

CLIFFORD FISHWICK
and
MICHAEL GARTON

by

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Before I begin I would like to thank Debbie Wood for putting on this lovely exhibition. I would also like to thank Pat Fishwick, Antonia (Tosje) Maks-Garton and Ann Berger, for their patience and help in putting this talk together, Mark Fishwick, Jessie Garton and Ray Berger who have given me the photographs for the powerpoint, and Jem Southam for enabling me to use the photographs that he took for 'The Painter's Pool'.

When I agreed to talk about this exhibition, I was conscious of the fact that members of both Cliff and Mike's families would be here, also many friends and colleagues, and students. So in this room there are many vivid memories of their love, their kindness and the many ways in which they inspired us.

It was Cliff, the Principal of Exeter College of Art, who on interviewing me for the post of half time art historian in 1970, did not refer to my status as a single parent. My previous job interview had ended in disaster when the panel agreed that I was the right person to teach drawing at Northampton College of Art, and then withdrew the offer when they heard that I had two small children.

It was Mike who took the phone call that told me my husband had died in New York. It was Mike who rescued the children's frozen hamster by tossing it in a blanket over the stove. Life and art are intricately entwined, but today, I want to try and understand how they came to make the work that surrounds us here and to attempt to place their paintings in the context of the history of art in England in the twentieth century.

Cliff Fishwick taught Mike Garton at Exeter Art School. They were both products of the atelier system and in turn, this is how they understood their role in art education. The model appeared simple. The artist, through his example showed the students who and what an artist was. You the student, were the

beneficiary of a chain of teaching that stretched back to Michelangelo and beyond. Being an artist was seen as a life long developing process, so the master was the model of the kind of dedication and intensity required to be an artist.

Janis Ridley said of Mike that 'he is showing the tradition of being an artist.'¹

A psychoanalyst has said of the atelier system, 'Real learning took place between individuals in a work group, when not under pressure to succeed or conform, and when it was possible for a degree of self selection to operate.'²

The system was so well grounded that it was incorporated into the architecture of the Art School. My own art school was set up like this, each master had a dedicated studio. To speak to the master you had to interrupt his work, quite a daunting prospect. In my case it was either Victor Pasmore or Richard Hamilton.

When the new Exeter College of Art and Design building at Earl Richard's was being planned, Cliff made sure that the Principal's office could also function as his studio. This was not a self-indulgence. It was the most significant element of his responsibility as he saw it. As a member of Staff going into Cliff's Office for a meeting, it meant that you had the opportunity to consider the progress of his current painting.

Mike drew alongside his students all his life, discussing the progress of his drawing, and advising students about how they might develop their own. Speaking as a colleague, when confronted with a student in difficulties, the remedy was to send them to Mike. The more troubled, confused or full of self-doubt they were, the more he was able to help them. It wasn't only what he said or proposed or advised that put them back on their chosen road, but his example of how to live a life as an artist. To Mike, everything that happened in the world was relevant to the

making of his work. Oliver Dowlen one of Mike's students put it clearly 'There was no distinction between how he taught and how he painted.'³

Looking back, one of the significant benefits of the atelier system was that, as a student one respected the masters, but one also felt respected by them. They treated you as an equal. This mutual respect was always there between Cliff and Mike.

Let's go back to before they met.

Cliff went to Liverpool School of Art at the age of seventeen, that is from 1940 to 1942. From 1942 to 1946 he was in the Royal Navy working on the Atlantic convoys. After the war, he returned to Liverpool to study for the Art Teacher's Diploma.

When invited to talk to the students about his work, Cliff would begin with Turner. It was Turner who famously lashed himself to the mast during a snowstorm off Harwich, making the painting that recorded the experience in the studio later. During his war service Cliff spent many hours on watch looking into space, sea and sky, in changing light, in darkness, in all weathers and under stress. It was this experience that deepened his appreciation of Turner's late work. Perhaps it was a consequence of appreciating Turner, that Cliff developed a way of working which chimes with Turner's. Unable to actually paint because of the task in hand, he made mental notes on the spot, sometimes sketches and water-colours, storing the experience of what he had seen for development in the studio later. Kenneth Clark records Turner's working process. He made very many drawings and water-colours 'In Rome alone he made 1,500 in three months.'⁴ about thirteen a day.

