



ALISON CHAPMAN-ANDREWS

LANDSCAPE REVISITED

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Recent work by **Alison Chapman-Andrews**,
where past paintings and drawings of the
Barbadian landscape are used as themes
for new variations.

ENCOUNTERS AND BORDERLANDS – Introductory essay
by **Therese Hadchity**

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My search for a new subject included the swimsuits, robes of power, Celtic circles. Each complete, they did not show the way forward. Usually each painting, or series, seems magically to carry within it the germ of the next. But nothing happened. So I abandoned the search for something 'new' and returned to my first inspiration — the Barbadian landscape, its trees, its plants, its patterns.

Yet there was a difference. Instead of the real landscape, I went to my past paintings and drawings, long forgotten in my sketchbooks. Where before I'd spent hours drawing I now took photographs of the same spot. Often things had changed. Gullies and gardens were overgrown and unrecognizable, farming methods changed the scene. For instance the gully near Sugar Hill has been flooded, presumably for irrigation, and although the royal palms trees amazingly survived, the tiny stream has gone. The painting that resulted, *Returning Rainy Season* is a mixture of the new watery reality and previous abstractions. This duality of realistic reflections and flat decoration is not resolved, another try is called for.

Each group in this exhibition series reinterprets a past work except for group 1 where I painted some on the spot from the veranda at Martins Bay. This does not fit with the exhibition theme, but as they are recent, not shown work, they are included. In group 2 the original drawings at Friendship Plantation, never led to a painting. Well I did one and cut it up. **Friendship Fragment** is all that remains. **Yellow Hillaby** and its sketch, **Green Hillaby** is new but reminiscent of what I couldn't do thirty years ago. In producing **Burnt Hillaby** I remembered a film seen as a student, of a volcano erupting, wonderful colour and full of the life force. This contains neither, a dying world.

The three primary colours in one piece is an idea I've been exploring since 2006. In this exhibition each primary colour is a theme for a group. While blue and yellow spawn multiples, blue 3 yellow 4, only red is a single new work: **Red Coconut**, perhaps because many ideas were included in this single painting. My favourite idea in *Red Coconut* is the green sun/coconut (green being the opposite colour of red). The composition was inspired by drawings leading to the two works shown from 1996 of the same motif. However, in *Jasper Sea* the colors are reversed with pink sea and yellow beach, not red. In the new work the trunk is more realistic, no longer just decorative triangles, so again we see the fight/balance between real and abstract in one image. It's a worry to me that it does not succeed totally. My continual search for a successful personal outcome is what it seems to be about. All I can do is keep making, composing, and working. I chose this path, but where it leads, no one knows.

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ENCOUNTERS AND BORDERLANDS

Since the very first time I set eyes on a painting by Alison Chapman-Andrews, Barbados never looked quite the same. It was she, who sensitized me to the island's secret crevices, its golden-pink glow in the hour before sunset and to the special quality of Barbados *remembered*. Yet few artists have more regularly answered any yearning I might have had for national romanticism, with works of dismissive restraint and analytical formality. This because the oeuvre is not, after all, about Barbados, but about the charged and multi-dimensional encounter between mind, eye, hand and matter – a process which in the end, of course, includes us, the viewers. While this may be true of all painting, I contend that Chapman-Andrews' subject matter, no matter her motif, always is the encounter itself.

So frequently and spontaneously connected with landscape painting is the name Alison Chapman-Andrews, that the label in fact may cloud our vision. For the landscape, even though a main source of inspiration, has as often been her 'lens' as her motif, and what the designation does not suggest is the oeuvre's stylistic and thematic breath and the artist's continued dialogue – not always with a particular landscape, but with the archive of landscape painting and, especially, as the present exhibition reveals, with her own previous work. While individual items may reflect on the relationship between man and nature, nature and landscape, on the eroticized body/landscape and the perceiving mind, and ultimately on art and the artistic process itself, the oeuvre, on the whole, is a convergence zone between the observed, remembered and imagined, the literal, abstract and symbolic. And although 'landscape painting' as a genre encompasses a vast range of moods and tonalities, it offers no hint of Chapman-Andrews' ability to transform the external world into visual poetry without ever succumbing to self-scrutiny or exposure, or of her frequent excursions to the borderland between materiality and perception, which erases the distinction between the 'something' and you.

