

Rory McLauchlan

Tom Allan

Robert Kelsey

SCOTTISH ART SCENE 43

FEATURING

Robert Kelsey
DA MUniv PAI FRSA

Tom Allan
ARBS PAI

Rory McLauchlan
BA (Hons) Fine Art

In this issue we feature two painters and a sculptor. Rory McLauchlan and Robert Kelsey are both landscape painters who use exceptionally vibrant palettes but their work could not be more different.

Rory paints mainly Scottish or French landscapes in a highly improvised way with colour, line and shape, producing almost abstract work. Robert is often inspired by the land and seascapes of the West Coast of Scotland but has also worked in the Mediterranean, Suffolk and Cornwall. He depicts light and colour with unparalleled accuracy.

Tom Allan hardly requires introduction. He has won many awards and set up and organised the first regular International Stone Symposium in Scotland. His work is held in private collections in Britain, Europe and the Americas.

We believe the combination of these three artists makes of a fascinating issue.

Stewart



Carnival Couple No1.

Rory McLauchlan

Where is your studio, why do you enjoy working there and what's special about it?

On the top floor of my house I have a small garret which acts as a studio/workshop and eyrie from where I survey and contemplate the world. From therein the alchemy is conjured up and dispensed.

It is a pleasant and homely space from which to work from but the clutter is abominable.

How would you describe the light there and do you have a preference for a particular light and how does it affect your approach?

The light is from the north giving a reasonable amount of lux and evenness. All is well until the onset of winter when the daylight, at this latitude, rapidly deteriorates. I find this deeply frustrating if it continues for more than a day. I have experimented with daylight bulbs, to compensate, but have found them all to be, practically, useless for my purposes.



Cornish Harbour 2013



Galloway Landscape 2014

How does the light hit your surface? Do you like to have sunlight in the studio or artificial light?

I am a colourist, through and through, and good clear light is of prime importance to my craft. Artificial light just does not work for me. It is imperative that I know what each colour is doing and saying at any given moment. I rarely work outside apart from gathering source materials, magpie like, photographs, sketches etc. Quick sketches are often made, which are taken back to the studio where the creativity of the imagination takes over.

Is there a particular subject or emotion that draws you?

No, not definitively, I am interested in the science and emotion of painting. I am looking, in my own way, into transforming a simple idea/image into something more - Head, heart and hand.

Free reign is given to the brushwork and, as much as possible, also to the imagination and intuition that accompanies it.

Although, there is much risk involved, bravery is paramount and failures are many but without them there is no progress, only stagnation.



Old Wine, New Bottles (Still Life).

Do you have a preference for particular colours? If yes, is it driven by subject, mood, light or an emotional response?

I am fired by all colours and my response to the juxtaposing and conjunctions of them. The finished work must sing regardless of subject matter. Inertness and dullness are certain death for a painting.

Have your technique/colour/composition preferences changed over time?

As time has moved on, all components of my practise have evolved from their origins. After many years of working through my influences, more and more evidence of order and harmony arise and are presented to me from the chaos. It is a continual and life long process/quest.

Do you have a secret weapon?

Hard work.

What type of equipment do you prefer to use? Do you have a favourite brush/knife?

I work mainly in oil and acrylic using standard shop bought brushes, as long as they are of good quality. But I'll work with anything that makes an interesting mark; I have a multitude of different brushes, knives, sticks, pieces of cardboard, old toothbrushes etc. I don't get attached to any of them, as I tend to work quite robustly, so any tools of my trade that I use don't last that long.



Still Life With Sweet Peas.



Still Life With Tangine #1

What surface do you prefer to work on and why?

As I often work quickly and vigorously I need a rigid surface that can take a fair amount of punishment. I find board better to work with than, say, canvas. I will tend to work and rework a surface over several days and weeks.

When painting what is your preferred base?

I have two excellent 'Mabef' oak H-framed easels which I move between depending on what I'm working on. Occasionally, I will lay something larger on the floor or against a wall.

Do you work in company or alone?

Always alone, as I'm easily distracted and need to focus.

Describe your normal working day.

No two days are the same, thankfully; otherwise I would get thoroughly bored. If the weather is kind I'll start the day with a brisk walk along the Prestwick shore front, which is always interesting, meeting a selection of local characters. After the first and strongest coffee of the day I get down to work.