Al Alvarez says that Cliff,

'was a master of that peculiarly English medium,

water-colour. Like Cotman, he knew how to capture a scene and an atmosphere in a few delicate strokes and a wash of pale colour. He produced literally thousands of water-colours, many of them works of great subtlety, but all done quickly, casually, like jottings in a notebook. He himself took this talent for granted and did not set much store by it.'⁵

Perhaps Cliff's disregard for his water-colours comes from seeing them as a private part of the process of painting. Kenneth Clark points out that in Europe, 'the classic tradition has never considered the water-colour a serious medium of painting.'⁶

Clark says of Turner, that making so many water-colour sketches transformed the way that he used oil paint, and I think you could say the same of Cliff. You can't correct a mistake in water-colour, every touch is fixed on the paper. Years of experiment with white paper meant that Cliff like Turner used oils in quite an extraordinary way. Alert to the qualities inherent in different kinds of mark, he built up layers of transparent glazes. The work in watercolours also meant that when he used oil colour, he relished the use of impasto, and the rich darkness that can be developed using oil paint. Mike said of Cliff, 'His main contribution was a feeling for handling paint.'⁷

The break that both artists had to endure at the start of their careers, Cliff's war service and Mike's National service, saw them returning to art education, bringing with them that experience and a redoubled commitment to their careers as artists. During the upheaval in the Art Schools of 1968 a slightly bewildered Cliff, commented to Graham Rich, that he couldn't identify with all the fuss the students were making, 'We just wanted

to carry on painting.’

On returning to Liverpool Art School after the war, Cliff circulated writing about Cezanne amongst his fellow students. Cezanne was an artist who was considered too avant garde by his teachers there, notably Alfred Wiffen the anatomy teacher.⁸

Both Cliff and Mike admired Cezanne. The evolving nature of Cezanne’s influence is difficult to recapture now. Literature on painting was difficult to get hold of, catalogues were simple lists of works, and colour illustrations were extremely rare.

Clive Bell developed the idea of ‘Significant Form’ as a result of his appreciation of post impressionism and in particular the work of Cezanne. Charles Harrison has pointed out, how at the time that Clive Bell was developing his theory, he and Roger Fry were looking at Cezanne’s early work, which was expressionistic in character.⁹ ‘Significant form’ was rather an elitist phenomenon, only certain people were endowed with the ability to appreciate it.

By the time Cliff and Mike were talking about his work, Cezanne’s late water-colours were known. It was Cezanne, who revealed the reality of the picture plane. He painted repeatedly, Montaigne St Victoire, an image of the mountain made up of marks, some of which were balanced on the surface of the canvas, sometimes appearing to hover in front of it. This was Cezanne’s great contribution, presenting an idea of a painting as something capable of having its own internal logic, of being an object in its own right. It was Cezanne who opened the door to abstraction.

Merleau Ponty described Cezanne as ‘the artist who wanted to make visible ‘how the world touches us’. The tactility of landscape, its being under your feet , or if you are a climber up against your face.’¹⁰

In 1947 Cliff was appointed to teach Painting and Murals at Exeter. Pat, who had met Cliff when she was an art student in Liverpool, wanted to follow the young artist that she so admired to Exeter, but her parents wouldn’t allow her to go, so Cliff suggested that they got married, which fortunately for everyone here - Pat’s parents agreed to. They arrived in Devon living first of all in North Tawton where Mark was born.

Cliff was painting boats and beaches with fishermen. The way in which, after the first world war, figures in art had become fragmented, minute (Giacometti) or almost stick men was identified by Ortega Y Gasset in his influential essay *The Dehumanisation of Art*, which was published in English in 1948.

