

ARTISTS OF THE ISLANDS



The Isles of Scilly have long been a chosen destination for artists. The natural beauty of the islands, both gentle and savage, and the exquisite light that falls on land and sea attracts painters from around the world.

In this regular feature, *The Islander* will interview artists who have a particular love for Scilly and ask them to choose one of their own paintings of the islands that has a special significance for them. The first interviewee is one of Scilly's most successful home-grown painters, Richard Pearce. Born on St Mary's, Richard now lives on Bryher, working from Golden Eagle Gallery, a converted gip shed.

Why painting?

I think it's genetic. My father was a wood carver and painted in oils. He encouraged all of the family to express themselves, to make things. My sister was a designer for Biba and my brother was interested in theatre and stagecraft. He now teaches at Goldsmiths.

How did a St Mary's boy come to be an artist on Bryher?

Once I left school, I came and went from Scilly, doing a bit of farming when I was here in the summers and travelling in the winters. I finally returned with my wife Caroline, looking to settle down. I managed a farm at Trenoweth on St Mary's for a while and then took the lease of my own farm on Bryher. This was something of a disaster and we ended up moving into our current house nearly 20 years ago. It had been the schoolhouse but Bryher was rather short of children in those days and it had been unused for over 7 years. The painting really developed through the realisation that farming wasn't going to provide us with much of a future.

Which of your paintings of Scilly have you chosen?

Well, I don't really have a favourite painting as such but I suppose the image of the three sails seems to have caught the imagination and become my signature painting. I have taken a bit of ribbing over it but those three sails have been good for me and proved popular with collectors world wide. A local said to me that the painting, for him, epitomises Scilly...sky, sea, boats on sand and that means a lot to me.

The original one is hanging in the reception of Hell Bay Hotel on Bryher and this, if I had to make a choice, would be my favourite. The three sails have become the logo for the hotel, hence the ribbing. I didn't actually design it for them. Hell Bay Hotel adopted and adapted the image from a cropped version from the Tresco Estate Collection.

Which other painters of Scilly do you admire?

Kurt Jackson. I like Kurt's work and the way that he paints Scilly. In the 1940s, an artist called John Wells was a doctor on St Mary's, before he left to follow the Newlyn School. I have never seen anyone else paint Scilly like him. It's kind of a hybrid cubist / abstract / modernist and quite unlike anything else.

Richard Pearce can usually be found at The Golden Eagle Gallery on Bryher, Isles of Scilly. For further reference: www.rpearce.net ■