



OPPOSITE
Silpho Forest
(pastel,
charcoal and
graphite on
paper, 26½x19)

BELOW
Summit (pastel,
charcoal and
graphite on
paper, 17¾x21½)

Austere Vistas

USING A COMBINATION OF DRY MEDIA, **JANINE BALDWIN** CREATES ARTWORK THAT REFLECTS THE INHERENT BEAUTY OF THE NATURAL WORLD WHILE CELEBRATING HER LOVE OF THE NORTH YORKSHIRE LANDSCAPE.

By Tim Saunders

Considering the wild and solitary nature of Janine Baldwin's landscape art, it might be surprising to learn that she grew up a city girl, born and raised in Leeds, in northern England. "The places I most enjoy are desolate, overgrown, reclaimed by nature," she says. "I think this comes, in part, from my upbringing. Perhaps my experiences of the urban environment lend a slightly more unique and austere take." Now living in Scarborough, it's the Yorkshire coast that most inspires the artist, who considers her treatment of it to be in stark contrast to what she calls her "usual twee approach."

Artistic Influences

Baldwin's earliest childhood memories include drawing, painting and making things. "I wasn't aware of it at the time, but I think the creative path was already set for me," she says. Art was her favorite subject in school, so it felt like a natural progression to make a career in a creative field. "I was lucky to have parents who supported my choice to do what made me happy. Dad was always the biggest supporter of my art career, and that meant the world to me. Very sadly he has passed away, but the foundation of love and encouragement he provided stays strong," she says.

At college, an art course encompassing ceramics, photography, graphics, fashion and textiles provided the variety that Baldwin craved. "I ended up pursuing a fashion degree, only to find myself enjoying the life-drawing classes far more than the pattern-cutting ones—so I knew I had to switch," she says. In 2001, she graduated with a degree in Fine Art from the University of York and started her career as an artist. "I was the first in my immediate family to go to university and be self-employed," she notes.

For years Baldwin painted predominantly in an abstract style heavily influenced by Cornish artists. Her work explored the use of bright, high-key colors and abstract shapes. Alongside this, she



“Drawing has long been integral to my work because it allows such a visceral response to the landscape.”

—JANINE BALDWIN



ABOVE
Expanse III
(pastel, acrylic,
charcoal and
graphite collage,
12x35½)

RIGHT
**In the Wilds of
Scotland** (pastel,
acrylic, charcoal
and graphite
collage, 6x8¼)



MIXED-MEDIA MAGIC

Baldwin is an Associate Artist with pastel-makers Unison Colour. “Their soft pastels are of exceptional quality, with a beautiful range of subtle tones,” she says. “For paper, I love Fabriano Accademia and Eco, which I buy in large rolls and cut to size. They’re 200-gsm and tough enough to endure all my reworkings and erasures. I prefer a smooth surface because I find that specialist papers require too much pastel.” For collages, she uses a variety of materials, including beautiful handmade papers from Nepal, Bhutan, India and the United States. “All are vegan and made with either recycled or sustainably grown materials, including hemp and lokta, which add unique textures to my work,” she says.



Solace (pastel, charcoal and graphite
on paper, 17¾x17¾)

developed a more realist style featuring earth tones. This evolved to be her main approach. “Abstraction still plays a major role,” Baldwin says, “particularly since there’s a strong focus on expressive and gestural line and texture. The development of mark-making is equally important to the subject matter of landscape itself. I’ve always been fluid with my style because it’s not healthy for artists to restrict themselves if their instincts are pulling them elsewhere.”

Baldwin’s sources of inspiration have changed over time. She cites painter Cy Twombly (American, 1928–2011) as one of her favorites. “I find his rhythmic marks and delicate layering of media fascinating,” she says. Willem de Kooning (Dutch-American, 1904–97) and the Abstract

Expressionists have also been central influences. She finds the rugged textures in the landscapes of Joan Eardley (British, 1921–63) inspiring, too. And she loves sculptors such as Anthony Caro (British, 1924–2013) and Lynn Chadwick (British, 1914–2003). Contemporary artists whom Baldwin admires include Jeanette Barnes (British, 1961–) and Lee Bae (Korean, 1956–).

A Media Evolution

For many years, oil was Baldwin’s primary medium. Then, about a decade ago, she felt she’d reached an impasse. “I always enjoyed working in charcoal and graphite,” she says. “Drawing has long been integral to my work because it allows such a visceral response to the landscape. I decided to focus solely on dry



Silhouettes (pastel, charcoal and graphite
on paper, 13½x13½)

media to see where it would take me, and I started experimenting with pastels—a medium I hadn’t really worked in before.”

Baldwin had often used oil sticks to draw on a surface and found that pastel sticks offered the perfect dry equivalent. “Both media gave an immediacy of color and allowed me to work with spontaneity,” she says, “which is crucial because I strive to capture lots of movement in my drawings. And the combination of dry media allows for endless possibilities.”

