

A PICTURE OF CORNWALL

Ray Balkwill

CORNWALL is artist country, immortalised by the colonies at St Ives, Newlyn and Lamorna. For generations this peninsula of big skies and swelling seas has beguiled artists with its renowned quality of light. So much so, that today Cornwall has one of the highest populations of artists and craftspeople in the country. Its ancient landscape has also been a popular retreat for poets, writers and musicians, both resident and visitors alike. Whether inspired by her dramatic coastline, countryside, moorland, rivers or harbours, the Cornish landscape has more than matched their creative needs.

This book is a celebration of the character and 'spirit' of a unique landscape in words and pictures. It presents the reader with a fascinating glimpse into the artist's own personal and physical relationship with the place and it also brings together for the first time some of its most celebrated contemporary artists. Some are published for the first time, alongside others who have received much international acclaim. Between them they encompass a wide variety of subjects, styles, media, as well as working methods. Complimenting the paintings the author provides a fascinating commentary, which also includes musings and extracts from poets and writers associated with the county.

The author is a professional artist and a native of Devon. However, his connections with Cornwall go back a long way and have been instrumental in shaping both his life and career. This lavishly illustrated book features 130 paintings, many of which have been reproduced for the first time. All who are passionate about the Cornish landscape will treasure this handsome volume.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ray Balkwill, SWAc is a well-known West Country artist whose connections with Cornwall span five decades. Although his roots lie deep in the red earth of Devonshire, Cornwall has been instrumental in shaping both his life and career. Born in Exeter in 1948, he graduated from Exeter College of Art, thereafter making a career in advertising as an Art Director. In 1990 demand for his paintings led him to give up his job to become a professional artist. He has held many successful solo exhibitions and his work has featured in numerous group and open exhibitions. He also teaches painting and for the past twenty years has run painting holidays in Cornwall, as well as throughout the UK. An art instruction film *Capturing Estuary Moods* has also been made by APV Films. He is a regular contributor to *The Artist Magazine* and his work has also featured in many other publications. He is author of six art books including *Ray Balkwill's Exe Estuary* and *A Picture of Devon* also published by Halsgrove. In 2006 he was elected an Academician in the South West Academy of Fine and Applied Arts and has been a member of the St Ives Society of Artists since 1999.

HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

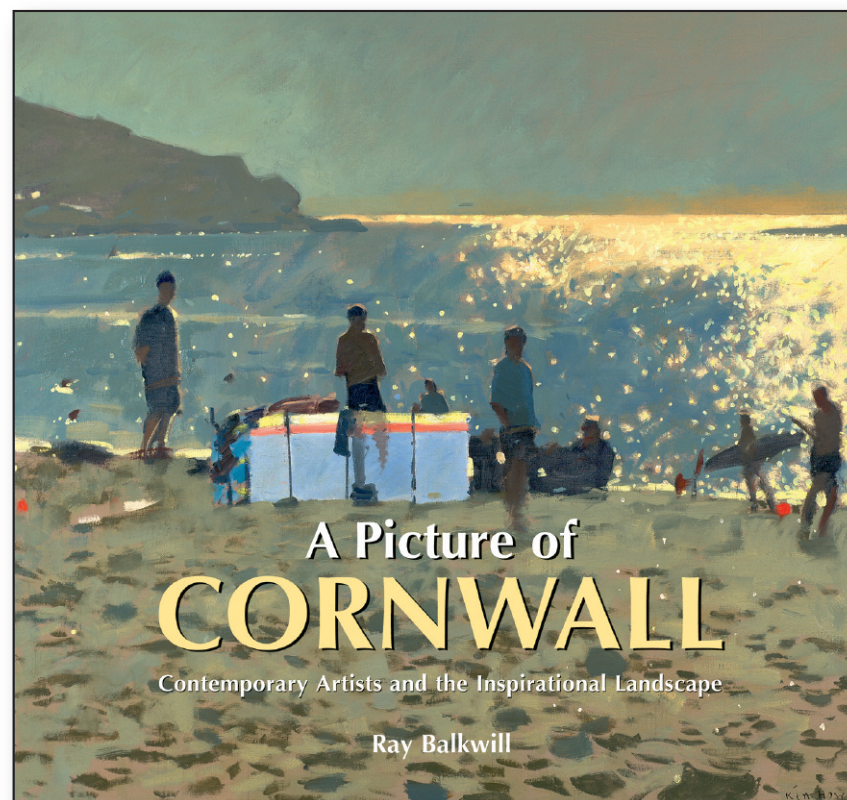
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Above: John Raynes. *Bathers, Portreath II*
Oil 12x12in (30x30cm)



