

**Peter Kettle Q&A with Sarah Wiseman Gallery.
Solo exhibition 'On Meadow and River'
14th – 28th January 2017**

SWG: What has inspired you most about Oxfordshire? Has a newer location brought out anything different in your paintings?

PK: 'I started with the Glyme Valley Way, a walk from Chipping Norton to Woodstock. This route took me on some unexpected passages through Oxfordshire's countryside. For example, following the River Glyme over farmland and through Nether Chalford's abandoned villages, I was surprised to stumble upon Capability Brown's landscaped parklands outside Kiddington. The juxtaposition created some interesting ideas with how to present this series of work. I want to reveal the rustic, wild swimming spots of Oxfordshire against the calm serenity of the lily canals and riverside walks. The rhythms of the harvested fields drawing into Oxford's honey-coloured architecture, enclosed by the Rivers Cherwell and Thames. It created a great way to link these journeys back to the city. A new location will always affect an artist's work, it's what inspires any landscape artist.'

SWG: What challenges do you encounter whilst working outside?

PK 'I picked a good time of year to start the walks, however it was the hottest week of the year on record! Lugging paints and a few canvases did get demanding on the 16-mile Glyme Valley Way walk. A few cows outside Radford took in an interest in my painting spots. Sketching at the top of Oxford's St. Mary Magdalene's Church with a constant flow of tourists walking past was entertaining. But if anything, the challenges are part of the joy of working outside.'

SWG: Can you tell us about other influences and inspirations, such as films, books, music or theatre?

PK: 'Music and literature plays a big role in influencing my work. In the past, painting in Wales, Dylan Thomas has greatly influenced the ideas and painting processes. The words arranged for a musical effect is an approach I try to incorporate visually in my work. Recently I have been reading *King Solomon's Mines* and Voltaire's '*Candide*', two books that demand the reader go on adventures.

I often play an eclectic range of music. It is the motivation for work in the studio. I listen to a lot Frank Zappa, Kraut Rock, Rockabilly and Irish Folk music.

Sarah Wiseman Gallery and I wanted to celebrate the Oxfordshire landscape, and looked to literature to theme the exhibition. The title for this show was taken from the Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem '*Binsey Poplars*' and the line '*...On meadow and river and wind-wandering weed-winding bank*'. Hopkins' bouncing rhythm and evocative words marries with the works in this series.'

SWG: Which visual artists do you most identify with?

PK : 'As a mixed media painter, the landscape is the inspiration, but what comes first is the surface that I create. I work landscapes into an abstracted painting that has loosely referenced the scene. I use light and earthy tones with accents of colour to bring form to those scenes. I identify with artists that have a similar approach, such as Anselm Kiefer,

John Piper and Peter Lanyon. These artists have heavily influenced how I approach landscape art, from composition to their materials used and applied to the canvas.'

SWG: What draws you to certain landscapes – can you talk about why you choose to paint the scenes you do?

PK: 'Wales has been a large chapter of my career because I was born in Wales and lived there for years. I pick locations steeped in history and unchanging natural beauty. It's important to develop a story and a journey into an artist's work. I looked into a lot of Welsh Industrial scenes (Port Talbot Steelwork) as well as scaling the Snowdonian mountain peaks and walking the Wales Coastal Path. Coming to Oxfordshire was a journey of discovery. I like to combine smaller paintings sketched in-situ with a more free and fluid response. These are done when the light and composition feels right. The larger pieces are finished in the studio and have a more refined approach. I pick locations that have an arresting effect on me. Incorporating buildings alongside nature reinforces a period of history.'

SWG: What are your ambitions – is there a location somewhere in the world you'd like to paint?

PK: 'Patagonia in South America is a project I am looking to do imminently. Retracing the footsteps of the Welsh Settlers that moved from Wales to Patagonia and colonised areas in the south in the 1865. Their inspirational journey across awesome landscape in search of fertile land is a journey I'm looking forward to walking, painting and exhibiting back in the UK.'

SWG: Describe a typical day as an artist.

PK: 'Morning is the business element which I tend to in the morning. This involves accounts, planning upcoming workshops and arranging meetings with clients and galleries. I then research future projects and logistics for those projects. When painting, I look over sketches I have compiled and on-going studio pieces. I try to work 9am until 5pm Monday to Friday, but in the run-up to an exhibition this usually becomes 7 days a week in the studio.'

SWG: What memorable responses have you had to your work?

PK: 'Each person's response to my work is very unique and memorable. A few years ago, when I started using mixed media and going through the process of abstracting the forms of landscape, I was working in a disused milking shed in South Wales - that was a very memorable and enlightening period. I like viewers to collaborate with the work by making their own interpretations. Often, I get remarks about the textures I my work. These paintings need to be seen in the flesh! I work with surface more so than with the image. Wrestling the ideas onto the canvas and discovering the process of layering and obscuring an image had a profound effect on how I paint today and how people respond to the paintings.'

SWG: What made you decide to be a painter?

PK: 'I sketched a lot when I was younger and was fortunate enough to have studied under some very inspiring art teachers who instilled a passion for landscape art early on. However, after university I went onto a career in television and documentary filmmaking in Brighton. It was when I was working on locations around Wales, surrounded by the welsh

landscape, that an unwavering urge to get back into painting began. In between television contracts I started to research artists that I loved. It was when I saw John Piper's Mountains of Wales series at the National Gallery in Cardiff that my decision to change career gained momentum. To paint, for me, became a necessity. I put a lot of thought into what materials I would use and how I would apply them. I attended workshops and exhibits and went through mixed media techniques I had learnt already.

I found that by building layer upon layer, obscuring the image and uncovering it again through different media, huge discoveries were made. That is what I find fascinating about painting; there is always room to grow and develop into new territories. This series of work on Oxford has been a journey of researching and exploring painting techniques to celebrate the landscape.'