Winter Landscape, Ayrshire 2013

I quite often thrash around, for the first couple hours, in the morning while the energy levels are high. After lunch it's more measured and contemplative. I need constant stimulus to rouse my senses, and so, I always have several paintings in progress at any one time. Very often it feels like a mammoth struggle to pull it all together, metaphorically wrestling with the paint. During the summer months it can be hard to remain indoors and stay focused as the temperature rises.

However, I need light to survive and can feel out of sorts when the working day is severely shortened by bad light. When painting is not possible I will use the time to speak to galleries and framers or catch up with my correspondence. It's a full-time job.

Who is your greatest influence?

The Fauvist's for their sheer exuberance.

Which work of art would you like to own and see every day?

Any André Derain or perhaps a Bonnard.

Which contemporary artist do you admire and why?

Far too many to choose only one. A few are: Alan Davie, John Bellany, John Houston, Sargy Man, Jimmy Robertson, Barbara Rae and so on and so on....



Yellow Teapot 2012

If you could go anywhere to paint, where would it be and why?

The Mediterranean for obvious reasons but not just for the light. The conditions are conducive to good living and harmony of lifestyle. It becomes an emotional requirement as well as a physical thing.

What do you do to relax?

I think if you are going to be heavily involved with painting, on a day to day basis, it is refreshing to remove yourself from it, regularly, otherwise staleness sets in. Although visiting the galleries is great fun and always inspiring. Reading anything from poetry to Montaigne along with Boswell and Hazlitt who are also very entertaining. Seneca for wisdom and Christopher Hitchens for living and thinking, to name a few.

Listening to Chopin, Satie or Bill Evans and Miles Davies, again to name only a few.

Is there something you'd like to say we haven't asked about?

As George Konrad said "Have a life lived instead of a career. Put yourself in the safekeeping of good taste. Lived freedom will compensate you for a few losses and then the joy of working can fill your days"



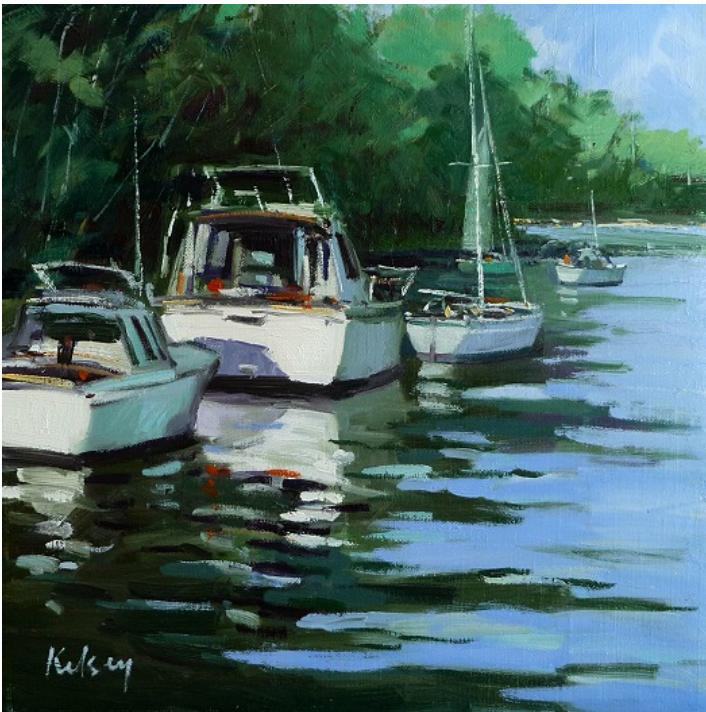
Afternoon Light, Glasgow

Robert Kelsey

Robert is the serving president of the Glasgow Art Club

I was born in Glasgow in 1949 and was lucky enough to study at Glasgow School of Art in what I believe to be the best possible period in its history.

I was there in the late 60's when the painting school was run by David Donaldson, Alexander Goudie, and James D Robertson. Nearly forty years on I can honestly say that the inspiration I received from this trio still lives in me. They all went on to achieve great things in the British Art scene, but sadly none of them are around today.



