

Katharine Edwards

KATHARINE EDWARDS

Written by Lucy Baring



Katharine Edwards

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CONTENTS

Early biography / 6
Artistic influence / 24
Why Wales / 27
Another significant man / 28
Other influences / 44
Frank and India / 60
Yorkshire, Fife, London / 69
Glasswork / 82
Northumberland / 90
Moon series and white horse series / 102
Spain / 110
Returning to Spain / 115
On painting / 130

"I bought a painting by Katharine 30 years ago, a large and vibrantly coloured landscape, vivid orange, green and brown fields with a strong black line and in the corner, the strange circles that could be glasses or the suggestion of a tractor's wheels. It reminds me of an aerial photograph but with thick dramatic paint layered over and over and with her signature "frame" in white and red, blue and brown paint. I am looking at it now, as it hangs in the kitchen, one of the first paintings I ever bought. I never thought to ask where this landscape is – it really doesn't matter - I just love the pattern and the colour."

—LUCY BARING



KATHARINE EDWARDS



Summer Time, Herefordshire, 1987

Early biography

Born in 1963, the fourth of five children, Katharine spent her childhood near Guildford, Surrey, where from the earliest age she and her sister Janey covered any available surface with paint and drawings. "We drew on anything and everything. We spent whole days in the orchard trying to draw trees. Our parents never minded if we covered say, the table mats, I think they were pleased that we had this passionate interest and they only ever encouraged us."



LEFT Early work painted aged eight RIGHT Katharine aged four with her parents

Self portrait, 1986

Every child is an artist.
The problem is how to remain
an artist once we grow up.

—PABLO PICASSO



KATHARINE EDWARDS

Katharine and her siblings aged five

On leaving school Katharine went to St Martin's School of Art, London, on a foundation course and then to Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris where she studied life drawing and painting under Vladimir Velicovic. "He was very masculine, not macho exactly but with a strong view on how to do life drawing. There was a model every day, often a dancer who would perform balletic modern dance while we sat on the floor of old amphitheatres trying to follow her "corps de movement" on huge pieces of paper using charcoal and ink." Vladimir, whose

own work was "quite Baconesque, a lot of his students emulated him" walked behind them all afternoon "he'd issue directives 'use one line here' or 'you don't need four lines here.' I was using a pen and nib with a bottle of ink and tried to get the human form with as few lines as possible – there was no way of erasing any mistakes. We had lessons in morphology and anatomy, all very thorough and interesting and unlike anything being taught in British art schools at that time. It was rigorous, every day, and when I left I felt that I could draw anything."





Charcoal drawing, Ecole des Beaux -Arts, 1985



Nude Charcoal, Ecole des Beaux -Arts, 1985



The building site, Katharine Edwards

Building Site, Paris, 1985



Place Franz Liszt, Paris, 1985



Père Lachaise Cemetery Paris ink on paper, 1985



Katarina Axlesson outside Ecole des Beaux -Arts



TOP Drawing in Paris BOTTOM Beaux-Arts Studio in Paris



Paris, 1985



TOP Trip to Venice, Phillippe, Katarina and Katharine BOTTOM Katharine Drawing in Languedoc, France



Katharine and Katarina by the Seine

Artistic influence

The first influential artistic figure in her life was her paternal grandfather, Ralph Edwards who was Keeper of Woodwork at the V&A (1937 - 1954) and has been described as the foremost historian of English furniture of his day. With his cane, dapper moustache and piercing eyes – a combination that could be put to devastating effect if he chanced upon a painting or other work wrongly attributed by an auction house or gallery – Ralph was a shrewd collector and passionate advocate of design, craftsmanship and authenticity. Visits to his chaotic rambling house in Chiswick Mall opened a box of delights, “He was so interesting

and knowledgeable, and always encouraging. My father Tim and his brothers were hugely influenced by him. They all collected British watercolours and furniture and had a love of beautiful things.” Tim Edwards went on to be President of the National Museum of Wales, “We went to many exhibitions together – I was very lucky to have a father who was such a perceptive and encouraging critic. My mother has also been a huge support throughout my life. She would bring me cups of hot Ribena and soup while I painted all day. I can honestly say she is the most loving, undemanding and wonderful woman I’ve ever known.”



Ralph Edwards in Venice



Katharine's Granny 'Grugs', 1985



Drawing of Tim Edwards, 1986

'Dad'
Katharine Edwards

Why Wales

Most of the family holidays were spent on the west coast of Scotland or in Wales where Ralph and Marjorie had a cottage and Uncle Nick had a mill house. The large group of cousins spent days exploring the Black Mountains and the landscape around Abergavenny. When, years later, her parents moved to Herefordshire, she took up residence in the studio next door. "I'd just come back from Paris and only wanted to

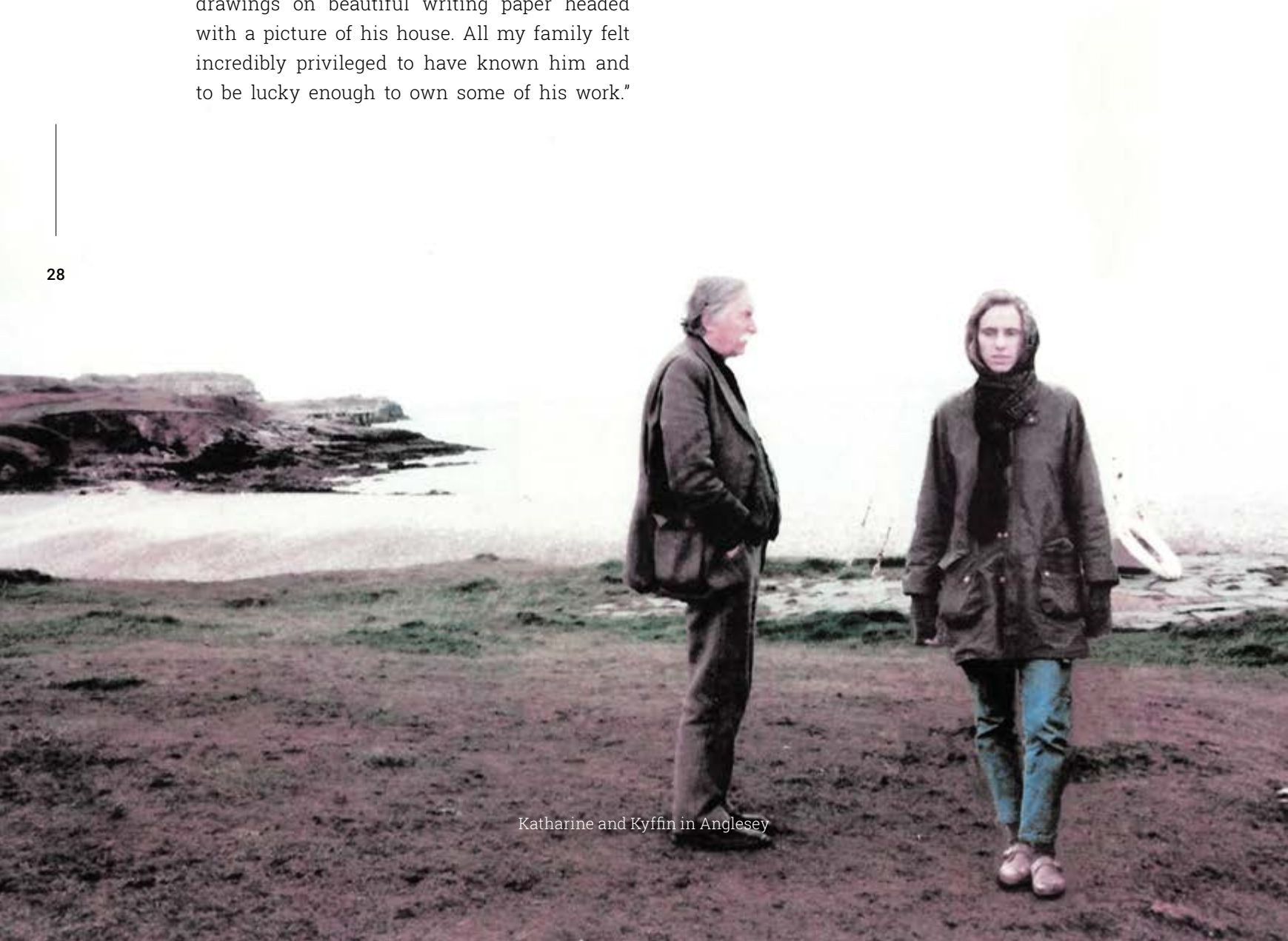
paint landscapes. The rich red soil round Ross-on-Wye, the contrast between that and the oil seed rape, I was falling in love with colour and the tension between wildness and cultivation that I'm working on now in Spain. Those paintings took on far more texture and pattern than anything I'd done before. And I was close enough to Wales to keep going back to draw the Black Mountains."



