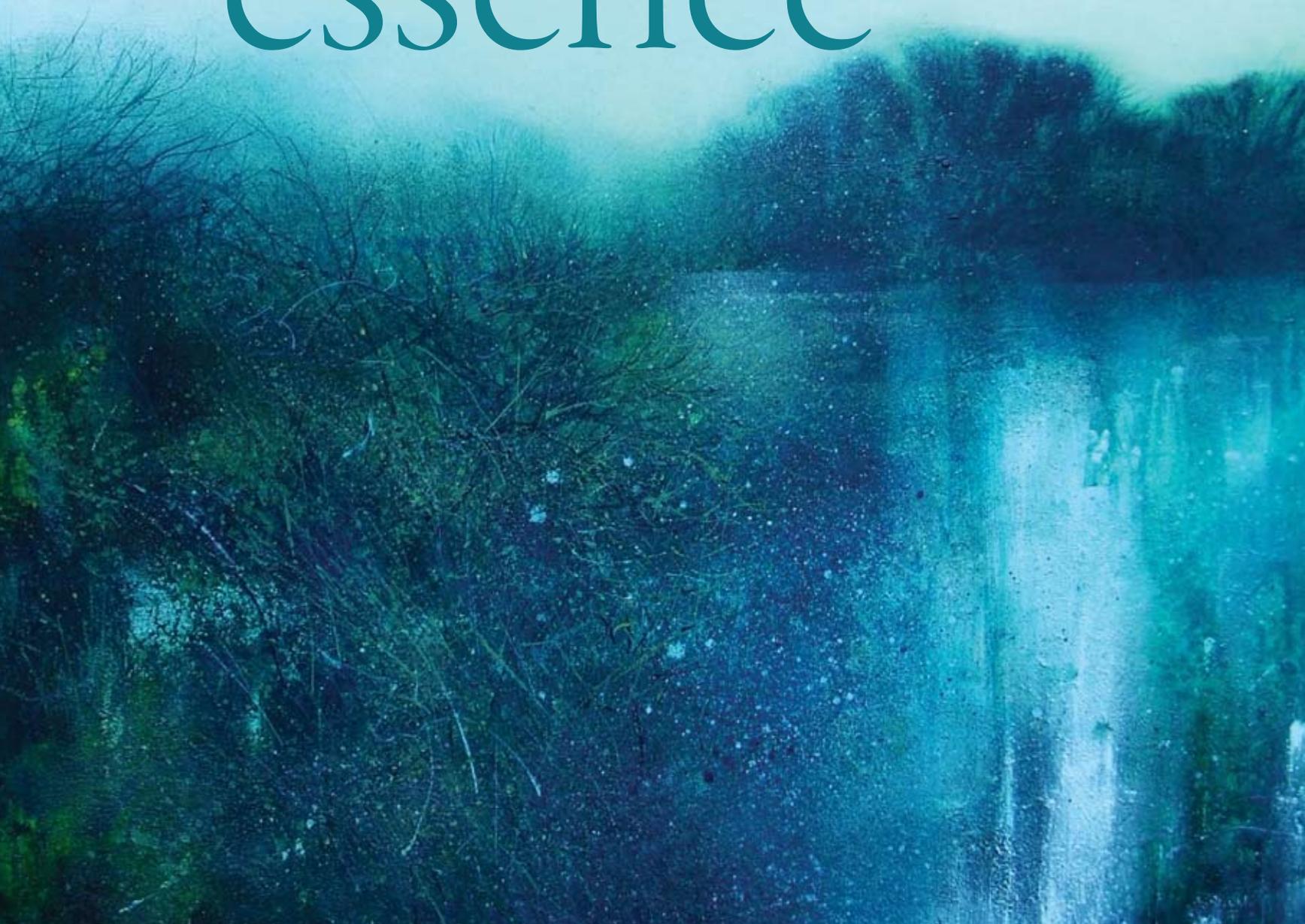


Distilling the essence



Depicting complicated waterscapes can be challenging, but one trick is to use the wet-in-wet technique. Artist Jonathan Trim finds the new Amsterdam Expert Acrylics perfect for his freestyle approach

MY WORK is about light and atmosphere. My studio is close to the Thames Estuary and I am fascinated with estuaries and rivers, so water features a great deal in my work.

I work on canvas or heavy, high-quality watercolour paper. I've recently been trying

out the new Amsterdam Expert Acrylics from Royal Talens, and I'm very happy with them – particularly the range of colours.