Above right: Richard Tuff. *Alongside the Foreshore* Gouache 19x19in (49x49cm)



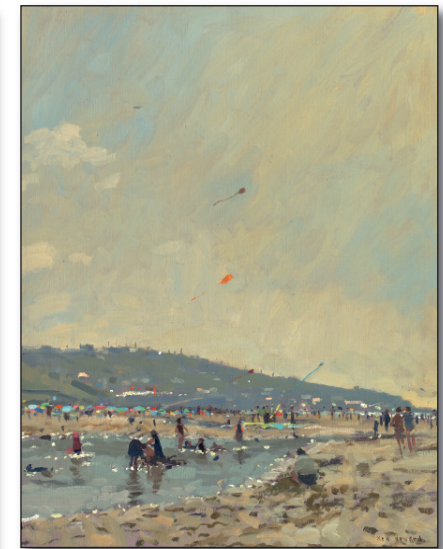
Right: Ray Balkwill. *Wet Sands, St Ives*
Mixed Media 17x17in (43x43cm)



Amanda Hoskin. *Setting Sun, Mount's Bay*
Mixed Media 27.5x40in (70x101cm)



Neil Davies.
Swirling Snow over Little Trelvagan.
Oil 30x23in (76x58cm)



Ken Howard.
Kite Flyers at Sennen
Oil 24x20in (61x50cm)

Example of a double-page spread.



CHAPTER FOUR
From picturesque fishing harbours to bustling ports...

Anyone who has ever watched a lone fisher boat bobbing along the horizon on its homeward journey to harbour, followed by the obligatory line of sheering gulls, cannot fail to be captivated by the scene. Fishing has been an integral part of life around the coasts of Cornwall for generations and its abundance of ports have also provided a wealth of material for the marine painter. If I had to choose my favourite location to paint, it would have to be amidst the tight and squoze of a bustling fishing harbour of which Cornwall boasts many, both large and small. For here are a thousand and one things to stir the imagination and leave all the senses. It may be the sound of merriment and splashing of oars in the harbour water; perhaps the cries of gulls, or the joggling of mast on a falling tide. I take particular pleasure in seeing fishermen unloading their catches on the quay, or repairing their boats at low water, the mere thought of which gets me reaching for my brushes. But even more than this, harbours hold a much deeper significance of wit, sacrifice and formidable endeavour. These are sensitive places to paint where scenes of hardship and bravery are commonplace and where fishermen will spend their living from the same night-time Cornish sea. A hardy race of men, often leading a life of no little peril, their gains are meagre, considerable and at all times precarious was how Dr Jonathan Couch described them. He saw a Victorian natural historian, who looked at Polperro and recorded there for most of his life.

Another charming fishing port in the town of which I had thought once wrote that 'time writes no words in the azure bow'. It is said that St Ives when

its name from the sixth century missionary. It is, indeed, indeed been being called from Ireland on an early date. My associations with St Ives go back to the early '60s when I sat down a number of painting courses here for 18 1/2 weeks. Then in 1979 I was elected a member of the St Ives Society of Artists, and was pleased to strengthen my connections with this charming town further. Magnificently situated, with its crescent of beaches, ancient whitewashed cottages and narrow winding streets packed tight around its harbour, it has provided much inspiration for painters old and new. Beyond the harbour lies Carvery Cliff House, the inspiration for Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs Dalloway'. The clarity of light is at its most vibrant here on the peninsula, as it is somewhat partly due to the clear proximity of the sea on all three sides of the land.

In the past it has dominated the north coast fishing grounds, while the south coast had fishing fleets in every cove and inlet from Penzance Sound to the far west. The immense shoals of pilchard and herring, which visited the bay in former times, were a source of considerable revenue. The pilchard season came to a close after the corn harvest, or as the saying went: 'When the corn is in the shock, then the fish is on the deck'. This was then followed soon after by the herring shoals which were of far less importance than pilchard, for while only the regular fishermen were concerned with herring, a large number of local people who initially pursued other occupations, left their work during the season to catch, cure and export the pilchard.

Often on my painting trips I enjoy meeting old fishermen who, in common with many Cornish characters, are a great source of information on times gone by. On one such occasion in Newquay harbour, a boatman regaled me with some of the local superstitions. He said that

Ray Balkwill, Wolfscove, Polperro.
Mixed Media 18x12in (45x30cm)