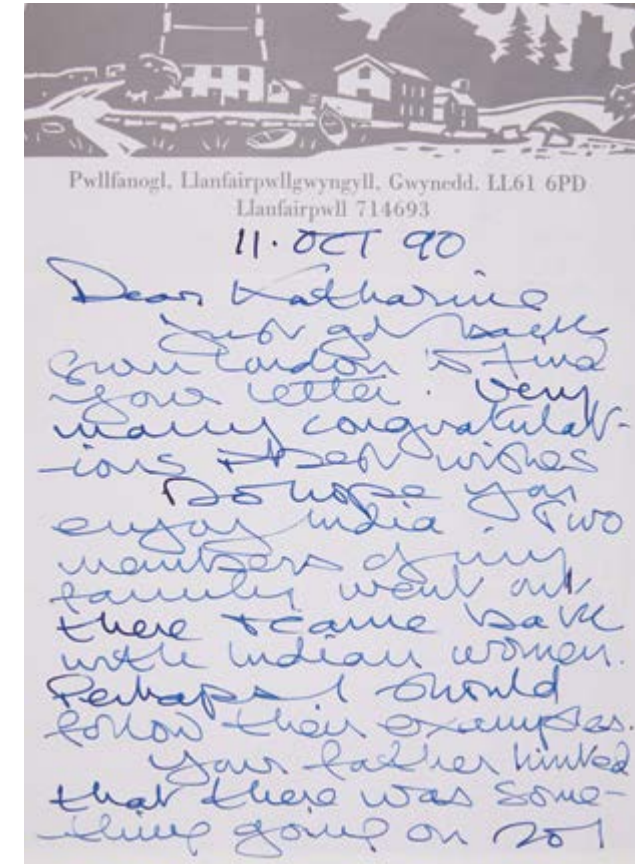
Holiday in Wales

Another significant man

Kyffin Williams RA was a great family friend having been championed early in his career by Ralph and then Tim Edwards. He now became Katharine's mentor and strongest influence. "I often went to stay with him in Anglesey where we drew the hills near his cottage. He really helped me to be IN a landscape. He painted thick impasto with a palette knife – shepherds with their sheep, hard-life men out in all weathers with caps and crooks... against the impregnable backdrop of the dark mountains of Snowdonia. We walked and talked, he was a wonderful painter and a wonderful man. We wrote letters to each other till he died – we discussed what we were working on, what exhibitions we'd seen. He had very flamboyant writing and included lovely drawings on beautiful writing paper headed with a picture of his house. All my family felt incredibly privileged to have known him and to be lucky enough to own some of his work."



Katharine and Kyffin in Anglesey



TOP Kyffin Williams RA BOT TOM Letter from Kyffin, 1990

Kyffin commissioned Katharine to do a series of drawings of the Gower Peninsula for an exhibition held by the Nature Conservancy Council, he chose her for the Artists Eye Exhibition (Eye Gallery, Bristol, Mall Galleries, London) and bought two of her drawings for the collection at the National Museum of Wales.







Went out there
July 87



36

Outside the studio, Herefordshire



KATHARINE EDWARDS

37

In her studio, Herefordshire



Landscape in Yellow, 1987

All the colours sing together;
their strength
is determined by the
needs of the chorus.
It's like a musical chord.

—HENRI MATISSE



Landscape Colour Construction, Herefordshire, 1988



Blue Day, Herefordshire, 1987

Other influences

While immersed in life drawing all day in Paris, Katharine passed a gallery with the work of Japanese artist Chuta Kimura: "he draws simple images with paint, quite loose and calligraphic, I fell in love with his abstract depictions of landscape. I was also drawn to Nicholas de Stael at this time and his extraordinary abstraction with colour. Sometimes one feels his images are about to topple over but they don't, because of his sense of balance. He gets the essence of an idea... this is something I keep coming back to. A little later I discovered Joan Eardley whose incredible expressive paintings of Catterline were done with the canvas tied to her body in the strong northern winds, her paintings make you understand what a place feels like."