Peter Davies has made a connection between the figures in Cliff’s beach paintings and the sculpture of the fifties made by Lynn Chadwick, Reg Butler and Kenneth Armitage and known as *The Geometry of Fear*.¹¹ This term was coined by the British critic and poet Herbert Read in 1952. He used the phrase in a review of the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale of that year. As the Tate Gallery online glossary says:

‘Their work, and that of Moore at that time, was characterised by spiky, alien-looking or, twisted, tortured, battered or blasted looking human, or sometimes animal figures. They vividly expressed a range of states of mind and emotions related to the anxieties and fears of the post-war period.’

Cliff met Al Alvarez, the poet, novelist, critic and climber in Bosigran at the climbers hut on the North Cornish Coast in 1956, and they enjoyed a lifelong friendship. Cliff was a serious climber. With Alvarez and the Biven brothers he climbed,

recorded and named routes, sometimes spotting possible climbs while out sailing. Climbing also fed into his painting. The sense of scale in his work and the wildness of the places that he had risked reaching were there in his painting throughout his life. Another poet, Ted Hughes, turned up in North Tawton whilst Cliff and Pat were living there.

Cliff made contact with other artists in the South West, where the centre of attention was inevitably St Ives. It is important to remember that St Ives had been the focus of the most radical developments in English Art between the wars and throughout the second world war. Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth had attracted Mondrian to Belsize Park and other European exiles such as Gabo and Pevsner to St Ives. The distinction between Abstraction and Abstracting was well understood in Cornwall. Cliff was a friend of Peter Lanyon. I think you can see connections between their work in this exhibition. Lanyon said 'I do not start with the idea, but with the experience.'¹²

Where Lanyon took up gliding, Cliff was climbing, so both of them gained from the experience of being above the landscape. Jack Pender, Patrick Heron, Michael Canny, Trevor Bell, Bryan Wynter, Paul Feiler, Alex Mckenzie, (who had been a student with Pat in Liverpool,) Karl Wesche, Bill Gear who was a member of COBRA in Paris, they were all friends of Cliff and Pat. We were lucky to have some of these artists as lecturers at Exeter College of Art. Roger Leigh and Mike Snow, who were on the College staff, had been Barbara Hepworth's assistants in St Ives. The debate about painting was lively, articulate, informed and international. Cliff's family holidays were spent in Cornwall and in Italy painting with these friends. Gradually Cliff's work became more abstract, full of light and air, growing out of his experiences of climbing and sailing and his contacts with this group of painters, most of whom exhibited with the

Penwith Society in St Ives, and who shared his belief that abstraction was the way forward for painting.

The influence of American Abstract Expressionism, (of which more later) came through Peter Lanyon who first visited America in 1957. Rothko visited St Ives in 1959, staying with Peter Lanyon for three days. He met many artists, danced the twist and saw the work at the Penwith Gallery. Lanyon told Cliff and Pat that the artist whose work Rothko saw in Cornwall, that he particularly admired was Pat Fishwick. Chris Stephens, reflecting on Rothko's visit says:

'The significance of Rothko's presence in Cornwall lies in the values and intentions he shared with St Ives artists...It also reflected a dialogue between British and American artists that was part of the increasingly international nature of contemporary art production.'¹³

Cliff exhibited in the first John Moores exhibitions in 1957, 1959 and 1961. In 1957 he had a one man show in London at the St George's Gallery. The show sold well, but the Gallery went bust before they could pay him for his work. This was a disaster, but it did mean that some of Cliff's work was out there building his reputation as an interesting and talented painter. Cliff exhibited in St Ives with the Penwith Society, but he didn't live in Cornwall and besides he had other responsibilities. His subject matter and his continuing dialogue with these painters place him firmly in the St Ives group of artists. Andrew Causey in his book on Peter Lanyon pins down the moment when St Ives suddenly came to be seen as out of date:

'The 1950's accommodation between land

scape and abstraction ended with the Situation Group's 1960 exhibition of non-figurative art. In the catalogue introduction Roger Coleman described the new work as "abstract (that is without explicit reference to events outside the painting – landscape, boats, figures – hence the absence of the St Ives painters for instance.)" The shift was sudden from St Ives work being seen as characteristic British modernism to a widely held view that it was out of date.¹⁴

Urban Abstraction was seen as a purer form of abstraction unlike rural abstracted landscapes. Lawrence Alloway thought that the sheer beauty of the local landscape was a drawback to the St Ives group of painters, 'British Art looks disorganized from a distance, because Britain's strongest national convention – landscape painting – seemed no longer usable.'¹⁵ Alloway warned that, 'As nature gets demoted from the centre of British aesthetic, which is now happening, Lanyon may turn out to be our last landscape painter.'¹⁶

Lanyon's premature death in a gliding accident in 1964, was a tragedy for the whole group of St Ives artists, as it seemed to act as a confirmation of Alloway's statement.

The forthcoming show of Peter Lanyon's work at the Tate St Ives and the exhibition of Cliff's work at Falmouth Art Gallery scheduled for next year will mark the starting point for a reconsideration of the work of the St Ives group at that time and Cliff's place within it. Peter Davies is curating the show at Falmouth, and his biography of Cliff will be published to coincide with the exhibition. It seems the right moment to re-evaluate the work of these artists, and to see them once again at the centre of the debate about painting.

Like many of our best art students at Exeter, Mike Garton was dyslexic, a condition that was not recognised in the early 1950's. Mike's enlightened parents enrolled him, therefore, aged thirteen, in Guildford Junior Art School. The course was 'Painting and Decorating and Sign Writing', but soon Mike discovered that there was a course called 'Fine Art'. From there he went to Exeter Art School and at eighteen he undertook National Service with the RAF. Mike spent time in Egypt, painting camouflage onto tanks. This was an established role for an artist in the theatre of war in those days. You can imagine Mike engaging with the task of making tanks disappear: using a limited palette and developing 'all overness,' working in the desert on a large scale with huge three dimensional 'canvases'. After National Service Mike returned to Exeter to take his National Diploma in Design, where Cliff taught him, he met Ann who was seventeen.

Cliff introduced Mike to Cezanne's work. In Mike's early works, the bowl of apples and the tree, you can see him following in Cezanne's footsteps. In the tree, the marks that describe the branches have their own careful reality as brush marks on the surface.

In 1957 Mike was accepted at the Slade, but without a grant. He supported himself and Ann, his new wife, by vacuuming the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's.

Mike actually signed on to do Sculpture. Ted Atkinson remembered his remarkable sculptures of heads and figures from life fifty years later¹⁷, but Mike couldn't get on with the Head of sculpture at the Slade. A. H. Gerrard and spent his time painting in his digs. Perhaps Mike's understanding for students who found themselves adrift or in the wrong context at Exeter came from this difficult situation. When William Coldstream eventually saw Mike's paintings, he was much impressed.

Mike was awarded a Slade Scholarship and ultimately a Diploma in painting. Tess Jaray was a student at the Slade at the same time as Mike. She says:

“‘When in doubt, return to nature’”. This is what Cezanne said and this is what we were sometimes told at the Slade.’¹⁸

This advice was not seen as useful by Tess, and reads as rather an over simplification. Cezanne said that the basis of his art was ‘une sensation forte avant la nature’ As Clark says:

‘At first this looks as if he was ascribing to the aesthetic of impressionism. But there is of course a profound difference. Cezanne is not thinking of an optical sensation, but of the reaction of his whole being.’¹⁹

