

# Marie Calvert: A Dialogue with Light



At very short notice, Marie Calvert agreed to replace our September speaker, who was unable to honour her advertised engagement due to circumstances beyond her control. Anya's talk has not disappeared, but is simply rescheduled; we were extraordinarily lucky in finding Marie, with whom we spent a delightful morning discussing both her work and, more generally, sources of artistic inspiration, and the creative value and social application of art.

Marie's full time work is as an Integrative Psychotherapist, using the creative arts and a variety of artistic disciplines with her clients in a transformative process, listening rather than directing, and picking up on unacknowledged verbal and behavioural clues to encourage

healing and selfknowledge through creative play. Outside of this, for the past fifteen years she has pursued a parallel life as a painter. Marie introduced herself as an amateur: but it rapidly became clear as she talked with passion, and described her practice, she was anything but: seen in the context of her professional career these two important aspects of Marie's daily life came together to describe a working artist.

Inevitably perhaps Marie's training is not entirely conventional. Discouraged at school by some underwhelming ceramics and an insensitive teacher, one master had the insight to guess that Marie might paint well. That seed, sown long ago, bore late fruit and continues to flourish and encourage. For many years Marie used the camera as her preferred tool to satisfy her own artist's eye, capturing sea and sky, light and mood, and the ever-changing weather, each image



capturing a fleeting moment at a unique point in time. These things, an inexhaustible source of inspiration, continue to engage her. Encouraged by a friend, she returned to painting, reskilling herself and finding her own artistic voice, a journey that still continues. Marie has learned much from working artists, particularly from the tutors of the School of Art in St Ives; and acknowledges the influence of contemporary painters such as Kurt Jackson, Neil Davies, and Gary Long. She

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quickly realised that photography and the painter's art are different disciplines. In consequence, Marie's studio paintings are based on pleinair sketches and colour studies, for which pastel is a favoured medium: those she showed us were jewels in their own right.

For an hour or so, we were privileged to share stopping points on Marie's artistic journey, from early and relatively conventional works, mostly executed in acrylic, to large scale and very free drawings in charcoal, wash, and collage, that commanded admiration from her audience. A particularly successful Turner-esque painting was unmistakably of turbulent weather over a Cornish sea; other paintings captured the space, light, and otherness of her much-loved Cornish sea and coast. Marie described the dialogue she has with her paintings, in a constant process of revision, erasure, layering, and play. She saw a tension between control and lack of control, using this proactively by, for example, turning a painting upside down, or using her less dominant hand, as a catalyst to reveal an image that could emerge organically from the plane surface of the canvas. A painting of waves breaking on a shore was effective testimony of Marie's practice, the painterly resolution capturing the energy and power of the waves.

This was an exciting talk, impeccably timed, given by an artist of courage and talent who, whilst still developing, has already found a personal and authoritative voice. For her audience, it made such a difference being able to see and handle original paintings, encouraging both questions and interactive conversation with the speaker. The last question? Where next? In the process of freeing up her paintings, both by practice and through tuition, and hovering on the boundaries between realism and abstraction with images that engage and draw in the viewer, Marie is surely finding the freedom to be herself.

Margaret Condon

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