Nicolas de Staël, Sicily, 1954



KATHARINE EDWARDS

Field Systems, 1988



Summer Time, 1988

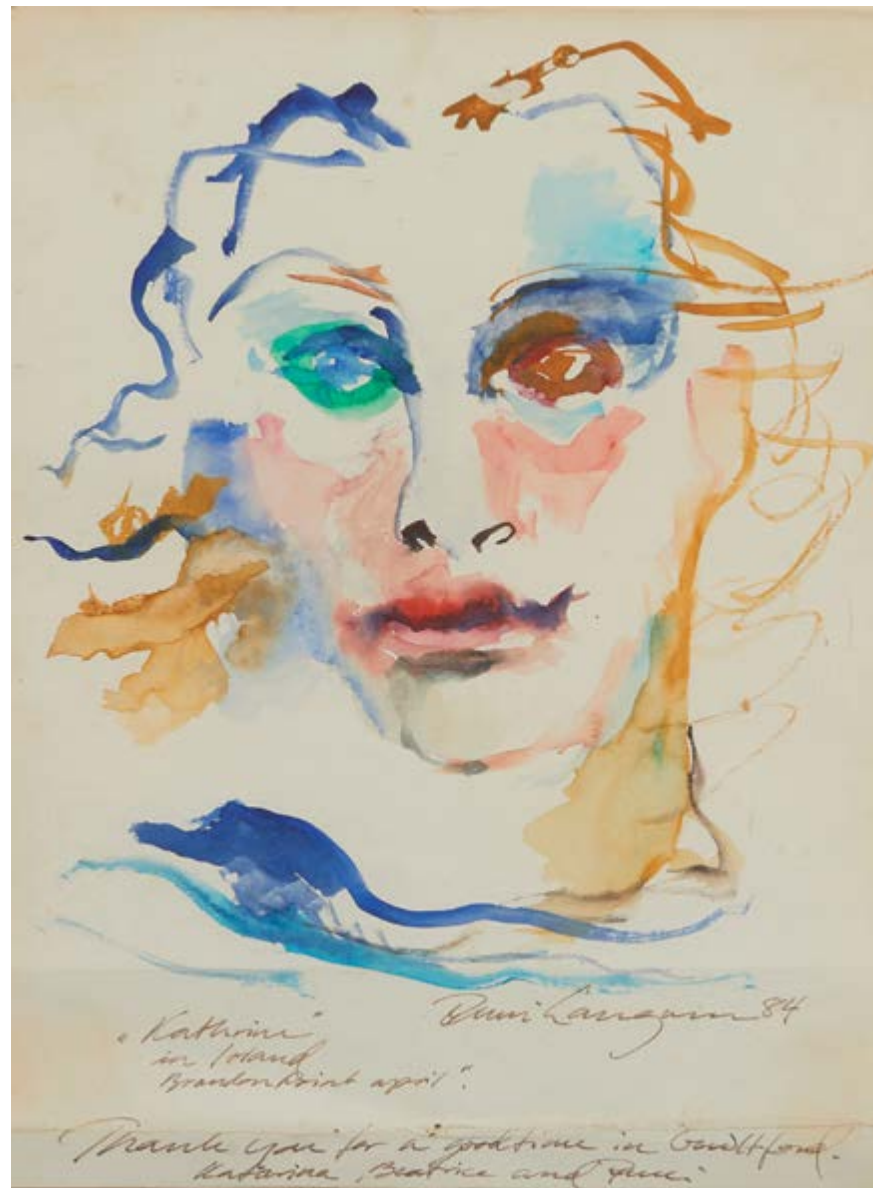


Halcyon Days, 1989

In Paris Katharine made two lifelong friends with artists Katarina Axelsson and Runi Langham, both of whom have had successful careers as artists in Scandanavia. "Katarina and I lived together in Paris. We worked a lot together, drawing for hours in Père Lachaise and the botanical gardens. We spent many painting holidays in Wales and Scotland and she introduced me to a remote island in the

archipelago around Stockholm where I painted softly undulating rocks lapped by the Baltic Sea.

I began a series of drawings of boats, concentrating on shape, finding their essence – strength, elegance, manmade but also elemental – by reducing their form to minimal lines and using a very spare but bold palette, blue and yellow – the colours of the Swedish flag."

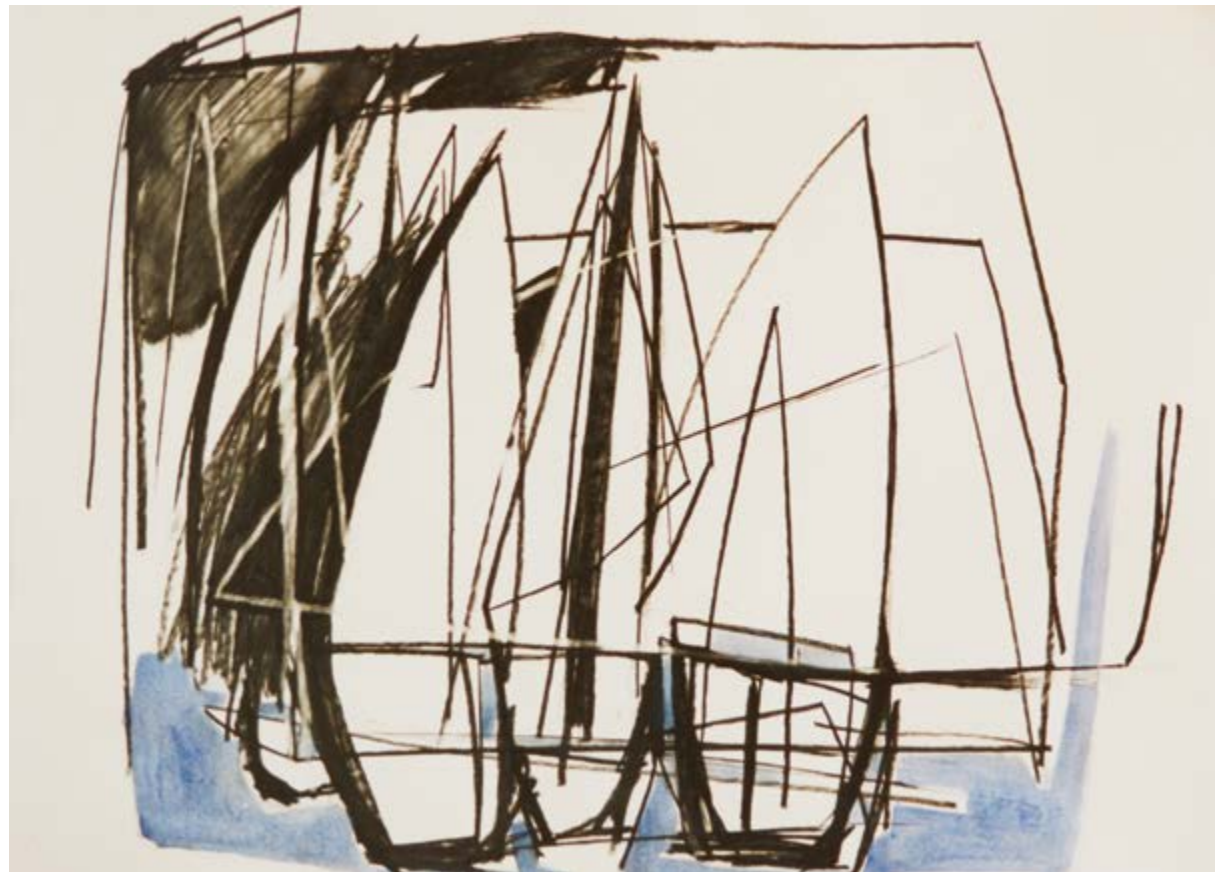


Portrait of Katharine by Runi Langham



KATHARINE EDWARDS

Katharine in Sweden



Sails, Sweden, 1989



Sails, Sweden, 1989



Sweden Boats, 1989



TOP In Katarina's studio, Paris, 1987 БОТТОМ Exhibition at Hay Barn Gallery, 1989



Drawing Katarina Axelsson

Back in the early eighties when we studied drawing together at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, we used to sketch each other in charcoal on cheap paper. Most of these sketches have gone down the bin years ago, but I have kept on my bedroom wall this funny little scene of me being drawn by Katharine whilst drawing something. Looking at it immediately takes me back to the flat we shared not far from République and the feeling of being young and full of hope in a foreign, exciting city so different to my native Swedish small home town.

That's what finding an old sketch does to you: brings back the moment as fresh as ever. We had a lot of fun during those years Katharine and I, spending more time travelling and sketching than actually at School where space was always scarce. Italy, Wales, Scotland, Ireland...

I stayed on in Paris, kept drawing and tried to learn to paint which proved to be much more difficult. Katharine back in England did the same and it's

great to see the coherency with which she has stuck to the landscapes she loves. The ones from Andalusia are new to me, and one in particular struck me "Watching the storm", with it's surprising frame in the frame, it's "mise en abîme" and deconstructed perspective. A woman and a dog are contemplating the storm in a southern almost oriental landscape. Doesn't it remind us of another "Wanderer" in a cold and melancholic north-european setting - the amazing "Traveller above the sea of fog", from 1818 by Caspar David Friedrich? Katharine's person is of a more modest expression but the Andalusian landscape around her seems to be roaring and somehow illustrating the tempestuous character of its people as I imagine it: proud and hot-tempered.

The memory of her discovery, way back at an exhibition in Paris, of the work of Nicolas De Stael seems to be still alive: a woman and her dog contemplating the storm of blue paint...