Though many artists revisit motifs throughout their working life, it is tempting to suggest, that the gesture seems especially poignant in Chapman-Andrews' case, partly because the landscape she has painted over the last four decades itself has been transformed, and partly because her limited mobility might have dictated an increasing internalization of the subject matter. Yet it could equally be argued, that Chapman-Andrews' landscape, always (though to varying degrees) has been internalized and that her approach is inherently transformative.

Works in the exhibition are thus, for the most part, variations or reinterpretations of earlier works or motifs. The artist's arrangement of the paintings into nine groups offers interesting and occasionally surprising hints at what she considers to be essential. Whereas a curator might have organized the works according to motif, emotional tenor or degrees of realism, abstraction or 'painterliness', Chapman-Andrews' groupings, it seems, precede the interpretive by simply identifying a technical, thematic or geographical starting-point – some of which may be less than obvious to the viewer.

I, for example, found the contrast between the fiery drama of color, movement and light on the leaves in the upper half of Group 6's **View at Flower Forest** (p. 21) and the moist, shadowy web of its lower half so captivating, that my eye almost bypassed the palm-tree in the foreground, which anchors the composition. Yet it is the low perspective on this palm tree, in addition to the strong light that dissolves the outline of the leaves, which connects the piece with **Big Canoe** (p.20). The latter, inspired by the tiny lino print **Big Big Canoe** (p.20), refers back to 'View at Flower Forest' through the use of natural fiber (burlap in the painting, coconut fiber and leaf in the print).

The oversized, vulva-shaped leaf in 'Big Canoe' and the magnetic field, which holds it in suspension next to the strong vertical of the palm, however, also links that painting to the surreal and eroticized **Cosmic Gully** (p. 16) of Group 5. Here, the coconut-trunks, now resembling painted tribesmen, have become phallic elements in a timeless landscape of grooves and furrows – a magic world, where the male and female principle, like sun and moon held in check by gravity itself, recall the following lines from Emily Dickinson:

That Love is all there is
Is all we know of Love
It is enough, the freight should
Be
Proportioned to the groove

In the re-interpretation, **Returning Rainy Season** (p. 19) as well as in the smaller sketch of the same name (p. 18), the duality of sun and moon gives way to a single principle – sun in the large version, moon in the small – and the earlier painting's air of suspension yields for a total immersion of elements. Contrary to the strangely enclosed and self-contained universe of the original, we now look out to the sea in the distance, and the artist, it appears, has been especially preoccupied with the water on the gully-floor, which in 'Cosmic Gully' is only faintly implied in the blue-green hues towards the lower edge of the canvas. The more abstract tendency in the newer works do, however, connect them with **Cosmic Border** (p. 17) of Group 9, where the trees – but for a few remnants of squiggly lines on the far left – are reduced to rhythmic patterns of vertical and diagonal lines. A sense of depth and orientation is created where a narrow opening between trunks and leaves offers a glimpse of sea and horizon, both of which are otherwise incorporated into the mutually interpenetrating areas of forest and ocean.

In the works of Group 4, such diagonals are all but eliminated, so that only verticals – usually the lower sections of the trunk with few leaves – are lined up across the picture-plane. Though **Be Strong and Endure** (p. 14), with its clustering palms, tall horizon and nocturnal atmosphere, in some ways recalls 'Cosmic Gully', the absence of a recognizable event on the far side of the horizon-line, apart from something resembling a smoke signal, continually returns the viewer's gaze to the foreground and creates a sense of confinement and lack of transcendence. It is this sometimes frustrated, sometimes harmonious dynamic between the 'here' and 'there', which the works of this group have in common. In **Cold Night** (p. 14) the brown earth and blackened trees in the foreground and the distant, silvery moon passively enact the familiar drama of line and circle, but in the reinterpretation – now in landscape-format and wittily entitled **Long Cold Night** (p. 15). The formerly withheld erotic energy has been released: the moon now lights up ('kisses') the fruit on the young tree at the centre, and the soil comes alive with electric arrows tingling with attraction towards the glowing celestial element on the far side of the fence. Finally, in **Cold Night Collage** (p. 15) we find the cycle completed: the ground is no longer visible and the moon has contracted and receded – but small flowers now protrude from one of the trunks.