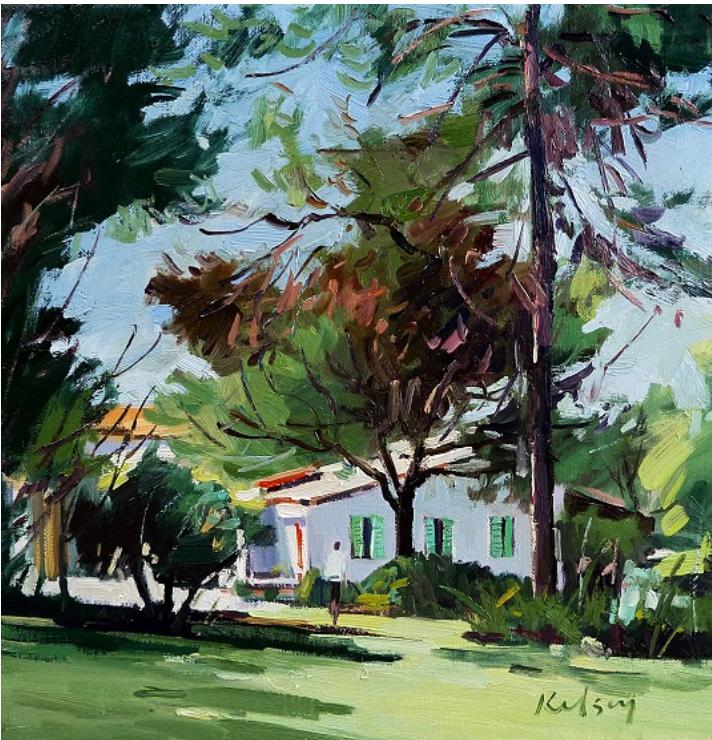
Backwater

Historically, I have been influenced by two Scottish Artists.

Samuel J Peploe 1871-1935 and F C B Cadell 1883-1937 both of whom have exerted a tremendous influence on my work, and it is probably from them that I get my colour palette.

I work with a fairly small range of colours running from Ultramarine Violet through Ultramarine, Cobalt and Cerulean blues.

I achieve the minty shallow water colour in my seascapes with Winsor Green. Finally, the earth colours of Raw Sienna and Naples Yellow are spiced up with Crimson, Orange and Cadmium Yellow.



Green Shutters, Portugal

I work on a smooth oil primed Belgian linen canvas which I buy from Russell and Chapple in London, and which arrives in a huge 10 metre roll.

This is then stretched onto wooden stretcher frames and is ready to receive the oil paint.

My style of painting is very direct, finishing most canvases in one or two sessions. As well as working on location when I get the opportunity I love working in my architect designed studio to the rear of my home. This contemporary structure has a full wall of north facing glass and all the comforts of a modern building. The central heating is welcome in the winter when the snow falls.



Path to the Shore, Arisaig



Traigh Sands, Arisaig

I love the loneliness and serenity to be found in certain locations such as the beaches of the Outer Hebrides and the rugged west coast of Scotland. I say loneliness which sounds like a bad thing, better to describe it as being at peace in serene places, where you can be alone with your thoughts, listen to sea birds, and the trickle of water.

I also love painting the vibrancy of cities like Glasgow, London and Venice.



Hammersmith Nocturne

I have a great relationship with some major Art Galleries, and since 1994 I have had more than 20 solo exhibitions in galleries in London, Edinburgh, Newcastle, and Chicago.

Thompson's Gallery, London represent me in the Capital.

For the past three years I have enjoyed serving as the President of the Glasgow Art Club and I have worked on the Management Committees of both the Glasgow Art Club and Paisley Art Institute.

In 1998 I was awarded a Diploma of Artist Membership from Paisley Art Institute. PAI.

In 2009 I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. FRSA.



S. Maria della Saluté in the afternoon light

In 2010 I was awarded an Honorary Degree of Master of the University of the West of Scotland. MUniv.

My influences other than the above named Scottish Colourists are Joan Eardley, and the English artists Edward Seago and Ken Howard RA.

My wife Jean is a great help to me in the studio and helps to make my canvases, as well as being my strongest critic.

My daughter Alison assists me with business matters and paperwork.