—BY KATARINA AXELSSON



Watching the Storm, 2016



Frank and India

In 1990 Katharine and Frank went to India, both keeping detailed diaries and Katharine drawing and sketching their journey. "We had the most incredible time, trekking in the Himalayas before we decided to get married in a registry in Katmandu. Then we travelled on the wonderful dirty noisy steam trains for six months - anyone who has been to India experiences a sort of visual overload, a sensory overload - unforgettable."

Married Katmandu December, 1990



KATHARINE EDWARDS

Udaipur Rajasthan



62

KATHARINE EDWARDS

63

From sketchbook Nepal

GANFIWAH 18th Nov 90



Sketchbook Varanasi, Christmas, 1990



TOP Nandy Bulls, India BOTTOM Katharine sketching in India, 1990

Light in nature creates
the movement of colours.

—ROBERT DELAUNEY

KATHARINE EDWARDS



Yorkshire, Fife, London

On their return Frank's job took them to Luddenden Foot in Yorkshire where they lived in a wonderful cottage and Katharine pursued her lifelong love of hill-walking, always with a sketchpad and Clemmie the dog. "What a privilege to have lived in that landscape with its factory chimneys, rolling moorland, hills punctuated by dry stone walls... so many of the elements I'm drawn to – big and wild but with a manmade thumbprint." Six months later they moved to Fife and then London where she worked from a studio in Finsbury Park and completed a series of cityscapes that were exhibited at John Jones Gallery in 1992.

TOP Sutherland Scotland BOTTOM Luddenden Foot West Yorkshire, 1991



Washing, Luddenden Foot, 1991



Deconstructed Cityscape, 1992

A picture is first of all
a product of the imagination
of the artist;
it must never be a copy.

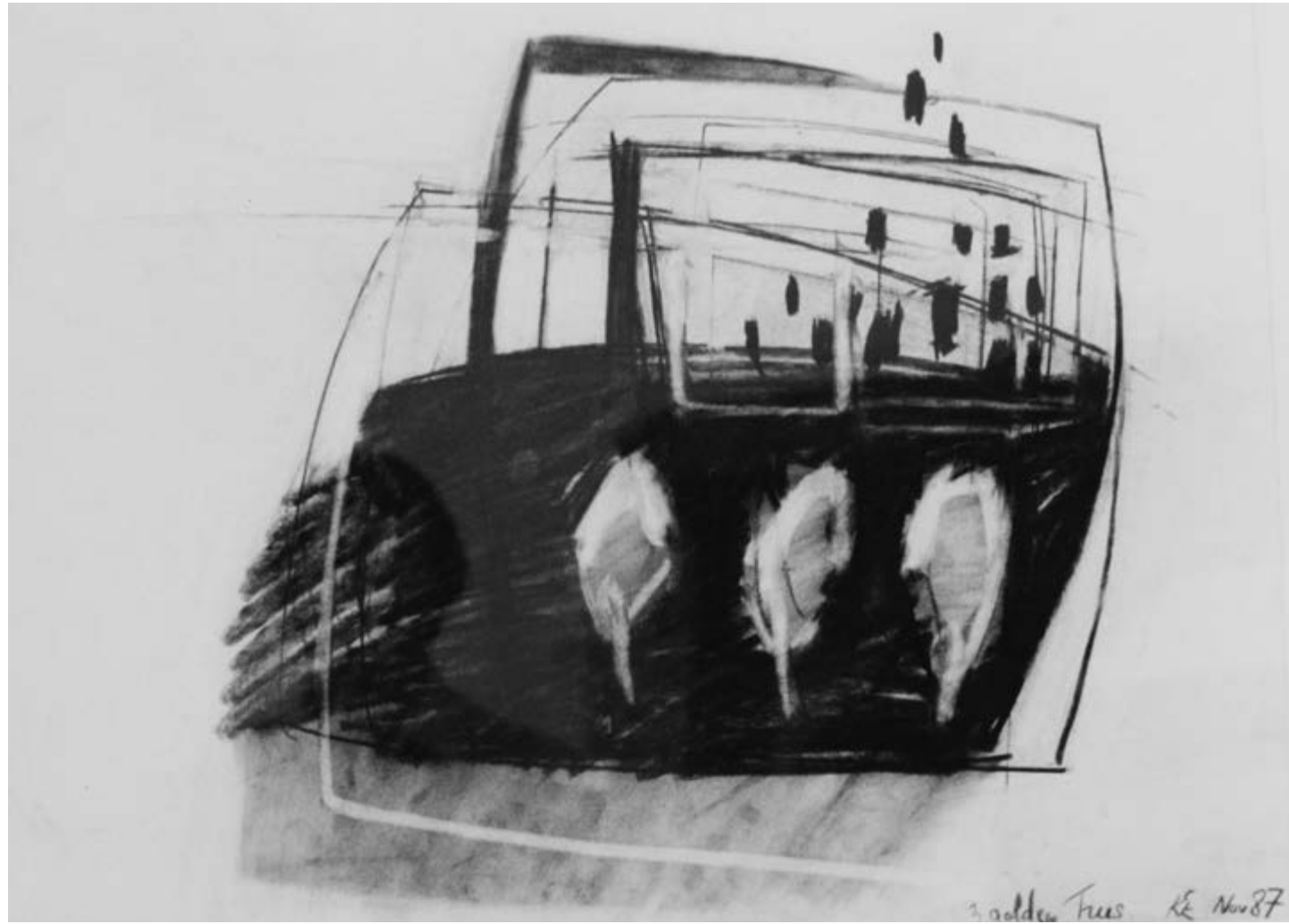
—EDGAR DEGAS





Charcoal drawing of London: Cityscape

Katharine Edwards
2008



Golden Trees, 1987



Rush Hour, 1991



Frenzy, 1992

Glasswork

In 1995 Katharine and Frank moved to Burloes in North Hertfordshire where they brought up their four children, Tom, Lily, Arthur and Louis. Katharine created a studio in an old barn and in 2001 began working collaboratively with her sister Janey in a completely different medium: fused glass.

"It felt like a new visual language. I was still using landscape for inspiration... ancient tracks over the land... birds... and I found the intense colour you get from glass so exciting. I could play around with design and experiment with pattern in a totally different way although you can achieve effects with layering of glass that is almost painterly.