It is compelling, thus, that neither male nor female elements are conscripted to an active or passive (receiving) role, and that it may as well be the female, which fertilizes the male, so that it may bear the fruit. The erotic gaze in Chapman-Andrews work is therefore never about human sexuality only, but rather an aspect of a world-view governed by the principle of complementarity.

Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in the works, which make up Group 8. **Trees on Black** (p. 24), one of the most austere paintings in the show, consists merely of a horizon-line interrupted by two trunks (or, if one reads the image in reverse, a field interrupted by three trunks) and a yellow moon traversing the space in-between. Through these simple sections, however, multiple dualities emerge: horizontal and vertical, foreground and background (or land and sea), sea and sky, line and circle, male and female – which altogether invoke a universal notion of complementarity. Meanwhile, in the more recent version **Reflected Moon Between Trees** (p. 25), the double image of the moon and its reflection – the female element alienated from itself and therefore also from the male (which, in this version, it doesn't touch) introduces a more irreconcilable and unsettling duality.

This sense of distance and longing has infused Chapman-Andrews' Barbadian works from the late 1980s. Even without the supporting title, the sweepingly panoramic **Last Day in The Country** (represented in the exhibition by a small watercolor-version (p. 22)) has the character of a last, loving glance. The details and sensory fullness emanating from the refracted light, alternating perspectives and nuances of texture and color suggest a heart-wrenching desire to absorb and reproduce the scene in its magnificent totality. It is almost impossible not to see in the two palm-trees – not now a phallic symbol – a representation of the eyes that see. Many years later and almost as if in ironic self-admonishment, **Claybury Revisited** (p. 23), however, concedes the corrosiveness of memory by repeating the scene in the sepia-tones of a faded photograph: the details are now erased, the view a bit myopic – and yet, the intense sense of presence is preserved and condensed in the palm-trees, also here, it seems, the eyes and alter ego of the artist and of us, her fellow travelers. In a more recent and even more radically transformed version, **Formal Trees and Buoy** (p. 23), the middle-ground has been reduced to a beach, while the now multiplied trees evoke the image of eager bathers heading for the waves.

The coastline has indeed been almost as staple a motif for Chapman-Andrews as has the landscape, a fact which in itself speaks to the principle of complementarity). The majority of works in Group 1 are mementos from visits to a well-loved location: **Martin's Bay Tree** (p. 9), **Steps to the Beach** (p. 9) and **Coconut Grove** (p. 9) – fleeting observations of the landscape's structures and movements. The other two works in this group – **Bay House** and **Bay House 2** (p. 8), on the contrary, reach behind the atmospheric for a sense of certainty. These, at first sight so mundane, renditions of fishing floats on a wooden patio, are meditations on the relationship between objects, light, volume and space (the viewer will note that the deepening of the pictorial

space from left to right, especially in Bay House 2, creates an ambivalence in the evocation of volume in the larger float) and therefore also on the ungraspable relationship between the material world and artistic representation – indeed on the nature of ‘being’ itself.

