



Michael Norcross in the studio, Park Life 2 Winter Geese



Open Studios West Berks & North Hants runs from May 10-26. The INSIGHT exhibition at The BASE, Greenham showcases an example of work by each of the 100 participating artists. Explore the OS Guide and website [www.openstudios.org.uk](http://www.openstudios.org.uk) to help you choose the artist studios you wish to visit

# Meet the Open Studios artists: no 3

Fellow OSWB participants Teresa Munn & Moya Tosh introduce three landscape painters

**SELF-discovery, the excitement of the moment, colour and composition are some of the key components for Open Studios landscape artists Sydney Klugman, Michael Norcross and Simon Pink.**

Sydney Klugman says: "Each painting is a chance to reinvent myself." It's a simple statement but one which has been with him all his painting life. He sees his work as a journey to find out where he is: "Sometimes its about memories and where I am in the picture emotionally and where I am in the picture physically."

His paintings are a combination of real and imaginary places and his colours reflect different emotions or moods. He describes himself as "a bit of a Freudian at heart" and is continually searching the shadowy part of the unconscious mind. "Shadows are important. Shadow is the most distinctive part of oneself but also the most creative."

Many of his pictures contain dark, shadowy figures and, as he paints, he is continually asking the question: What is going on behind me? He wants his viewers to think about where they are in the picture and sees a strong spiritual element in his work. He is not trying to create a topographical, detailed record of a place: "It's not precious to me where it is, it's precious in how it got to me."

Sydney describes his work as very process orientated in which the finished piece is a bonus. He often collages his paintings into new pictures, revisiting them and re-doing them.

A key theme he plays with is windows and doors and he has constructed a box of windows containing paintings of places he has visited. Some of the windows have been left deliberately empty because "I wanted to leave a space to be

reflective." He is currently working on a series of interiors which he says he is wrestling with in every direction.

By contrast, Michael Norcross describes his landscapes as representational paintings, drawing what he sees. He derives his subject matter from endless walks around the countryside and celebrates what he finds: "Sometimes I do a drawing and sometimes it's just a few words and some colours stuck next to them but more often than not I do a painting on a scruffy bit of paper."

His paintings often come from those little studies which he keeps in the studio, describing them as scrappy little notes or observations, an aide-memoire which helps him to remember the scene: "You can recreate something from it, recreate the excitement of the moment." If he needs more information he will revisit the spot and describes this as an empirical exercise. From these small beginnings Michael will scale up to do large paintings.

As well as these small sketches and drawings Michael paints large pictures 'en plein air' which is not always as idyllic as it sounds: "It is quite tough. Sometimes it's not terribly pleasant." He was particularly challenged during a day-long sitting painting May blossom where he was constantly having to pick dead flies off the canvas and another occasion when he was so cold after a couple of hours he could hardly feel his fingers.

Michael says he is not an artist in pursuit of the picturesque and looks for nature themes in more out-of-the-way places.

His style combines experience and imagination because for him just recalling things accurately is not enough. "Personally, I don't think that makes a good painting. It's what you bring to the painting. The



Simon Pink, Wittenham Clumps and with his sketchbook

**He likens his paintings to a film set with trees, foliage and clouds depicted in a magnificent treasure trove of bright colour**

starting point is living in the moment, recapturing the feeling and experience which is why it's really important to get out there."

Simon Pink has a similar emotional connection with nature and wildlife which he has been passionate about since childhood and which he describes as his comfort zone.

Composition and colour are the main elements of his work and his starting point is looking at shape and framework. "I'm always looking at form, the lines, how's your eye going to see it, the structure."

He likens his paintings to a film set with trees, foliage and clouds



depicted in a magnificent treasure trove of bright colour. His love of colour has been magnified in his mind by extensive travel to hot tropical countries such as Brazil, South Africa, India and Jamaica. Whenever he visits he makes a small sketchbook of highly coloured and quickly executed paintings which he sometimes uses for later reference. He doesn't share these sketchbooks with anyone and describes them as "memory catchers".

Simon describes his paintings as modern, stylised versions of landscape where he takes realistic features from observation, sketches and photographs and adds in extra elements to form the composition of the final piece. He knows what the composition will be but not necessarily all the colours and often works on eight paintings at a time.

His work is big, suited, he says, to a villa with white walls and is held in private collections all over the world, including that of rock legend Elton John, who commissioned him to paint Windsor Guildhall.

You can meet all three painters during Open Studios in May, for details see <https://www.openstudios.org.uk/artists>



Sydney Klugman circular walk and in his studio