My starting point is always to create some texture in the foreground by using a mixture of resin, PVA, sand, grit and sometimes crushed shells – whatever I can find at the location where the painting is set.

The texture is applied to the canvas with

only a vague idea of the composition. I prefer to let the compositional ideas develop as I work. I have my sketchbooks around me, but even when I start a painting it's not as if I'm looking at a sketchbook page. I just let it develop by making reference to the sketches I've done. It's not an absolute, preconceived idea about what the painting is.

I never do any underdrawing and never ▷



Amsterdam Expert Acrylics

I'm really happy with this new range. The pigment is very good, and the colours are really vibrant. I can water them right down or use them straight from the tube. Other brands of acrylic can look chalky and the colours artificial, but these are very versatile and you get a rich colour like oil paints. Also, some of the colours are wonderful – greyish blues, pearly greys – just what I need!



Profile

Born in Essex, Jonathan Trim studied at Southend College of Art & Technology, Huddersfield Polytechnic and Leeds University. He taught art while developing his own style and left teaching to paint full-time once his work began to sell well. Now specialising in waterscapes of East Anglia, he has exhibited widely and his work is in collections worldwide. His work can be seen at The Appleyard Gallery, Holt, Norfolk; The Buckenham Galleries, Southwold, Suffolk; Back2thewall Gallery, Burnham, Essex; The Art Cafe, Colchester; and on his website, www.jonathantrim.com.

start with an absolute idea except that I know the location. When sketching I sometimes make notes on colour, and occasionally I'll take a painting to the location to check things. But in a sense, I build up my own language of colour. All the time I'm out I'm looking and thinking – it's always registering and being stored away in the sketchbooks and memory banks.

I'm constantly walking, spending a lot of time in the area. I'm trying to reproduce the experience, the feeling; the idea of the wind and the rain and the sun and the reflections. I'm trying to pull all that together on a canvas without being too precise and photographic about exactly what was there. It's trying to capture the feeling about being in that particular landscape. I enjoy just letting the painting develop, without mapping it all out. It's nice to let things just happen.

When the textural material has dried I flood the canvas with water, using a hose or sprayer. This allows

"I'm trying to reproduce the experience, the feeling; the idea of the wind, rain, sun and reflections. I'm trying to pull all that together without being too precise and photographic"

me to apply colour, which fuses together to produce an interesting underlayer – similar to a wet-in-wet technique. While the canvas is wet, I can tilt it to create paint runs and I sometimes spray water onto the colour again to create more fusing of the paint, perhaps even dabbing it off with a paper towel. With the flooding of

the canvas you get these happy accidents you can use, that grow on the canvas over time.

When the underlayer has dried I start building up colour and form,

always working across the painting as a whole. The paint is applied using a variety of techniques, including flicking the colour on to the canvas using a toothbrush and long-haired brushes. Using a toothbrush allows me to apply a fine spray of colour to create a granulated surface. I gradually build up the painting in layers. Sometimes I'll scrape back to previous layers, then gradually work on top using a mixture of techniques, including drybrush – dragging a fairly dry paint across the surface that will pick up on the high spots.

I gradually let the painting come into focus. Some parts are left out of focus where paint has been dragged or dripped or left to run. Other areas have detail painted

with a fine brush. Sometimes I use a household paintbrush or a palette knife, as well as toothbrushes. I don't want to overwork and lose the spontaneity of some of the marks. It's a balance of how much you work through those marks. Sometimes I leave the painting for a week then go back to it. The first time you come back into the studio is when you can see what's really going on.

Techniques should be developed as part of the visual vocabulary by searching and experimenting to convey ideas.

PREVIOUS PAGE

Dawn Light on the River Stour, mixed media on canvas, 100x100cm, £700, sold

ABOVE LEFT At work in my Essex studio

OPPOSITE TOP

Towards Leigh, mixed media on canvas, 80x80cm, £550 (sold)

OPPOSITE BOTTOM

I begin by texturing the blank canvas with pebbles and sand, set in PVA (1). Then I apply a wet wash before dropping in other colours, keeping the textured canvas really wet as the paints fuse and blend (2).

LEFT *Estuary series no. 12*, mixed media on canvas, 90x90cm, £750



TRIM'S TOP TIPS

- Use your sketchbooks to trigger memory but don't copy them exactly.
- Be quite loose about what you do to start with.
- Let the painting build up in layers, gradually coming into focus.
- Sometimes you need to leave the painting for a short while then come back to it.
- Use your own visual experience and your own life experience of being in those places for a long time.