Mike knew that Cezanne said he wanted to paint ‘Poussin from Nature’²⁰ and he was interested in Cezanne’s formal ambitions. At the Slade in those days it was the practice for students to make a copy in front of a painting in the National Gallery. Mike chose Poussin’s *Landscape with a Man killed by a Snake*. The subject of this painting does not appear to have any mythological or biblical source. The setting has been identified as a notorious snake infested area near Fondi, south east of Rome. I think that this painting is a very illuminating choice for Mike. It is a carefully constructed landscape, which conveys an uncomfortable view of nature as harbouring dark secrets and indifferent to the struggles of humanity. It has been called a study in fear. The dead man, wrapped in the coils of the snake, has been seen by the running man. The woman washing clothes is alarmed by

the running man but has not seen the dead man, the fisherman are simply absorbed in fishing. The figures are placed on alternately light and dark strips of ground. The narrative unfolds taking the eye along a sequence of diagonals back through the landscape. Poussin made models, like stage sets from which to paint. I can see Mike’s engagement with the way that Poussin takes the viewer successively through the foreground into the middle ground and on to the background. This pathway for the eye was to become a serious preoccupation for Mike.

The other big influence on Mike was the American abstract expressionist exhibition at the Tate Gallery. This show was enormously influential. The USA had been dominated by the art of Europe, now it was going to show Europe how to ‘do’ art. The show, funded by the CIA, had a persuasive theoretical platform articulated by Clement Greenberg. The Exhibition of 81 canvases packed into 41 enormous cases toured Europe: Milan, Madrid, Berlin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, London and finally New York. Cliff and Pat saw the exhibition in Paris, and Mike saw it in the Tate in February or March 1959. Seventeen painters were included in the show. Cliff admired Rothko’s and De Kooning’s work in the exhibition. The direction of Cliff’s work seemed to be endorsed by the work in the show. The scale of the work had an effect on Cliff’s painting in the early sixties.

Mike was particularly impressed by the work of De Kooning, Pollock, Sam Francis and Rothko. Mike ‘Went Abstract’, as it was put in those days. It is possible to see exactly what Mike admired in Pollock’s painting. The active reality of the mark at the moment of its making, the ‘all overness’, and the scale of the work. Greenberg’s idea of the task for painting as testing the limits of what a painting could be, was an engaging question for Mike. He even went a bit ‘American’. He bought a white chef’s jacket and trousers and died them pink. This outfit was later im

proved upon by Molly Fitton, who made him a white brocade jacket. He bought a pink Cadillac!

In 1960, after the Slade, Mike now with Ann and baby Sarah, got a job at Cardiff Art School as Master of Painting and Murals.

In 1963 Cliff invited Mike to come and work at Exeter College of Art. Graham Rich remembers Mike's first day at Exeter because it was also Graham's first day as an art student. One of twelve new students that year, who each had been told to arrive with a set of specific materials. The group waited expectantly for Mike's entrance. When he arrived and asked for a sheet of paper, a student handed over one of the three sheets of paper that had been specified on the list. Mike, placing it on the floor, asked for a bottle of Indian ink. Graham handed over his own precious bottle of ink. Mike emptied it from a great height onto the paper. Then he said, 'I will be back at six.' Horrified at the loss of the ink and mystified by the enigma of their beginning, the twelve students set to work and by six o'clock had made an amazing installation using newsprint, charcoal and paint. When Mike returned, he was delighted with what they had achieved. Graham says Mike didn't start with a question or with an answer, he started with a crisis, and this had been a tremendous lesson. Anne pointed out that what was missing from Graham's account was that Mike would have been pacing around all day anxious about the risk that he had taken and worrying about how his new students were progressing.

Mike's abstract paintings were complex, colourful and geometric. He was still concerned with perception, following the eye across the picture plane. He made many geometric drawings on paper, tracing the after image and recording it. Dick Tartar, a

lecturer in mathematics at Exeter University, fascinated by the way that Mike was approaching his work, invited Mike to address his students. Mike entered the lecture room and immediately asked for all the chairs to be removed. He talked about the number 'three', and space as the third dimension. Everything he talked about was his own discovery. The talk was a memorable success.