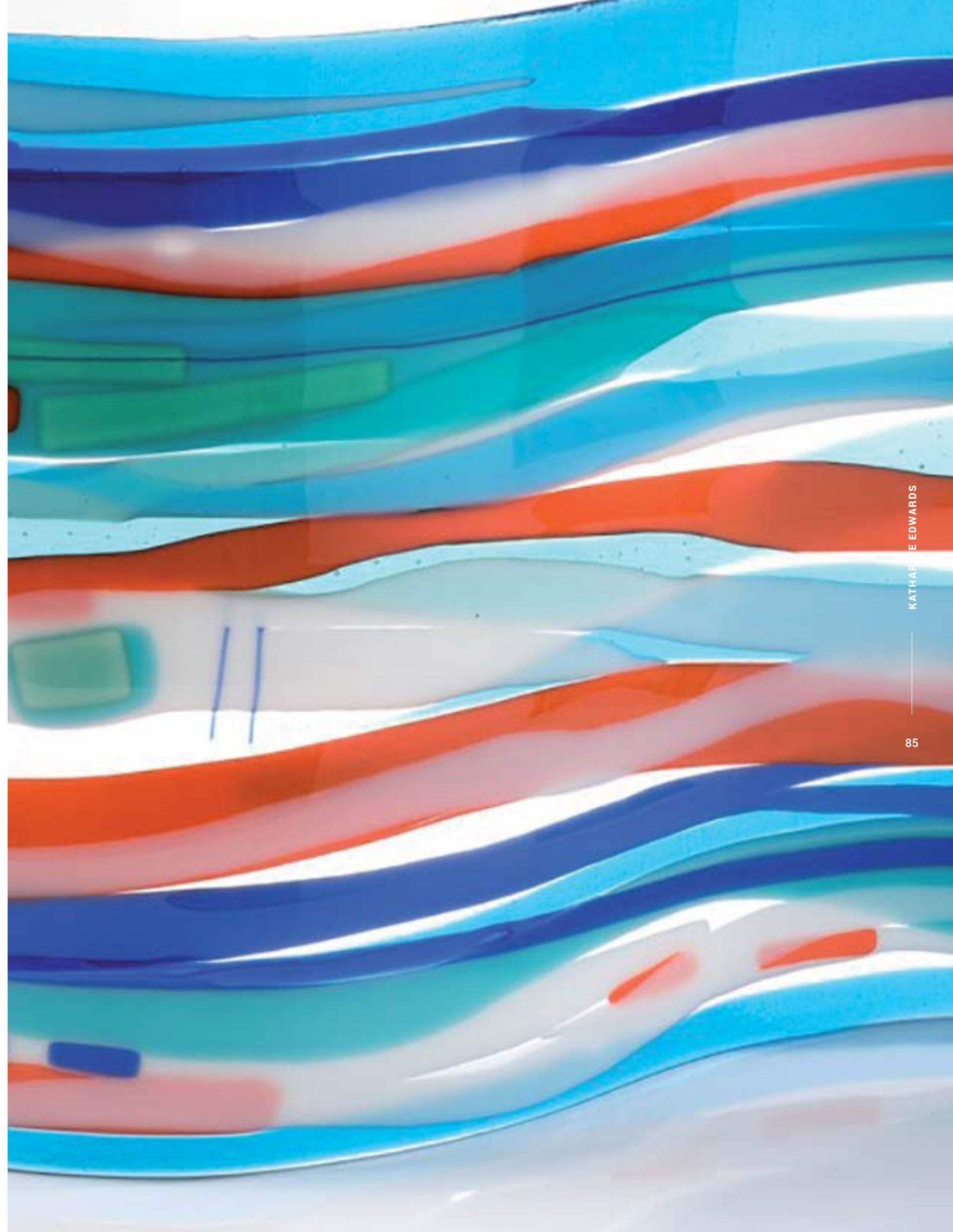
Janey was really the expert at the firing temperatures but of course the process is quite precarious and you never quite know how a piece will come out – you are firing at temperatures of say 800-850 (°C degrees) but it's easy to make mistakes and the whole thing can change again in the cooling. It's exciting, without a doubt and very technical. I loved making pieces that function - plates and bowls - as well as wall works. I always knew I'd go back to painting but this was an interesting time, I learnt a lot about colour and how it works together.

They exhibited regularly in galleries around the country culminating in the 2012 Olympic exhibition "Glass Games".





TOP Sea Scape, 2007 BOTTOM Happy Days, 2007





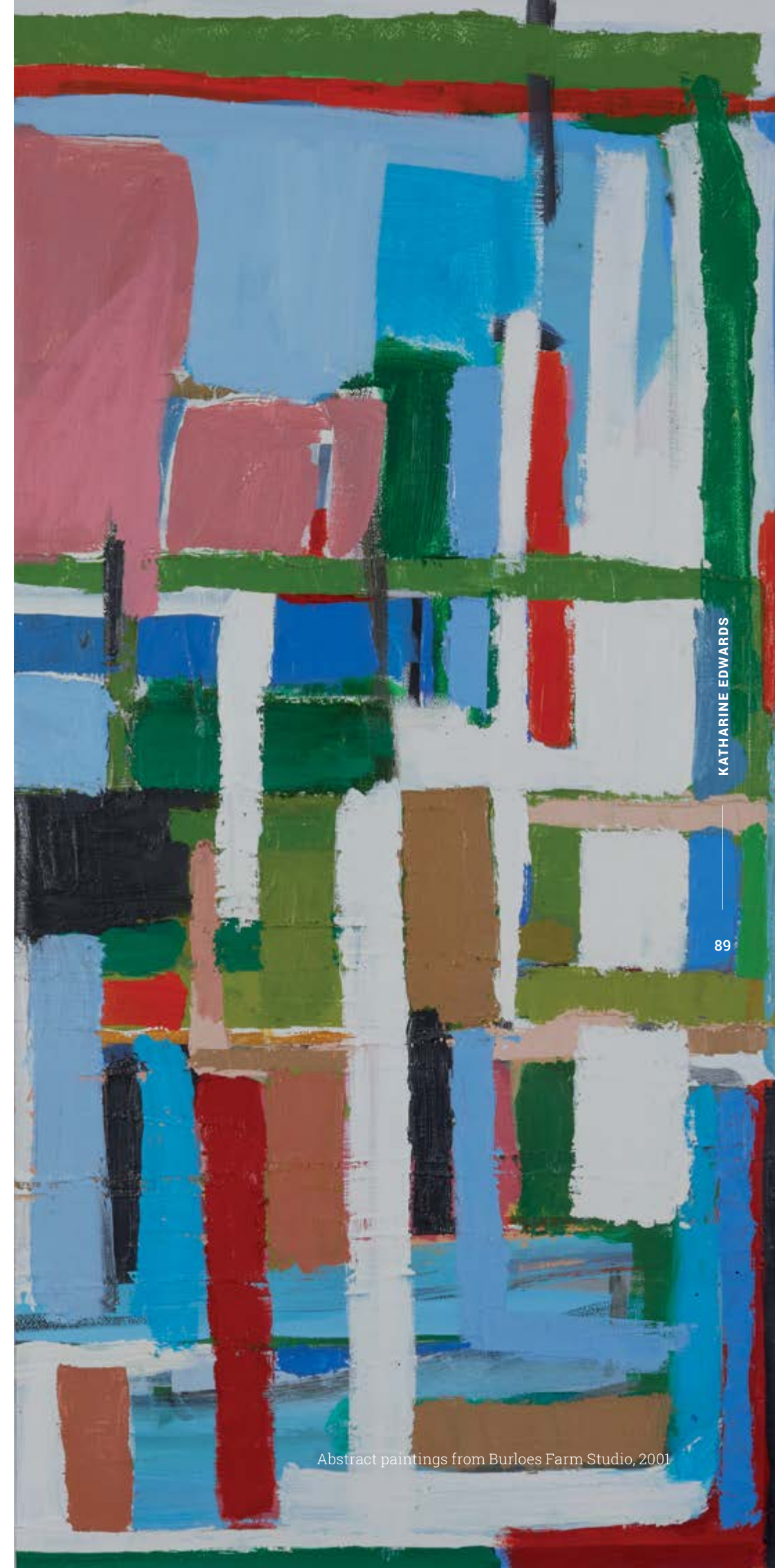
I construct lines and colour combinations
on a flat surface,
in order to express general beauty
with the utmost awareness

—PIET MONDRIAN

Colour Compositions, Burloes Farm Studio



Colour Compositions, 2001



Abstract paintings from Burloes Farm Studio, 2001

Northumberland

In 2001 Frank and Katharine bought a cottage in the Cheviot Hills, Northumberland. Surrounded by forest with fresh water supplied by an underground stream, no electricity but wood burning stoves and gas wall lamps, its remoteness and silence became central to Katharine's drawings. "We could shut out all the noise of life. I was doing a lot of running at the time and one day I came across a wolf – of course it was an alsation but it looked like a wolf – we were utterly alone staring at each other. Back in the studio I began a series of charcoal drawings over a series of months, always going back to that moment."