This conundrum likewise, though perhaps not intentionally, suffuses the almost monochromatic works – also based on visits to Martin’s Bay – placed in Group 3. On this reading, the peculiarly obstructive shimmering opacity at the centre of **Jasper Sea** (p. 12), which blocks the eye’s passage to the background, invokes the transformation of the materially solid into atomic mists under the inquiring gaze. No wonder, therefore, that the small complementary piece, **Bay and Moon** (p. 12), should consist entirely of pulsating energy – the world in flux, where matter and time becomes one. In **Red Coconut** (p. 13) the newest in the group, the artist nonetheless returns to the combination of realism and abstraction noted in Bay House 2. Here, the insertion of the coconut tree and its leaf converts the lowest band in the background’s flattened color-grid into a shallow foreground. As our eye moves upwards, the realism applied to the tree’s dry and porous base recedes and allows the gradually flattened trunk to blend in with the background.

Among all the exhibition’s identified sources of inspiration, the most unexpected is the small fragment of a 1981 painting (p. 10), which is the basis for the works in Group 2, all centered on Mount Hillaby. The fragment shows an abundance of vegetation rising up from the gully floor to the level of the surrounding, grove-like landscape. It is, however, not the image of the earth as a cornucopia, but the sudden depression in the topography itself, which ever so discretely is carried forward in the three new paintings. In the very sparse and sketchy **Green Hillaby** (p. 11), the presence of a gully is merely intimated in the shadow to the right of the long palm, which bisects the picture-plane. While the compositional use of the palm to evoke a shallow foreground resembles that of ‘Red Coconut,’ ‘Green Hillaby’ is no formal experiment, but a determined topographical analysis, softened only by the yellow flowers in the foreground, with its background allowed to unfold into the far distance. Meanwhile, in the larger **Yellow Hillaby** (p. 10) the austerity gives way to a plethora of narrative detail. As in the sketch and certain previous works, for instance ‘Last Day in the Country’ and ‘Blackman’s Gully,’ the artist locates herself, and us, at a slight remove from the central ‘event,’ by converting the very foreground into a sort of viewing platform. From this point a story is told – a story about a landscape of grasslands, ridges and caves, of long, spindly trees and sprinkles of flowers, of gullies with cool blue-purple shadows, of arid hillsides and a sky reddened by blazing cane-fire. It is a portrait exactly so suggestive, that it brings the ‘sitter’ to life and yet allows the viewer to complete the narrative. How surprising, then, to find that Chapman-Andrews – with apparent and uncharacteristic finality – has added another chapter to the story. In **Burnt Hillaby** (p. 11), the scene turns apocalyptic and the oncoming fire becomes a furnace of cosmic destruction and creation. There is no safe promontory in the foreground here – fireballs and specks of blue fall out of the sky, the grass-patch is now a war-zone of charcoal and cinders, and a ravine, collapsed into a black hole, distorts the landscape’s gentle curves into a cascading precipice. And yet, in the midst of this unfolding catastrophe, Chapman-Andrews – as fully as ever a master of subtlety – by the mere superimposition of four veil-thin bands of light where the distant plains meet the horizon, converts the apocalyptic mood into one of elation and expectancy.

If the exhibition and the present discussion do justice to Chapman-Andrews’ artistic disposition and development, they present, within the seemingly narrow confines of a single genre and, indeed, within the groups identified by the artist herself, an astonishing range and versatility of style, technique and inflection. The differences between new works like ‘Burnt Hillaby,’ ‘View from Flower Forest’ and ‘Formal Trees with Buoy’ are indeed as conspicuous as those, which separate recent from earlier works. And yet, these differences are never as profound as it may appear, for Chapman-Andrews’ entire oeuvre is infused and indeed distinguished, not only by its emphasis on the artistic encounter, but by an unrelenting curiosity and determination to challenge herself. In her viewers, this alone instills a sense of elation and expectancy.