When I first met Mike in 1970, he had been going through a difficult time with his painting. He felt he was sacrificing his career by going non abstract. In spite of the fact that he felt he was committing professional suicide by returning to figuration, he couldn't stop it from happening. It was as if the transformation occurred in spite of him. He had established a reputation as an abstract painter. The Welsh Arts Council had bought one of his abstract paintings, but here was Mike painting what was before him, his studio. All the effort and energy expended on developing his abstract work was now applied to the subject. Tracking the progress of the eye from foreground to middle ground and background. He made string grids so that he could observe peripheral vision and how it functioned in the paintings he was making. Following the eye from the studio floor to out of the window. It was now that Mike began to work in Stoke Woods. Like Constable, Mike was Painting outside in the open air, in front of the subject.

Ann says that Stoke Woods are very much like the Berkshire woods where Mike grew up. This attachment to the landscape of his childhood makes one think of Constable, who wrote to his friend John Fisher in 1821:

'I should paint my own places best...Painting is but another word for feeling...The sound

of water escaping from Mill Dams, willows old rotten planks shiny posts and brickwork. These things made me a painter and I love such things.²¹

Constable said about painting in the open air:

‘No two days are alike, nor even two hours, neither were there ever two leaves of a tree alike since the creation of the world²²

Graham Clukas, said, ‘Mike never steps into the same wood twice.’²³ But it would be a mistake to see Mike’s work in the Woods as regressive, a return to the idyllic days of English landscape painting. Mike was working there using all that he had learned during his abstract phase. The work that he made in the woods goes beyond abstraction.

I remember Cliff saying that he found nature far too overwhelming to work in front of it. Charles Harrison says of Paul Nash:

‘Drawings water-colour sketches and photos were assembled together after the relevant observation was made – the transformation of a specific remembered scene into a composition of complex but well ordered relations.’²⁴

This was also Cliff’s working method. Nash wrote of painting ‘from’ nature rather than ‘after’ nature. Harrison says that Paul Nash’s work, ‘conveys a strong sense of the possibility of reconstructing the state of mind of one present at such a place at such a time.’²⁵ and I think that you can say this of Cliff’s work also.

This was a way of working conforming to Wordsworth’s idea of poetry as ‘emotion recollected in tranquility.’²⁶

Bonnard, a painter much admired by Cliff, wrote an interesting text published in *Verve* in 1943, titled *The Bunch of Roses*. Like Cliff, Bonnard found the presence of reality very difficult to cope with and he advised the painter to look at the roses, but to go into the next room to paint them. The presence of the real roses would be too much for the painter to handle, he had to discover his own painting identity and the presence of the subject was distracting. ‘Renoir painted Renoir’, a painter had to develop their own view of the world. Bonnard said that he was weak in front of nature, ‘Cezanne could do it, you have to be able to defend yourself against nature.’²⁷

Mike’s strategy for making work was completely different to Cliff’s. Mike would imagine an image or dream about a place, and then set out into Stoke Woods to find what he had imagined. Mike fearlessly confronted the strangeness of nature. He worked face to face with what he could see but his head was full of a precise understanding of painted space. He would balance his easel precariously where it needed to be. Mike, all his life invented roof racks on vans, ways of working outside in all weathers with sheets of plastic draped over the surface to protect the paper or the canvas from rain. He now began to establish an outdoor studio for himself in the woods. He would rig up canvases and arrange pulleys and hiding places so that anyone stumbling across his studio would not discover the paintings. He would cycle with paintings, acting as sails, strapped to his bicycle. If he could not find exactly what he was looking for he would tie branches back with string. Mike wanted flatness and constructed a pool in his Stoke Woods studio by damming a stream to find

the flatness he was looking for.

Mike talked about looking, but when Mike exhorted students to look, it wasn't quite as simple as it sounded. The mechanism of peripheral vision, following the eye's path, catching it out, these are the puzzles that enthralled him, because by pursuing them so intently he attained an inner vision – a magical transformation that would lift a painting onto a meditative plane something beyond the sum of its parts – a painting to travel through.

