



LEFT: CLARE LAW

The real Cornwall

ARTISTS CELEBRATE THE 'UNSUNG HEROES' OF THE CORNISH LANDSCAPE

Words by **Laura Joint**

ABOVE: LISA WISDOM

In her renovated forge, in a disused granite quarry just outside Mabe, artist Lisa Wisdom is gently tapping away at a tack on her latest, remarkable piece of work, made entirely out of found metal. At the same time, 50 miles away in Callington, fine artist Clare Law is also in her studio, putting the finishing touches to her latest artwork, an oil painting of vibrant colours and rich textures.

Two very different ways of working, one big thing in common: both artists are consciously celebrating what Clare describes as “the unsung heroes” of the Cornish landscape. In Clare’s case, it’s the everyday foliage and greenery you see throughout Cornwall; the mosses, the ivy, the trees. With Lisa, it’s the county’s industrial archaeology, which is especially visible around her particular corner of the county.

Lisa and Clare are among ten artists from Cornwall who have been busy preparing for Delamore Arts, the annual exhibition of paintings and sculpture held every day in May at Delamore Estate in Cornwall, on the southern edge of Dartmoor. When Lisa loads her van up, she’ll be quite literally taking a little bit of Cornwall with her.

When Lisa moved her workshop to what was then a dilapidated quarry forge eight years ago, it was with every intention of carrying on her career as a blacksmith, but that all changed when she started to refurbish the forge and clear the grounds. “I found all this old corrugated iron,” she explains. “It had been the roofs and walls of the former quarry buildings which had collapsed and were lying about all over the ground.”

“It was a post-industrial wasteland, and I was gathering what I call Cornwall’s industrial archaeology. It was exciting, collecting all these materials and starting to incorporate my finds into my work. Gradually I became a full-time artist using entirely found rust and copper. I’ve always worked in metal but there’s just something about the colours of this metal that I love – the rusted, corroded edges, the greys, and the blues created by the natural oxidation of the copper.”

Lisa flattens, cuts and shapes these bits of metal into 3D collages that illustrate “the real Cornwall”. No acids are used, just natural materials, including charcoal.

It seems that people in Cornwall feel a real connection to her work. In 2016, she was asked to create a series of three pieces

to commemorate the centenary of the 1914-18 war. Focusing on Herodsfoot, Thankful Village is a reference to the fact that all the men who left the village for the two World Wars came home safely. As with most of her pieces, buildings are the most predominant feature and, as Lisa says: “They’re evocative of Cornish buildings because they’re made out of Cornish buildings! The material speaks for itself, as to its origins. You can feel the Cornwall in them.”

Lisa is exhibiting four pieces at Delamore, including Harbour Hill, based on Falmouth. She adds: “I’m Cornish; I grew up on the Lizard Peninsula. I enjoy the real Cornwall, the bits that the tourists don’t see, so I don’t beautify Cornwall in my work. My Cornwall is an ‘honest’ Cornwall, a bit decayed and broken down. I want the viewer to see rust in a new way.”

Clare’s Cornwall is the leafy green of the Tamar Valley and the edge of Bodmin Moor, where she grew up surrounded by woodland. It obviously rubbed off: “I’d sit and watch and play in the woods and now I realise I was soaking up all that information – the light, the colours, the textures – because that’s what I’m reproducing in my paintings.

“We’re very lucky that in Cornwall we have heavy foliage and magical woodland scenes where the landscape creates layers of colours and textures, but it’s not as often celebrated. To me, this foliage is the unsung hero of our landscape. When you get these glimpses of nature ‘just being’, that’s what inspires me.”

It’s only when you take a close look at Clare’s paintings that you notice just how textured they are. She uses a painting knife to create the textures, the oil so thick her paintings take four to six weeks to dry. “It’s a really exciting way to work, a bit like sculpting with oil, and it’s almost 3D.”

Clare has three pieces at Delamore, including Rhythm, inspired by the gardens at Cotehele. “I love Delamore and I spend many days there each May. In terms of exhibitions, it’s my highlight of the year.”

Delamore Arts, May 1 to 31 at Delamore Estate, Cornwall, PL21 9QT
Opening times: 10.30am to 4.30pm, admission £8.
Tel: 01752 837236/01752 837663.
www.delamore-arts.co.uk | www.lisawisdomartist.com
www.clarelaw.co.uk