THERESE HADCHITY
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Group 1 – VIEW FROM THE VERANDAH

BAY HOUSE 2

2011

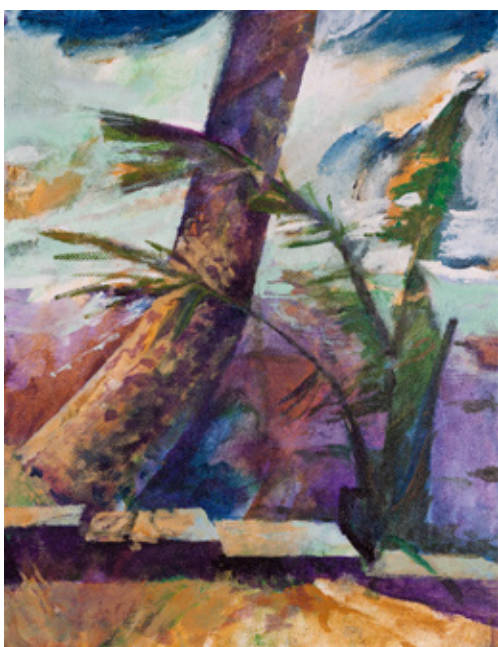
24 x 24 ins, acrylic



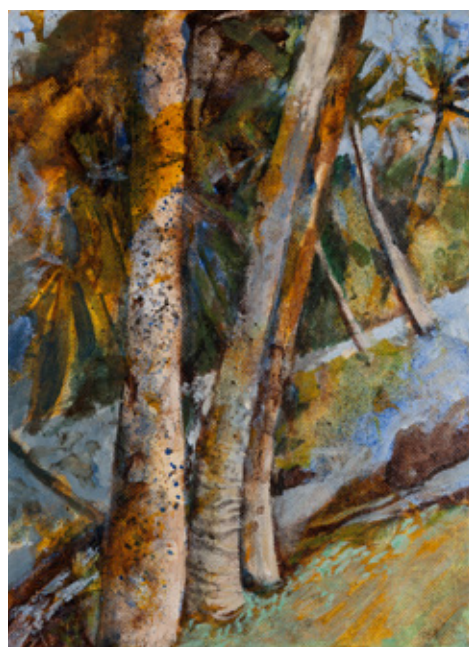
MARTINS BAY TREE
2008
24 x 24 ins, acrylic



STEPS TO THE BEACH
2012
14 x 9 ins, acrylic



COCONUT GROVE
2012
14 x 9 ins, acrylic



Group 2 – HILLABY FROM FRIENDSHIP (YELLOW)