Gestural mark-making is central to Baldwin’s technique. Most of her works involve a combination of pastel sticks and charcoal, so that drawn element is always present. She has found that certain media lends itself better to particular subjects. “When drawing forests, for example, I want

the black intensity of compressed charcoal to express all those lovely dark recesses that invite the viewer in,” she says. (See *Silpho Forest*, page 00.) “For bleak, sparse wintry scenes, such as *Solace* and *Silhouettes* [both above], I love to use pastel. It conveys so much with just a few lines.”

Baldwin also uses the physicality of paint to create diverse textures. “Collage allows me to distill the landscape into segments and abstract shapes,” she says, “and it’s brilliant for depicting forms such as the patterns and lines of tree bark.” (See *Mixed-Media Magic*, opposite.) A muted palette allows for charcoal to be used. In summer months when the foliage is in full swing, Baldwin sketches in the forest to develop her charcoal pieces. These studies form the basis of the artist’s studio work.

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT

Distant Mist II (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 21½x25¾)

Ghost Trees (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 13½x13½)

Ephemeral II (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 13¾x16)

Glimpse (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 13½x13½)



An Energetic Process

Baldwin finds that the frenetic, vigorous first stages of a new piece are key to capturing the energy of the landscape. This gives way to careful consideration of what to keep or remove. The artist is inspired by de Kooning's use of multiple layers of paint, allowing those layers not to be obscured by each reworking, but to ultimately form the finished painting. "In dry media, I use this method with several thin layers of graphite, charcoal and pastel—sometimes just with a sweep of pigment—together with numerous erasures and reapplications to form the final image," she says. "This way, there can never be a mistake. Every exploration on the paper or canvas becomes another piece of the finished work—and it's all the richer for it."

If something isn't working, then Baldwin will remove it. She notes, however, that most elements can be

used as ghost lines, even after being partially erased, to add further depth. Drawing with an eraser, Baldwin uses the erased lines and areas at every stage of the artwork as a technique in itself. "I never apply an acrylic underpainting because I like to be able to erase back down to the paper," she says. "The whole process is very intuitive. The image undergoes several reworkings and takes on a life of its own before I regard it as finished."

Part of Baldwin's working process involves allowing one piece time to breathe while working on another. She usually has at least 10 works in development simultaneously.

Music is always playing whenever the artist works indoors. "The energy from it comes through in my work," she says. "I sometimes use track titles or lyrics from my favorite bands and musicians as artwork titles, so you'll find

names inspired by Royal Blood, David Bowie, Led Zeppelin, Queens of the Stone Age and Iggy Pop, among others."

Each day is different, depending on exhibitions or project deadlines. If she's working toward an exhibition, Baldwin's day might include sketching outside, developing pieces in the studio, creating social media content, liaising with galleries, and framing and cataloguing her work.

The artist takes commissioned work on occasion, which typically involves discussions with clients about which of her works they prefer in terms of color palette, medium, style, composition and size. An interesting example was a commission with Ingo Interiors, in Liverpool, to produce a panoramic collage that was then reproduced as a large-scale wall covering in Yorkshire Housing's new hub The Place, in Leeds (see below).



Janine Baldwin with the wall covering she designed for Yorkshire Housing.

CLOCKWISE
Coniston Water Lake District III (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 17¼x17¼)

Scarred Field II (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 10x10)

Lament (pastel, charcoal and graphite on paper, 11x17)



Janine Baldwin (janinebaldwin.co.uk) is an Associate Artist with Unison Colour. She has exhibited extensively across the United Kingdom, including shows with the Royal Academy of Arts, the Society of Women Artists and the Pastel Society, UK. Her award-winning works are included in private collections across Europe, Africa, North America and Australia. In September 2023, the artist had a solo exhibition at Watermark Gallery, in Harrogate, England. In May 2024, Baldwin will once again be exhibiting in the Pastel Society, UK's annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries, in London. Her work has also been selected for the Royal Academy of Arts 2024 Summer Exhibition. Baldwin is represented by Watermark Gallery, Harrogate. She also shows with Cambridge Contemporary Art and the Birch Tree Gallery, both in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Connecting With the Land

Baldwin's appreciation for places of natural beauty have led her to participate in beach cleans and other environmental and animal rights campaigns. Another source of her inspiration stems from being a conservation volunteer with the North York Moors National Park, which sits at the edge of her hometown. "The experience feeds into my artwork, giving me a deeper understanding of nature and the primal connection we have to the land," she says. Among her favorite tasks are planting trees and hedgerows, and creating habitats for the water voles and rare butterfly species that have a stronghold in Yorkshire.

Hiking, sketching and doing conservation work immerses the artist in the landscape. "So much is absorbed subconsciously," she says. "Sketching

directly from nature allows me to respond to transient light and atmospheric conditions, and to reflect the sensory experience of being in the landscape in all types of weather."

Currently, Baldwin is preoccupied with dark, brooding, mountainous landscapes, stirred by her past trips to the Lake District and Scottish Highlands. "Climbing Ben Nevis was a highlight for me," she says, "inspiring several works that hopefully encapsulate the exhilaration of standing on the mountaintop, breathing in the fresh air and being reminded of just how small we really are." *PJ*

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