Tom Allan

Sculpture and Me

My life as a sculptor has been unpredictable. I was never destined for it – my parents had a quite different idea of my future. Dutifully I went to university, then taught English for thirty years, but began to sculpt soon after I started teaching. I had taken Higher Art at school, as a filler for my Sixth-year timetable, and loved it; and was extremely fortunate that a new Principal of Art, Robbie Simpson, arrived that year. One day a stack of breeze-blocks arrived at the Art Department, and he introduced us to sculpture, and carving in particular. I found I had a talent for it, and took it up again ten years later, in 1977.



Young Carthorse (breeze block cast in bronze)



Family Group (Italian travertine)



Winged Victory (Red Persian travertine)

Beginnings

Starting with breeze-blocks, I soon moved on to sandstone from demolished Glasgow tenements. Teaching myself through books, I identified other sources of stone - Cornish soapstone, alabaster from Staffordshire, relatively easy to work, so I could produce sculptures even during the years of full-time teaching. I attended Glasgow School of Art for several years, doing Life-drawing with John Boyd and Patrick Dorrian, and Sculpture with Jennifer Wendy Ross. In due course, I began to exhibit, in 1979 at the Royal Glasgow Institute for the first time, and from the early 1980s at the Royal Scottish Academy. Stone was always my preferred medium, though I tried other materials such as wood, clay, plaster, fibreglass, and assemblages of various kinds.

Take-off

In the 1990s I began to realise that I could regularly sell sculptures, and exhibiting opportunities grew. Cyril Gerber had taken my work from early days, and now galleries were springing up such as Art Exposure in Glasgow and the Leith Gallery, which welcomed new sculpture. When my school amalgamated with another, and I had the opportunity to take early retirement, I refused at first – I enjoyed teaching – but then realised that I wanted to do more in sculpture, and wouldn't be able to if I didn't start then. Since 2000 I have been a full-time, self-employed sculptor, working at Glasgow Sculpture Studios for thirteen years, and now at my studio and home in Gartcosh, North Lanarkshire.

Carving or modelling – and with machines?

Because I was early captivated by carving, my strongest influences were the modern sculptors who had carved – Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and through them I discovered Epstein, Modigliani, Brancusi, and especially Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. I began to have an inkling of what sculpture was about, for me, through their work: making sculptures which were still plainly of stone, yet capturing the essence of the thing, having a life of its own. This remains what I feel is sculpture for me: carving rather than modelling (though that is a useful adjunct) and exploring the wonderful array of stone and marble which is available. And so much more is available to us now than ever in the past, along with the modern inventions such as angle-grinders and air-tools which speed up the work, and also make certain effects possible.

Material matters

I relish the wide variety of carvable stone. Over the years I have used these, in chronological order: aggregate concrete blocks, Siporex breeze-blocks, Lochabriggs red sandstone, Glasgow sandstone, Canadian soapstone, Cornish soapstone, Staffordshire alabaster, Watcliffe Lilac sandstone, Ancaster limestone, Clunch stone, slate, Carrara marble (from a cemetery dump), Connemara marble, Hornton stone, black granite, Palmer's Buff, Craigleath sandstone, Clashack sandstone, Hamhill stone, Lincoln stone, Salterwath stone, Kilkenny marble, Australian soapstone, Portsoy marble, Naxos marble, Pentewan stone, Etretat chalk, Purbeck stone, Plean precast stone, Portland, Cadeby, and Tadcaster limestone. Then, after my first visit to Carrara, various types of Carrara marble – statuario, bardiglio, capellato, nuvolato, arabescato; and stones available there from all over the world: Red Persian travertine, Black Spanish marble, Black Belgian, Moroccan marble, Italian travertine, Pakistan onyx, Portoro marble . . . the list goes on.



Million Dollar Baby (French limestone)
VAS prizewinner 2006



Applemac Classic (Carrara marble)



Just Hooked (Carrara marble, polystyrene fishbox)

I enjoy finding the right stone for each particular subject, rather than being tied to one favourite stone or marble. And though it may not chime with the doctrine of “truth to material”, I sometimes deliberately make pieces which imitate something in a completely different material.