FRIENDSHIP FRAGMENT
1981
9 x 22 ins, acrylic

YELLOW HILLABY
2013
36 x 48 ins, acrylic





GREEN HILLABY
2012
12 x 16 ins, acrylic

BURNT HILLABY
2013
37 x 48 ins, acrylic

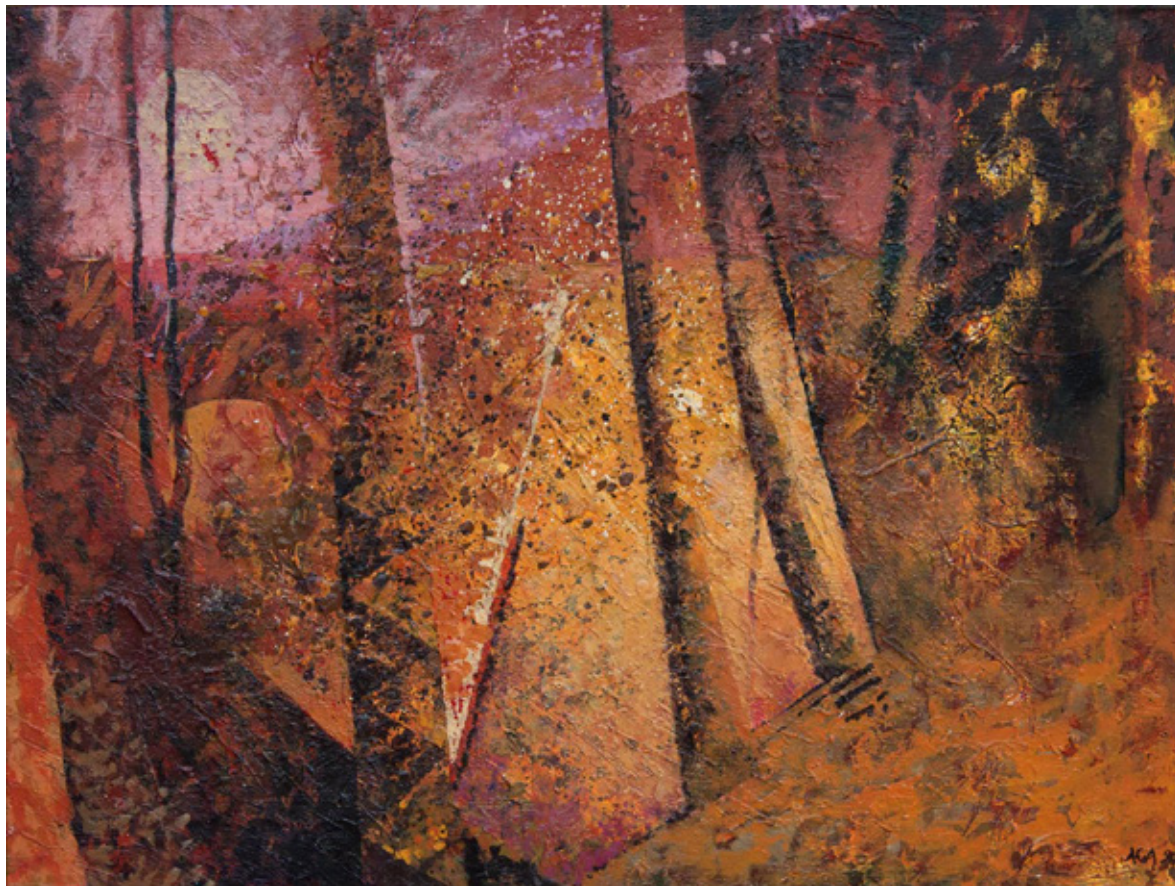




Group 3 – MARTINS BAY (RED)

BAY AND MOON
1998
6 x 6 ins, lino print
Private Collection

JASPER SEA
1998
18 x 24 ins, acrylic
Private Collection



RED COCONUT 2012
36 x 48 ins, acrylic
Private Collection



Group 4 – COLD NIGHT (BLUE)



COLD NIGHT
1999
14 x 14 ins, acrylic
Therese Hadchity Collection



BE STRONG AND ENDURE
1998
48 x 58 ins, mixed media
Private Collection
Photograph only in exhibition



LONG COLD NIGHT 2012
36 x 48 ins, acrylic



COLD NIGHT COLLAGE
2012
12 x 16 ins, acrylic and collage

Group 5 – SUGAR HILL GULLY

COSMIC GULLY
1994
48 x 60 ins, acrylic
Private Collection
Photograph only in exhibition