David Eustace described looking through some of Mike's Woodland drawings with him, 'They were almost impenetrable. He looked long and hard and quietly and seriously he said, "There's something there".'²⁸

You have to learn to look into Mike's work. For most of the twenty years I worked at Exeter, a very large charcoal drawing by Mike, Stoke Woods of course, hung in the committee room. Steve Thorpe who was teaching with Mike at the time that he made this drawing says that it was made up of twenty four smaller sections made on twenty four separate days and assembled together into one large drawing, about ten foot in length. By the end of the drawing process Mike said he felt as if he was drawing the atoms in front of him.

At meetings I used to position myself opposite this drawing whenever I could. Academic board meetings, governors meetings, student interviews, staff interviews, course reviews, takeovers and mergers, all became an opportunity to engage with Mike's drawing. Through this drawing it was possible to make my way through the charcoal marks, and to move into the woods in my imagination: to move through the trees, to take a path, and always a different path.

Outside the window there were at that time some beauti

ful trees. In Spring, their pale green leaves moved independently in the light, but this natural display was a light distraction compared to Mike's great drawing which seemed to provide access to an interior space – a place for thinking, for resolving things, for being aware of being in the world. The drawing seemed to grow richer over time, a steadily intensifying prospect. The more you looked at it the more it became.

Jem Southam says that when he was first appointed at Exeter as a lecturer in photography, he expected to be able to talk to colleagues about art, but the only person who would discuss the subject with him was Mike. He and Mike talked about the process of painting. Having set up the canvas in the woods, you look at the tangle of vegetation that confronts you. Where do you make the first mark? Where do you start?

Jem made a book of photographs of Mike's studio in Stoke woods called the Painter's Pool.²⁹ He photographed the studio in the woods throughout the year, recording where Mike had tied back branches that were in the wrong place, Mike's easel, Mike's ironing board. Looking at Jem's photographs is like seeing directly into Mike's imagination.

Jem said to me that he was surprised that Mike, who painted the woods at all times of the year and in all weathers, seemed to use the same palette whatever the season. Mike told Graham how much he was enjoying having retired. Now he was able to go to the woods at all times of the day, through all the seasons and that he was finding colours that he had never seen before. This seems like a contradiction, but I think that Jem's observation reveals the difference between the photographer, trying to catch the light at a moment on a surface and Mike the painter, who is aiming to construct something which is beyond appearances.

Itten pointed out that artists have a colour identity and it

was important for their training that they recognized and understood this identity. The Tate Gallery owns Turner's last palette, rescued by Ruskin. It was once the practice for artists to donate a palette to the Royal Academy. Katherine West who was a student of Mike's at Cardiff could recall being taught by Mike how to set out her palette (See Appendix). Mike's palette is certainly very distinctive, sombre, serious and thoughtful, a colour identity that opens up a path for contemplative thought. The pool that Mike had built by damming the stream, was now the centre of Jem's photographs. After Mike's death Jem tried to keep the pool going. He was surprised at how much work Mike had needed to do to keep the pool from drying out.

Like Claude Lantier in Zola's novel *The Masterpiece*, the novel which led to the end of his lifelong friendship with Cezanne, both Mike and Cliff painted and painted and painted. Gombrich could have been talking about either of them when he wrote about Cezanne:

'Outwardly he lived a life of tranquility and leisure, but he was constantly engaged in a passionate struggle to achieve in his painting that idea of artistic perfection after which he strove.'³⁰

Tosje said that when she first met Mike, she hung some of his paintings on the wall. He didn't like it. All he could see was where he felt he had failed. He just wanted to get on with the next painting. Tosje told me, 'He always put down his brush at ten o'clock - every night.'

I remember bumping into Cliff at a Topsham party after his retirement. He had been sorry to leave his current painting

to attend. He leant towards me in the crowded room, 'Lesley, what do they live for? How do they manage without art?'