Public affairs

As a stone sculptor, I'm sometimes asked to mend a gatepost, or polish a marble fireplace – and have to politely decline. But among the surprising requests that have come my way, almost by chance, are the public commissions: the centenary memorial to Lord Kelvin in the Glasgow Necropolis, the statues of St Peregrine and of Pope John Paul II at Carfin Pilgrimage centre, the memorial in Fairlie to William Fife the yacht builders, as well as community public art works in Glasgow at Castlemilk and Penilee. All of these were totally unlike the kind of sculpture I was doing, but since I happened to do stone, and there were so few stone sculptors in Glasgow, I was approached. And I found each of them rewarding, especially doing the larger-than-life size statues of saints. I made them in Carrara, where I could choose the block directly, and had excellent technical help.

How far can you go? Teaching . . .

Two other things I didn't expect were the teaching that sculpture led to, and the travelling. I was encouraged to start classes by my mentor in Italy, Boutros Romhein. The classes started in 2003 at Glasgow Sculpture Studios (GSS), and have been almost continuous since then. I was keen to do this, partly to protect the existence of stone sculpture at GSS, and also to pass on what skills I have. A Hungarian sculptor visiting Glasgow had been amazed at the amount of stone-carving on the Victorian buildings – and equally amazed at the lack of such activity today. I have tried in a small way to remedy that, and have taught over a hundred people, of all ages and backgrounds, including many practising artists who wanted to extend their range. Many of my former students have come back for years, and now work independently, some at GSS.



Karel Woytjla
(Carrara marble - ht 3 metres inc. base) St Francis Xavier's Church



Stone Class at Gartcosh studio



Summer Days of Stone, GSS 2014



Five Red Herrings (red sandstone) Kirkcudbright



Stone Symposium in Mexico 2010

. . .and Symposiums

From 2006 I helped to organise several stone symposiums in Scotland – Stirlingshire, Kelbourne Castle, and Kirkcudbright, inviting some British sculptors and some from abroad. As a result I have been lucky enough to be invited to take part in similar events in far-flung places – Serbia, Canada, Hungary, and Mexico. The advantage of these experiences for a sculptor are immense – meeting and working beside other sculptors, sharing ideas and techniques, working in a new environment and enjoying a camaraderie which is so rare in the life of solitary stone sculptors.



Gothic Trees Arch
(Carrara marble) 1



Gothic Trees Arch
(Carrara marble) 2



Sleep
(slate)



Glasgow Tree
(wood)



Blackbird
(marble, gold leaf)

Size – does it matter?

There is an almost natural tendency for sculptors to move up in scale, to create bigger and bigger works. Sandy Stoddart has recently revealed his project to carve a mountain-range in Skye into the figure of a Celtic hero, bigger than Mount Rushmore. There may be an inherent quality in 3-D work which gives this impulse, and I did enjoy the larger commissions. More recently I have done pieces which are up to six feet tall, but are abstract forms, often plant-inspired, for outdoor exhibitions in sculpture parks and trails, mainly in England. I usually transport and install the work on site, and get the chance to see the effectiveness of sculpture in the open air, in attractive settings such as the Hillier Botanic Gardens in Romsey, or Newby Hall in Yorkshire, or Quenington in the Cotswolds.

Sculpture in stone – an art form

I believe there is another way of doing sculpture that does not need more size, more space, or more expense. The sculptors I particularly admire are those whose works are not impressive public memorials, or big rhetorical statements, and don't emulate grandiose architecture. They make sculptures which are small, indoor, even hand-held, but which can elicit an aesthetic response in the same way as a painting can.

Massive historical paintings, portraits of the rich and famous, or vast murals and fresco cycles have had their place and time. I look forward to seeing small sculptures treated as on a par with the kind of paintings you want to live with.

Yet even a small piece can have a suggestion of the monumental, a feeling which is not only given by bulk. The mass of a sculpture isn't strictly related to its overall dimensions. And there isn't always a need to scale up in order to get a full response.

[Visit the artists' websites](#)



Saluté from Harry's Bar
[Robert Kelsey](#)



All along the Watchtower
[Tom Allan](#)



Yellow Teapot
[Rory McLauchlan](#)

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OUR THANKS

We'd like to thank each of the artists featured for taking the time to help us put this magazine together and giving us such an insight into their work.

Stewart

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Solo presentation

by Graham Fagen

21 students,

art & design college

from across

Scotland

2015



New Venue
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