

On Seeing

Artists are often asked what inspires them. It is a reasonable question, but not quite the right one. Inspiration suggests something sudden — a flash, a moment of heightened perception. What interests me more is the quieter, more durable habit of simply noticing.

Seeing, in the artistic sense, is not passive. It is an act of attention.

We look at the world constantly, yet much of what passes before our eyes barely registers. Familiar landscapes become abbreviated; we learn their outlines and cease to examine them closely. The task of the artist, as I have come to understand it, is not to search endlessly for the spectacular, but to recover the ability to see what has been there all along.

The landscapes that draw me are rarely dramatic. A wide sky over salt marsh. Still water holding a muted reflection. A weathered church standing without ceremony against the horizon. Paths shaped by repeated footsteps rather than design. These places do not announce themselves. They wait.

Perhaps it is because I came late to image-making that I feel no urgency to pursue novelty. Instead, I find myself returning to scenes that reward patience — landscapes in which atmosphere matters more than event.

Weather, in particular, has become an unspoken collaborator. Coastal light seldom settles; it shifts, softens, gathers, and withdraws. Edges dissolve. Distances become ambiguous. What is revealed is not merely topography, but mood.

A photograph can record such moments faithfully, yet faithful description is not always the same as lived experience. Memory has its own optics. We recall places not as inventories of detail, but as emotional impressions — quieter, sometimes simplified, often more spacious than the literal scene.

My work begins with the real and then moves gently away from it. Not to obscure reality, but to approach what might be called its emotional contour.

In this respect, transformation is not an abandonment of truth. It is an attempt to reach another kind of accuracy — the accuracy of felt experience.

Tools evolve, as they always have in art. What matters is not the novelty of the instrument but the intention guiding its use. For me, technology is at its most

valuable when it becomes almost invisible, allowing attention to rest where it belongs: on balance, atmosphere, restraint, and coherence.

Restraint, I have learned, is an underappreciated artistic discipline. It is tempting to embellish, to intensify colour, to sharpen every boundary. Yet very often an image gains strength from what is withheld. Quiet surfaces allow the eye to settle. Simplicity invites contemplation.

With time, I have also grown less interested in capturing places exactly as they appear, and more interested in creating images that encourage stillness in the viewer. A successful work, it seems to me, is not one that overwhelms, but one that holds attention a little longer than expected.

Age brings certain permissions. One becomes less concerned with fashion, less eager to impress, and more willing to trust slower instincts. Grey hair, I have discovered, is not a passport to wisdom — but it can, if one is fortunate, be an invitation to look more gently and with greater patience.

Looking back, I suspect that the foundations of seeing are laid long before we recognise them. Early experiences of open land, working landscapes, large skies, and solitary paths teach the eye something about space and proportion. Even now, I find myself drawn to places where human presence is felt lightly rather than declared.

There is, too, a quiet satisfaction in returning viewers to the ordinary. Grandeur has its place, but the everyday possesses a depth that reveals itself only when we pause long enough to notice it.

If my work has an aim, it is simply this: to invite a second look.

Not to instruct the viewer what to see, but to suggest that the familiar may still contain undiscovered calm.

Seeing, after all, is less about the eye than about attention — and attention is one of the most generous acts we can offer the world.



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