Group 9 – COSMIC BORDER

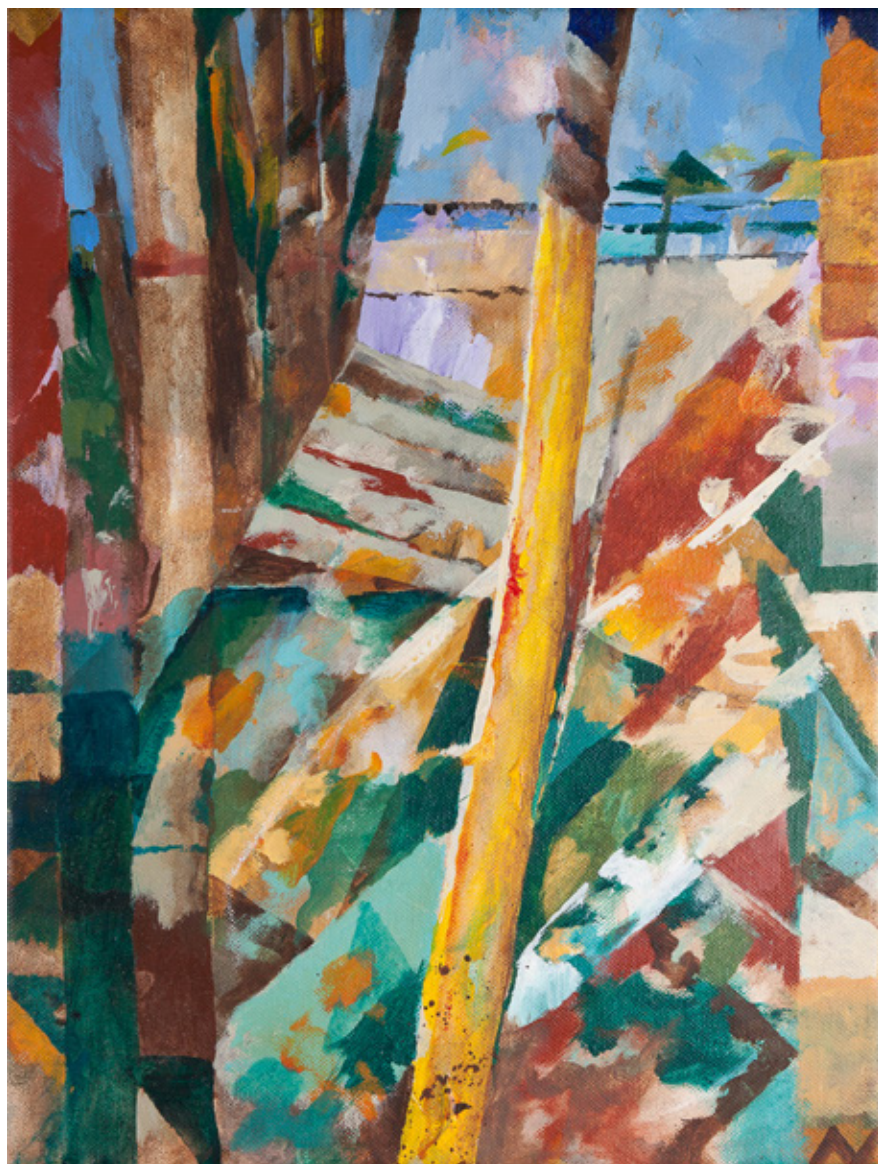
COSMIC BORDER
1994
60 x 72 ins, acrylic
Private Collection



Group 5 – SUGAR HILL GULLY (Continued)



RETURNING DRY SEASON COLLAGE
Page from current sketchbook



RETURNING RAINY SEASON
SKETCH
2013
16 x 12 ins, acrylic

RETURNING RAINY SEASON
2013
60 x 48 ins, acrylic



Group 6 – FLOWER FOREST

BIG CANOE
1999
30 x 18 ins, acrylic
Private Collection



BIG BIG CANOE
1996
8 x 4 ins, lino and collagraphic print
Private Collection



VIEW AT FLOWER FOREST

2012

24 x 24 ins, acrylic and burlap

Hillary Bethel Collection



Group 7 – CLAYBURY

LAST DAY IN THE COUNTRY

1987

8 x 9 ins, watercolour

Artist's Collection



FORMAL TREES WITH BUOY
2013
18 x 24 ins, acrylic



CLAYBURY REVISITED
2008
24 x 24 ins, acrylic
Private Collection



Group 8 – BETWEEN TREES

TREES ON BLACK

1998

10 x 12 ins, acrylic and knitting

Nick Whittle Collection



REFLECTED MOON BETWEEN TREES
2012
49 x 48 ins, acrylic



EXHIBITION LIST

GROUP 1: VIEW FROM THE VERANDAH

1. BAY HOUSE (2011)*
11 x 20 ins, acrylic
2. BAY HOUSE 2 (2011)
24 x 24 ins, acrylic
3. MARTNS BAY TREE (2008)
24 x 24 ins, acrylic
4. STEPS TO THE BEACH (2012)
14 x 9 ins, acrylic
5. NORTH (2012)*
9 x 14 ins, acrylic
6. COCONUT GROVE (2012)
14 x 9 ins, acrylic
7. NORTH BEACH (2013)*
9 x 14 in, acrylic