Both Cliff and Mike have through their art changed the way that we see the world.

Gaston Bachelard asks the artist 'Tell me what your element is?' For Cliff, I would answer air. For Mike I think it would be earth.

Both Cliff and Mike were ambitious in the scale of their imaginative aspiration, yet looking round the room, the modesty of both of them stands out. Every mark is totally unselfconscious. You could say that both these artists conform to Duchamp's assertion that 'The artist is a mediumistic being.'³¹ Their art comes through them not from them. Perhaps this is the true basis of their power as artists. By standing back and allowing the work to come through them, they give us, the audience, the space to move into the paintings and engage with them, for we have been granted a generous space to bring our own imagination into the work.

Mike has the last word – because it will stand for both of them. At the end of his life, Mike was told that he wasn't well enough to go to his studio in Stoke Woods again and he realized that he would be unable to carry out the paintings that he had planned. Mike paused for a moment thought about his life and said

'I've had a good paint.'

APPENDIX

The Palette used by Mike Garton and still used by me, Katherine Elaine West. Mike had spent a lot of time experimenting with colour mixing and which colours gave the purest results and this is what he taught me:

- Three blues :- Prussian Blue (tending to yellow)
Cobalt Blue least adulterated by any other colours)
Ultramarine (tending to red)
- Three reds:- Alizarin Crimson (tending to blue)
Cadmium Red Pale (least adulterated by other colours)
Vermilion Red (tending to yellow)
- Three yellows:- Lemon Yellow (tending to blue)
Cadmium Yellow Pale (least adulterated by other colours)
Cadmium Yellow Deep (tending towards red)
- Three whites:- Zinc White:- fairly dense and reflective
Titanium White:- tends to be translucent, letting background through slightly
Permanent White:- thick, solid and dense letting least back ground through.

If you wanted the most vibrant green you mixed blue tending to yellow with yellow tending to blue eg. prussian blue and lemon yellow. The most vibrant orange was mixed by vermilion and cadmium yellow. The most vibrant purple was mixed by alizarin crimson and ultramarine. Muddier shades were mixed by confusing the eye with adulterating green with a blue that tended to red or a yellow that tended to red or both, ...or an orange with a red that tended to blue and/or a yellow tending to blue... or a purple with a blue tending to yellow and/or a red tending to yellow.... depending on the shade and the perspective you were trying to suggest. The potential for mixing any colour you could use in a landscape is therefore endless and totally controlable. I hope this makes sense. Not many people understand this logic if they have not used the same palette.

Mike did not use black because he said that all blacks have some colour in them and could be mixed from three primaries. He was very careful about priming his canvases but I don't remember him giving us a recipe for his grounds. He recommended that we read Max Doerner's "Methods and Materials of the Artists". I made up my recipe from that book.

We did not have the benefit of Acrylic's early on on our training. We used gouache or oils and he recommended "Artist's colours" not "Student's colours" as they were of better quality.

Mike was very influential and deeply honest in his judgements and opinions which could be hard to take when you were in the middle of something you

hought was quite good but he was always right. He helped me a lot when I got unable to trust my judgement or lost confidence. He was absolutely to be trusted to find the reason for, and to find a way out of, difficulty.

The importance of the colour palette was the purity and control of colour so that one did not get unintended effects from adulterating pigments which could completely alter the position of themselves in the perspective of a picture if you were not aware of it and this would cause muddle and confusion. I am absolutely certain that every colour mixed by him and used in a painting were considered and deliberately controlled and in their rightful place both in perspective and in their influence on other colours in the painting. This is why the "Stoke Wood's" paintings are so powerful and endlessly fascinating. Personally I find them beautiful but also painful because they demand so much scrutiny and I find something almost lonely in them till I remember his colour palette and his deliberateness. The paintings personify everything that I knew about Mike as one of his lucky students all those years ago.

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