or just as bare branches.

There is no set route as I wander around the garden to look at each piece. There are hidden paths, water and a lawn. Some sculptures are small and hidden away; others are so large they appear oversized rising above the roofline of the studio buildings. There is more to see next to the house. Out-buildings have been kept as the sculptor's marble carving studio. Light streams in through a glass roof striping the back wall and falling on racks of tools left as though Hepworth might return to continue working.

“Spring” (1966 bronze), the egg-shaped piece set in the rockery by the fish pond is perhaps a favourite - no more than a metre tall but set in a sun trap high above the path between the bamboo and palms. One of the most beautiful ways that the sculpture catches the light occurs when the sun casts a shadow of the strings like a harp across the verdigris hollow within the smooth bronze geode. Hepworth knew Naum

Gabo, who worked in St Ives during the War. Like Gabo she used strings in many of her works. “Spring” is the only piece of this type outside in the Garden.

On the lawn in front of the hut where Barbara Hepworth used to sleep in the summer is a piece in two parts called “Two Forms” (“Divided as a Circle” - bronze 1969) just taller than man height and as wide as it is tall: two half circles with circular eyes provide a spy-hole to the house and studio. The noonday sun from the south first falls on the tallest tree and then on all the sculptures as the afternoon passes. “Two Forms” acts like a sun dial casting a shadow across the lawn. As the sun sets in the west the shadow falls on the summer house.

St. Ia’s church tower is one of the few complete buildings visible from the world outside. Within the garden the largest sculpture is “Four square” (“Walk Through” - bronze 1966); this colossal rectangular piece, which almost matches the size of the church tower, is made of four almost square bronze slabs stacked like dominoes. Each has a hole. The height of the sculpture draws the eye to the sky, framing a perfect blue against the soft green. As part of the garden this rectangular silhouette can be viewed through the branches of both tropical and deciduous tree leaves. In winter the twigs make an interesting veil of shadow and contrast with the solidity of the unchanging artificial forms.

The fact that Barbara Hepworth planned to leave her property as a home for her sculpture and envisaged how her work and workplace could live on is perhaps the most

interesting facet of this project. Was she aware that in such a tiny garden would house the largest collection of her work? The idea of displaying her work in natural light is for me the greatest achievement with the grouping of the pieces within the plants and paths offering an endless variety of visual treats which could not be enjoyed in a conventional gallery setting.

When Hepworth worked inside the studio and looked out onto the garden when there were just flowers and trees I wonder how much their shapes influenced the forms she was making, and how often she thought of the space as an outdoor gallery for the future? There is a photograph from as early as the 1950's showing completed works outside the studio with the church tower clearly visible in the background. We do not know exactly when the idea of a memorial garden was first crystallised but during her life Hepworth used the garden to display work.

Trewyn Studio and The Hepworth Garden as they now stand have a message about her life's work enduring and a unique place where the Cornish light brings a special life to Barbara Hepworth's sculptures beyond her twilight years and into the future.

“NEW HORIZONS” A MOVE

After losing my father I needed some peace and the desire to be by the sea became stronger. Time with my mother became more precious and I sought comfort in the beautiful places where we had spent our summers in Cornwall. I needed to find optimism to balance the cold hard fact of loss and also wanted to be with her. A new life together and a move were planned. There would be time to experiment with my own work in the landscape we both loved. Sadly with the slowing of age and concerns about her health I braved this new life alone. There was an emptiness when I re-visited Porthmeor Beach. The telephone brought her familiar voice but as the call ended a sense of remoteness returned.

I had often made long weekend visits out of season and always seemed to be welcomed by the winter sun. This was time for myself and my camera not a holiday but one of my “private escapes”. My mission was to record the light and landscape as references for my work. Many of the photographs taken on those visits captured not only the setting sun but blue skies, cotton wool clouds and palm trees. These were pictures of an exotic place where dreams were made. I still enjoyed using slide film and would proudly project the landscape at larger than life size in luminous colours to illustrate my lectures. Relocation was to recapture the spirit of those explorations

After visiting for more than twenty years I did not consider

myself “a stranger in the town”. Time spent in St Ives was part of my life. I had enjoyed leaving my career in London in the shadows and spending time anonymously on the beach or out walking. I was often spotted with my camera but as the lady from “up country” my images were part of my professional work not for local display. I had spent time in two separate worlds. This time I was not going to return to London... I was going to stay in St Ives to explore more of Cornish landscape and more of my own creative ideas

Every day as a resident I could see the sea in the distance across the garden. Although the sea might be grey the turbulent waves were still beautiful. Despite days of endless rain and challenging winds I had to go out and needed to find a different environment to allow me to focus on work. The structure of work days and weekends had been lost and I was suffering from “cabin fever”. I bought brightly coloured waterproofs and battled against the rain to catch the country bus to Penzance. The claustrophobic carriages of London Transport were left far behind without regret.

The silhouette of St Michael’s Mount was the highlight of the journey. The visibility of the causeway changed each day with the tide. Travelling to the South side of Penwith gave me a new outlook. Penzance offered somewhere to learn new skills and a place to spend some alternative thinking time. A laptop became my mobile office and studio. Light and windows was my subject both in my writing and artwork. The regular fonts of the words produced by the keyboard helped structure my thoughts as I wrote. Prints became digital images. I thought

of the sky and the sea and mixed and matched colours from a palette on screen.

My new Cornwall was not a passive two dimensional landscape of picturesque scenery. It was alive and I wanted to draw on the fusion of ideas around me but I also had to face my feelings. There was no easy resolve to the painful reality that the people I cared most about were far away. I decided to lose myself in the process of thinking about my projects and looked forward to the fine days when it was possible to go out along the coast and look out to the open sea. The sparkle of sunlight could often be found across in Mount's Bay when local cloud hung over St Ives. I tried not to look back but to the future.

I needed to rediscover a source of motivation. That first winter the weather reflected my feelings. There were dark clouds interspersed with occasional bright sunlight: the sea was both angry and calm. Monochrome blue windows filled large canvases. I wrote about the views which inspired me and the quality of daylight. I wanted a new window on the world. My references were photographs from local vernacular studios and contemporary city architecture. The images were from two different worlds but there was a linking theme: the value of light to bring energy in to a space and reveal form. The buildings were my sculptures and I compared the windows to the holes in Hepworth's forms.

The sea was also an inspiration with its ever changing colours and moods. The sea was not just to be admired: its

tides and currents had to be understood. I had wanted to learn and reached out from my own island to make links to my friends. I had needed time and space to think. The most valuable moments were not spent working but gazing out to sea. The silence I had feared became a source of comfort and a welcome time to reflect.

End



