



Painting the light

*For North Norfolk artist **Tracey Ross**, the coastline is more than a subject – it's the setting for an intensely personal creative journey*



PICTURE: ©CHARLOTTE BROMLEY-DAVENPORT

PICTURES: Fine artist Tracey Ross works from her studio near Walsingham (above). Tracey's paintings begin life as rapid coastal sketches that capture fleeting moments on the north Norfolk shoreline (left). The skies of *Bright & Early* ignite in fiery hues across the canvas (below right).

For many, the North Norfolk coastline carries a spiritual quality that seems to transcend time and place. From blustery winter days to early summer sunrises, it holds a restless beauty in the salty air. It's in the way light falls across the marshes, in the cloud-streaked theatre of a Norfolk sky and in the silver stillness before a storm breaks over the sea.

This atmosphere is at the heart of Tracey Ross' semi-abstract paintings. Working in mixed media and acrylics, she seeks to reveal the deeper mystery within this dramatic landscape. In her painting *Bright & Early*, seasonal light blazes across the canvas in fiery hues, capturing the charged energy of a coastal sunrise. *Blue Sea Lagoon* offers something gentler, evoking depth and space as a distant tide ebbs quietly to shore. In *Nets in the Creek*, texture and composition draw the eye as tidal water creeps through a narrow inlet and the boundary between sea and sky dissolves.

Tracey has been shaped by this landscape all her life. A Norfolk girl through and through, she never felt the pull to leave. She studied textile design before completing a Visual Studies degree at Norwich University of the Arts, and the love of colour mixing she discovered remains central to her work. A member of the Norwich 20 Group, she takes part in North Norfolk Open Studios each year, has been shortlisted for the National Open Art Competition

and reached the finals of both the Royal Society of Marine Artists and the Institute of Painters in Watercolours. Her paintings now sit in private collections and galleries across the UK and abroad.

The coastline remains at the heart of everything she produces. "Painting along the North Norfolk shore is an exciting spiritual journey on canvas," Tracey says. "I spend a lot of time walking with my sketchbook, observing and drawing. It's a place where I feel a connection and a sense of presence."

Tracey's Christian faith is also woven into her practice, shaping the way she sees and responds to the landscape. "Often on walks, my passion for the work grows not only as an emotional response but also a spiritual one, sensing the joy of God my Creator," she explains. "Capturing the seasonal elements particularly delights me. It's an intense visual experience which speaks to my heart."

The horizon is a defining thread in her work, appearing in every piece

"Painting along the North Norfolk shore is an exciting spiritual journey on canvas"





PICTURES: Blue Sea Lagoon and Nets in the Creek show the range of Tracey's palette, from the quiet depths of an open sea to the textured intimacy of a tidal inlet (above).

she creates. "The Norfolk coast is a thin place," Tracey says. "Lord George MacLeod used that phrase to describe the island of Iona - somewhere the material and the spiritual are separated by nothing more than tissue paper. Standing at the water's edge, looking out to that horizon, I feel exactly the same." In her mixed media work, she even uses tissue paper physically within her paintings; a quiet echo of this idea.

Tracey's creative process begins long before paint touches canvas. Each piece starts on the coast, with Tracey absorbing the salt air, the shifting light and the mood of the landscape before making a single mark. "My sketchbooks give insight into how I work," she says. "Rapidly drawing my feelings of a place through mark making is key to recalling all the energy I sense." Back in her studio, she works across several paintings at once, moving between them in short bursts to keep the work spontaneous and alive. Knowing when to finish, she admits, is the hardest skill. "You learn how to stop by overworking a painting until it's almost lifeless," she laughs.

"Sometimes a painting will just sing and tell you it's done. Other times, you have to shut the door on it for a few days and come back with fresh eyes."

This spring, Tracey will open her studio as part of North Norfolk Open Studios from 23rd May to 7th June. She will also exhibit with The Salthouse Artists at

Salthouse Church from 10th to 17th June and hold a solo show at The Boathouse in Burnham Overy from 12th-16th August.

"Painting these landscapes feels like responding to a place that has shaped me through my childhood and my life," Tracey reflects. "It's a privilege, and an honour, to give people joy through something that speaks of a landscape they carry with them."

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