Stealth, Northumberland, 2011



Sketchbook drawings, Northumberland



Wolf, 2003

“It is a Heiktsuk belief that wolves do not show themselves unless they are trying to tell us something”

IAN MCALLISTER, THE LAST WILD WOLVES:
GHOSTS OF THE RAIN FOREST

When Katharine told me that she had been drawing Wolves rather than landscapes lately, I was struck as always, by the awesome power of our unconscious to deliver up images to support, heal and guide us, in perfect unison with our goings on in the upper world, our day to day reality. Images to touch and stir, to ignite our curiosity and wondering.

It seemed to me, that at a time when there was a hitherto unknown, unpredicted shadow lurking as potential threat to her family, that Wolf might be appearing to shine up Katharine's innate strength and fierce protectiveness as a mother. Wolf teaches us to tune, in order to hear calls from the wild depths of forest and lonely expanse of plain or mountain steep. Wolves bring endurance - which Katharine, to my mind, has in abundance, along with the skills and qualities of leadership, co-operation and of family loyalty. All these are attributes the North American admired in Wolf.

Symbolically, Wolf is released to bring about the destruction of the old to make way for the new, inviting us to expand our consciousness to include both inner and outer forces of the wild.

—BY KATHARINE ROBERTS,
ARTS PSYCHOTHERAPIST



TOP Lily, 1994 BOTTOM Louis aged four, 2006



Tom aged seven, 2001



Family drawing at Fairhaugh, Northumberland, 2003

Draughtsmen
may be made,
but colourists are born.

—EUGENE DELACROIX



Fairhaugh Northumberland



Charcoal Rocks, 2004



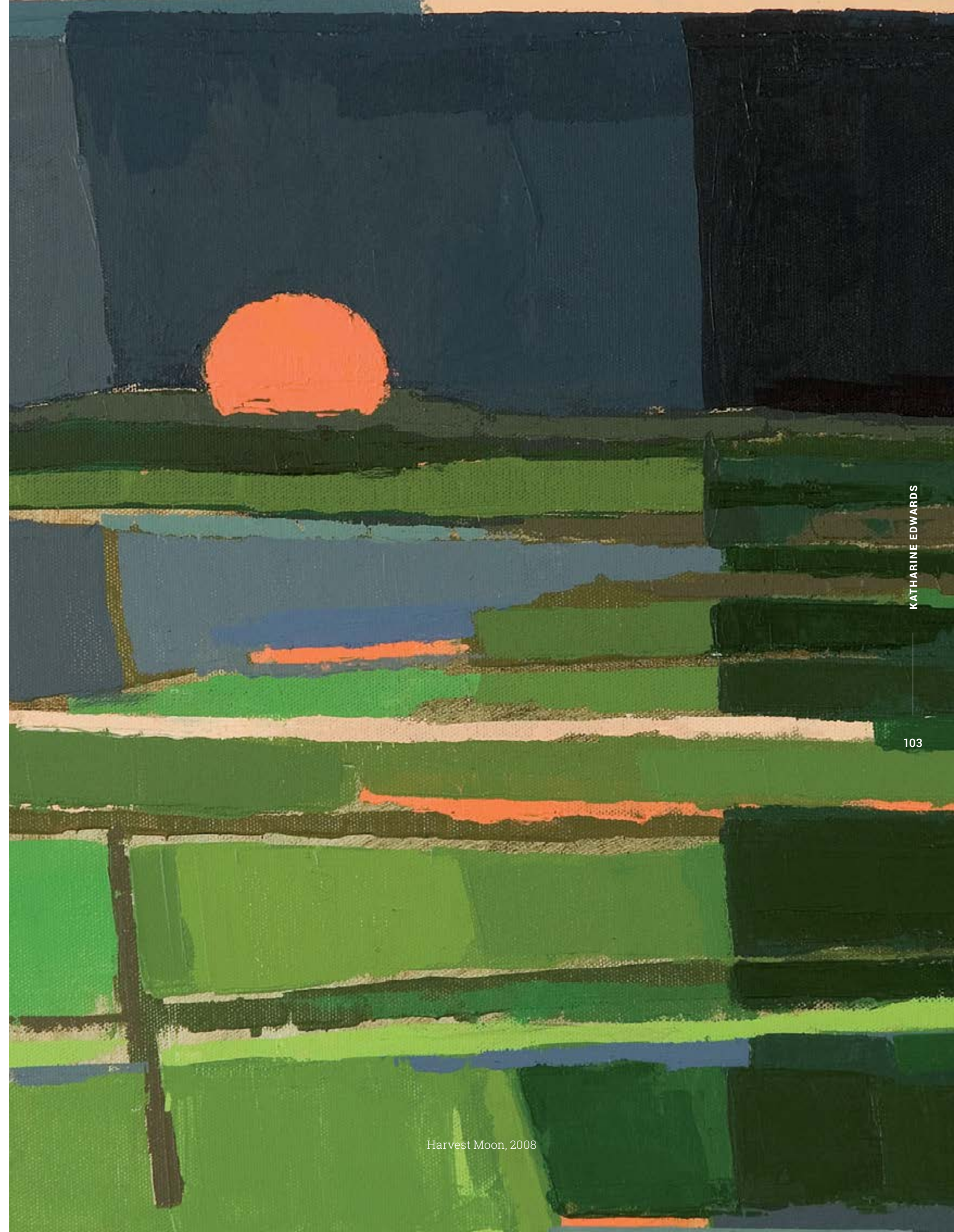
Moon series and White Horse series

In 2008 Katharine exhibited at the Air Gallery in a collaborative show called Modern Romantics for which she made a series of paintings using the Hertfordshire landscape. "I was drawn to the huge fields of barley after harvest when the fields have varying shades of gold and yellow.. I played with their shapes and loved their grid like composition. I became preoccupied with a white horse that seemed to find it's way into many of the paintings at this time.

I began a series of moonscapes that were very pared down paintings - a simple structure, the colour and tone being the focus, sometimes intensely gold or a cool powerful silver that was reflected in the landscape."