GROUP 2: HILLABY FROM FRIENDSHIP (YELLOW)

8. FRIENDSHIP DRAWINGS (1980)*
Photocopy
NFS
9. FRIENDSHIP FRAGMENT (1981)
9 x 22 ins, acrylic
10. FROM FRIENDSHIP (1980)*
15 x 15ins, acrylic
11. HILLABY FROM FRIENDSHIP (2013)*
12 x 16 ins, acrylic
12. GREEN HILLABY (2012)
12 x 16 ins, acrylic
13. YELLOW HILLABY (2012/3)
36 x 48 ins, acrylic
14. BURNT HILLABY (2013)
36 x 48 ins, acrylic

GROUP 3: MARTINS BAY (RED)

15. MARTINS BAY DRAWING*
Photocopy
NFS
16. JASPER SEA (1998)
18 x 24 ins, acrylic
Private Collection
NFS
17. BAY AND MOON (1998)
6 x 6 ins, colour lino print
Private Collection
NFS

18. RED COCONUT (2012)
36 x 48 ins, acrylic
Private Collection
NFS

GROUP 4: COLD NIGHT (BLUE)

19. COLD NIGHT (1999)
14 x 14 ins, acrylic
Therese Hadchity Collection
NFS
20. BE STRONG AND ENDURE (1998)*
48 x 58 ins, mixed media
(*Photograph only exhibited*)
Private Collection.
NFS
21. LONG COLD NIGHT (2012)
36 x 48 ins, acrylic
22. COLD NIGHT SKETCH (2012)*
12 x 16 ins, acrylic
23. COLD NIGHT COLLAGE (2012)
12 x 16 ins, acrylic and collage

GROUP 5: SUGAR HILL GULLY

24. COSMIC GULLY (1994)
48 x 60 ins Acrylic (*Photograph only exhibited*)
Private Collection
NFS
25. RETURNING RAINY SEASON SKETCH (2013)
16 x 12 ins, acrylic
26. RETURNING RAINY SEASON (2013)
60 x 48 ins, acrylic
27. RETURNING DRY SEASON COLLAGE
Photocopy
NFS
28. RETURNING RAINY SEASON 2*
48 x 36 ins, acrylic

GROUP 6: FLOWER FOREST

29. TREE DRAWING *
Photocopy
NFS
30. BIG CANOE (1999)
30 x 18 ins, acrylic
Arthur Atkinson Collection
NFS
31. BIG BIG CANOE (1996)
4 x 8 ins, lino and collagraphic print
Private Collection
NFS

32. VIEW AT FLOWER FOREST (2012)
24 x 24 ins, acrylic and burlap
Hillary Bethel Collection
NFS

GROUP 7: CLAYBURY

33. LAST DAY IN THE COUNTRY (1987)
8 x 9 ins, watercolour
Artists collection
NFS
34. CLAYBURY AGAIN (2013)*
16 x 20 ins acrylic
35. FORMAL TREES WITH BUOY (2013)
18 x 24 ins, acrylic
36. CLAYBURY REVISITED (2008)
22 x 22 ins, acrylic
Private Collection
NFS

GROUP 8: BETWEEN TREES

37. TREES ON BLACK (1998)
10 x 12 ins, acrylic and machine knitting
Nick Whittle Collection
NFS
38. REFLECTED MOON BETWEEN TREES (2012)
49 x 48 ins, acrylic
39. ROUGH SEA AND TRUNKS (2010) *
9 x 8 Ins, acrylic and paper

GROUP 9: COSMIC BORDER

40. COSMIC BORDER (1994)
60 x 72 ins, acrylic
Private Collection
NFS
41. MONOCHROME WINDOW (2011) *
8 x 9 Ins, acrylic and sand
42. WINDOW IN COLOUR (2011) *
8 x 9 Ins, acrylic and sand
43. COSMIC COLLAGE (2013) *
48 x 48 collage

*Not illustrated (15)

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