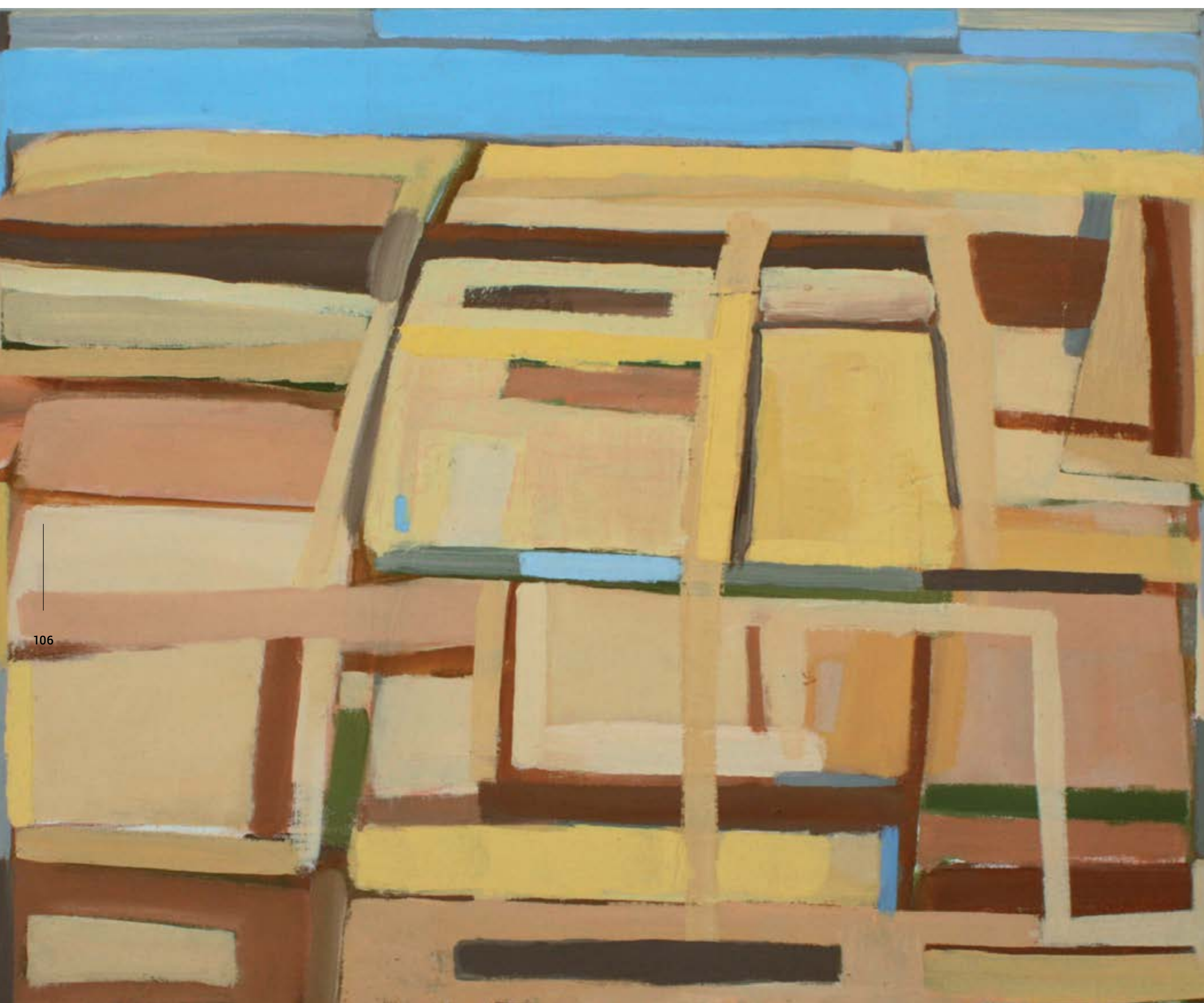
Gold Harvest Moon, 2008



Harvest Moon, 2008



LEFT White Horse, 2009 RIGHT Silver Moon, 2008



Harvest Tracks, 2009

"I have collected Katharine's art for many years, each artwork is very different but each piece touches me in different ways. Looking at Harvest Tracks I step into fields of rich colours of the golden harvest, my heart and soul are touched by the warmth of the colours. Each time I look at this picture I see different directions and movement of the paints like contours of the fields.

When I look at the Red Sun painting, I feel the heat of the sun, so strong against the darkness of the tops of the trees among the subtle grey sky, taking me to a Scandinavian landscape, I want to step into that solitary place and touch the sun.

Finally my other drawing I love is the graphite drawing of the crows in flight against the white paper, there is a starkness, simplicity and beauty in this composition of the birds as they flutter through the whiteness of the empty sky.

These three pictures reflect what I think is Katharine's amazing artistic ability and versatility to change through the years with a passion to paint and draw into the place of beauty, her observation and emotional immersion into the moment and capturing her vision with such sensitivity and understanding."

—SALLY HULKE



Red Sun, 2012



Soaring Birds, 2011

Spain

In 1995 Frank and Katharine spent six months in Andalusia where they lived near Gaucin, a beautiful Pueblo Blanco near Ronda. "Tom and Lily were very young and we'd been living in London but we needed a change of pace and found a house on the edge of a cork forested National Park. Our house was so high up that we could watch the swallows below us while listening to the daily tinkle of herds of goats and sheep as they migrated to and from their daytime pastures. Raising the children in this beautiful landscape was exactly what we wanted when we left England."

The nearby village of Jimena de la Frontera had a thriving artistic community and they took trips to Grenada, Córdoba and Seville where the exquisite architecture of the Alhambra, Mezquita and the Real Alcazar reminded them of the Mughal Empire style they'd previously found when travelling in Northern India.

"We were transfixed by the mix of cultures, the layering of these upon one another. The Moorish influences, the Hispanic music, the beautiful Azulejos and Zellige tiles, the colours, the smells, it was so exciting to the North European eye - a fresh, exotic, beautiful and intriguing aesthetic vocabulary."

"And there is a certain rawness to Spain, especially in the south where a passion seems to permeate everything: the dancing, the guitar music, the language, the running of bulls... And the Easter parades and fiestas which blend Pagan, Islamic and Catholic Christian ideas into something dramatically Spanish. We knew we couldn't stay forever because of work and other family commitments which either meant spending long periods apart or returning. We reluctantly returned to England, but I look back on this as a golden period."



View near Fuente del Conde, Spain

Diptych Andalusian Panorama I

2018

I look at this view from the house. In order to fully grasp the monumental presence of the land I needed to paint it on two canvases. I wanted to reveal the varied terrain across the vista: the wheat fields and olive trees, the town of Izñajar in the middle distance and the clear blue sky that contrasts with the mountains and the ever changing light throwing quick moving shadows.



KATHARINE EDWARDS



Looking at Katharine's Spanish paintings, the heat and the calmness overwhelm one. She has painted the landscape from above, allowing its beauty to be seen without the human frenetic activity blurring the ground. The eagle soars above the Earth, calmly, seeing the earth as Katharine does.

Her frenetic city and landscapes are packed with angst, pent up worry and distress, being painted as viewed from the ground. These Spanish pictures give the feeling she had when living in

the top flat of her Paris days, looking down on the architectural beauty of the city, but without it's stress, it's bustle, it's human miscommunications and it's acerbic, disparaging, intellectual and sartorial judgements.

She has got back to the peace that Kyffin Williams showed her in Wales, but with the heat and colours that we all crave.

—RANDLE WHITE

View from Katharine's house



Katharine painting in Andaluca, 2019

Returning to Spain

It was always a question of when they would be able to get back to Spain and in 2014, with their youngest child now grown up, they felt able to embark on a new chapter with new adventures and challenges. Having thought they would return to Ronda or nearby, they began to explore further afield and discovered the area near Antiquera, "a beautiful pre-Historic, Phoenician, Roman, Moorish, Catholic and now modern Spanish town. When we first saw the house in Fuente del Conde we were led to the edge of the terrace, looked out towards the Subetica mountain range with Izñajar sitting on its rocky outcrop above the valley with its huge lake, a fresh water reservoir and we both knew

immediately, this is what we'd been looking for." Over three years they set about renovating the house, a cortijo, that sits amongst a patchwork of olive trees and ancient oaks and where eagles, azure winged magpies and a regular visit from a hoopoe punctuate the sky.

"The thrill of this new life has given me renewed energy, reflected I think in the resurgence of my need to paint, to create, to set down my impressions of Andalusia. This is the time for both of us to immerse ourselves in the contrasting worlds of Europe, to revel in the complexities, idiosyncrasies and contrasts between Hertfordshire and Izñajar, España."



Diptych Andalusian Panorama II, 2018



El Toro

2020

My depiction of a bull based on the Toro de Osborne Sherry bull which one sees all over Spain. He is defiantly silhouetted in front of the harsh heat of the setting sun, his strong shadow thrown over the arid landscape.



Lake Izñajar

2020

A fragmented composition, pared down to create a melodic dynamism similar to the gentle sway of a boat. I wanted the landscape to gently recede as if one was slowly closing one's eyes, using tonal blues to inspire the feeling of relaxation, of partially remembered thoughts.

Buzzard

2016

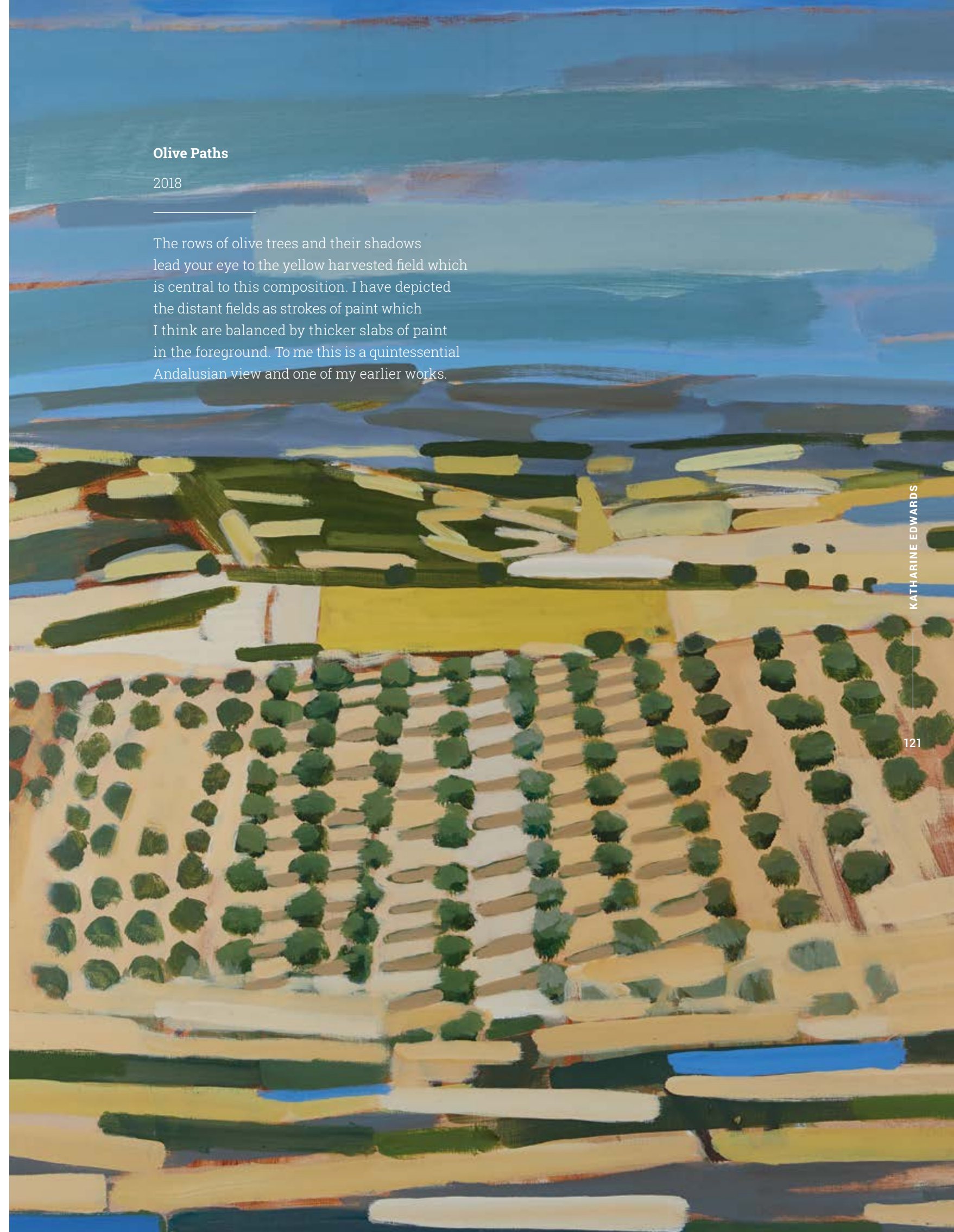
Painted after watching a buzzard wheeling in the thermals over a parched landscape, there is a glimpse of lake and fields of wheat in the middle ground, their earthy hues acting as a hazy recession of space beneath the endless blue sky.



Olive Paths

2018

The rows of olive trees and their shadows lead your eye to the yellow harvested field which is central to this composition. I have depicted the distant fields as strokes of paint which I think are balanced by thicker slabs of paint in the foreground. To me this is a quintessential Andalusian view and one of my earlier works.





The Moon Dance

2019

The Moon Dance is a work that sways and winds through my imagination. The expressive pose of the birds contrasts with the blocks of pure white. The moon's oscillating reflection through the landscape inspires in me dreamy contemplation.

Las Palmeras

2020

I wanted to contrast the crepuscular sky with the beautiful shape of the Phoenix palms that are planted all over Andalusia. I loved playing with the shape and repeating pattern of the palms.





Road to Tiñosa

2019

Frank and I do this walk often, the long view and striking perspective never fails to impress and enchant us. March is often stormy, I wanted to show that in the sky over the mountain range.

Watching the storm

2016

One of the first paintings I did in Spain. This is late Autumn and in retrospect a sort of memorial to our dog Annie who had recently died. I rarely use figures but felt this needed one.



KATHARINE EDWARDS

On painting

I don't know why but I always have to frame things. I like to work on square canvas and I always have to hold the composition in place with some sort of border. I feel odd when I don't have it. I often have two or three paintings on the go at one time, sometimes for months but when they're done I say DONE, otherwise you'd never finish.

I'm not always painting an actual view, but a composition based on many views. I condense it, simplify it but always trying to keep the proportions right. It's about balance, pattern, harmony of composition and breaking things down to simple lines. Whether it's with a palette knife or brushstrokes, I like horizontal and vertical tension... the skies in Spain have become increasingly collage-like. I enjoy that suggestion of mixed media – perhaps it comes from working with glass.

Initially I was scared of the olive trees – I wasn't sure what to do with them, but now I think of them as essential to the design of each landscape. The views in Spain are so huge but it's not necessarily rugged and wild, there is plenty of cultivation and the order that brings is incredibly exciting – the juxtaposition of scale and manmade lines is endlessly fascinating. I've never used blue much before but finding a hot blue has been so interesting, and also exploring how the midday sun bleaches out all the colours. Painting heat.

I love working in acrylic because it dries so fast and so flat. I love that flatness and painting in layer upon layer, taking some off, letting things come through. I rarely use figures in a landscape, I'm not trying to create a story, I'm expressing my emotional response to the shape of the landscape and colour.





Heading Home
2019

I watched this Bonelli Eagle flying back to its rocky lair in the cliffs above our house. I love the contrast between the blue sky, the pyramidal hills, olive fields and the layers of arid soil in the foreground.



Mezquita Interior, Córdoba, 2020

katharinedwards.co.uk

Photography
Christina Bull

Graphic Design
Veronica Martinis

