

AN INTERVIEW WITH BETHAN HARRIS

*Bethan Harris* is an artist based in Bedfordshire, UK, where she specialises in highly detailed pastel drawings of the natural environment. Taking inspiration from the personality and constant motion of the environment, Bethan hopes to capture these ever-changing moments in time.

**CG** With continuous strokes of pastel on paper, you create these beautiful depictions of nature, and one of your reoccurring themes are trees. What is it about this subject that has your interest peaked?

**BH** I've always been drawn to trees. To me, they are among the most abstract forms in nature, constantly shifting under external forces, moving and growing in countless ways. I've long looked to them for inspiration, especially after spending so many years living in the countryside. I'm particularly fascinated by the way they interact with light and the range of colours that emerge from those encounters.

On a deeper level, there seems to be a shared understanding that trees are interconnected, part of a hidden communicative network. This is the idea I hope to express through my work.

**CG** You often use a colourful palette of pastels in your work, what is it you like most about this medium?

**TB** I love being able to make direct, immediate marks on paper. You don't get quite the same effect with paint, which is why I'm so drawn to pastels. Another thing I love is their vibrant spectrum of colour. The pastels I mainly use are from Unison Colour, based in Northumberland; their pigments are handmade to reflect the tones of the Northumbrian landscape, which I find especially inspiring, as many of my sources of inspiration come from there. Since my work lends itself to such a bright and varied colour palette, the pastels allow me to create these kinds of landscapes.



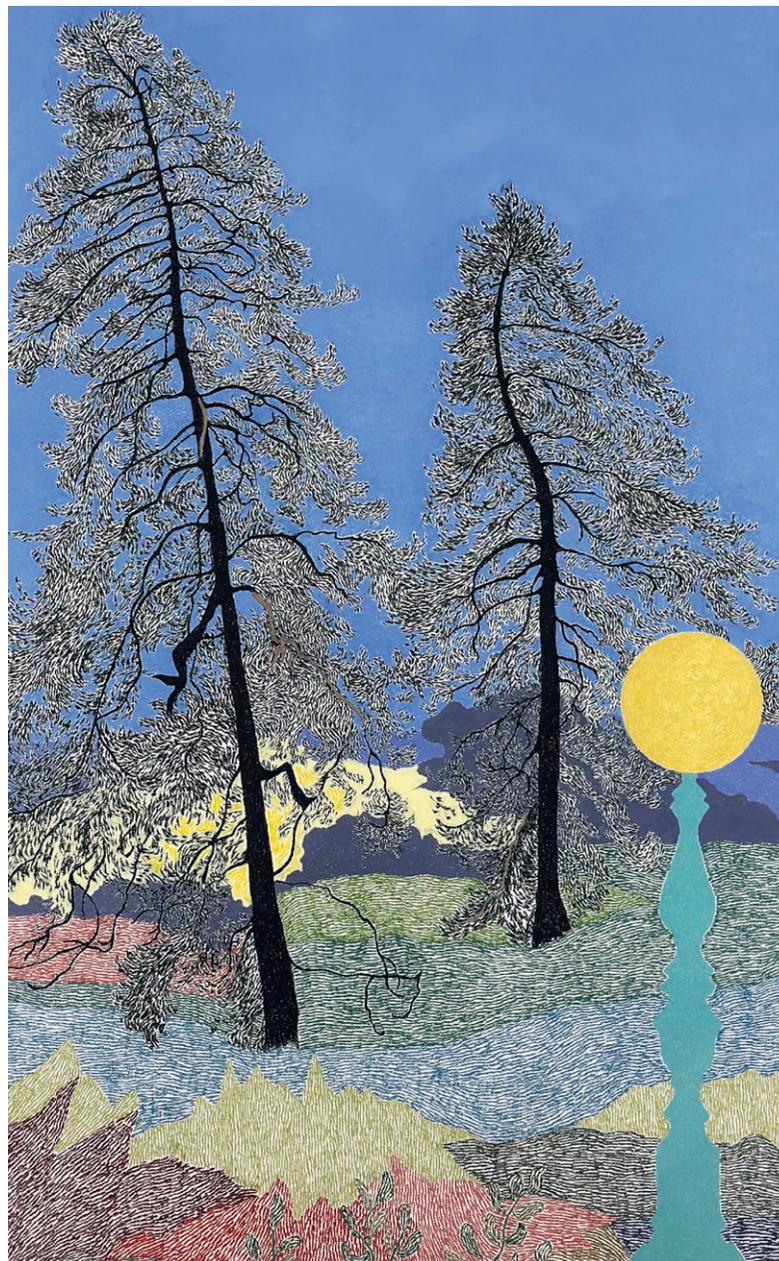
## CUBE GALLERY

CG When you are in the middle of creating a piece, what keeps you grounded and focused in those moments? Or do you prefer to let your mind roam and explore other possibilities?

BH My work develops entirely through intuition. I often begin with a rough image in mind of what I want the piece to become, but, especially when working with such a diverse colour palette, new possibilities emerge as it progresses. When I settle into an idea for a time, that's when I feel most focused. It's the constant decision-making throughout the process that makes me feel a little wild.

CG Your method often captures the environment in a state of motion, what are you thinking about as you draw that helps you express nature's liveliness?

BH I suppose I'm thinking of moving landscapes because nothing from memory is ever static, like a photograph. It's hard to describe, but the lines and fluidity in my drawings often reflect what I observe in real life: the sway of a branch in the wind or light filtering and dissolving through the trees. I feel as though I'm simply capturing nature in its rawest form- in constant interaction with the elements.



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CG With large, overarching tree branches, moving landscapes, and vast skies in your drawings, is there a deeper concept at work here?

BH In a sense, when looking at my drawings, you might ask yourself what isn't there? The answer is always people. The kind of nature I want to depict is untouched and wild, free from human interference. While at university, I was particularly interested in ecology and climate issues, and that awareness has undoubtedly embedded itself, perhaps unconsciously, within my work.

CG When you're in need of inspiration what helps gets your creative juices flowing again?

BH Mainly, it's getting myself outside. It can be hard to leave the studio, especially when deadlines are approaching, but taking a break and reconnecting with the things that excite me to draw is always the first step towards feeling inspired again.

I also find it helpful to look back through old sketchbooks and past ideas, particularly those drawn in specific places. Many of my works revisit recurring motifs from those landscapes. I'm a little obsessed with capturing the same image in slightly different ways, so returning to these earlier studies often sparks new energy and direction.

**CG** What is the one artistic item you couldn't dream of living without?

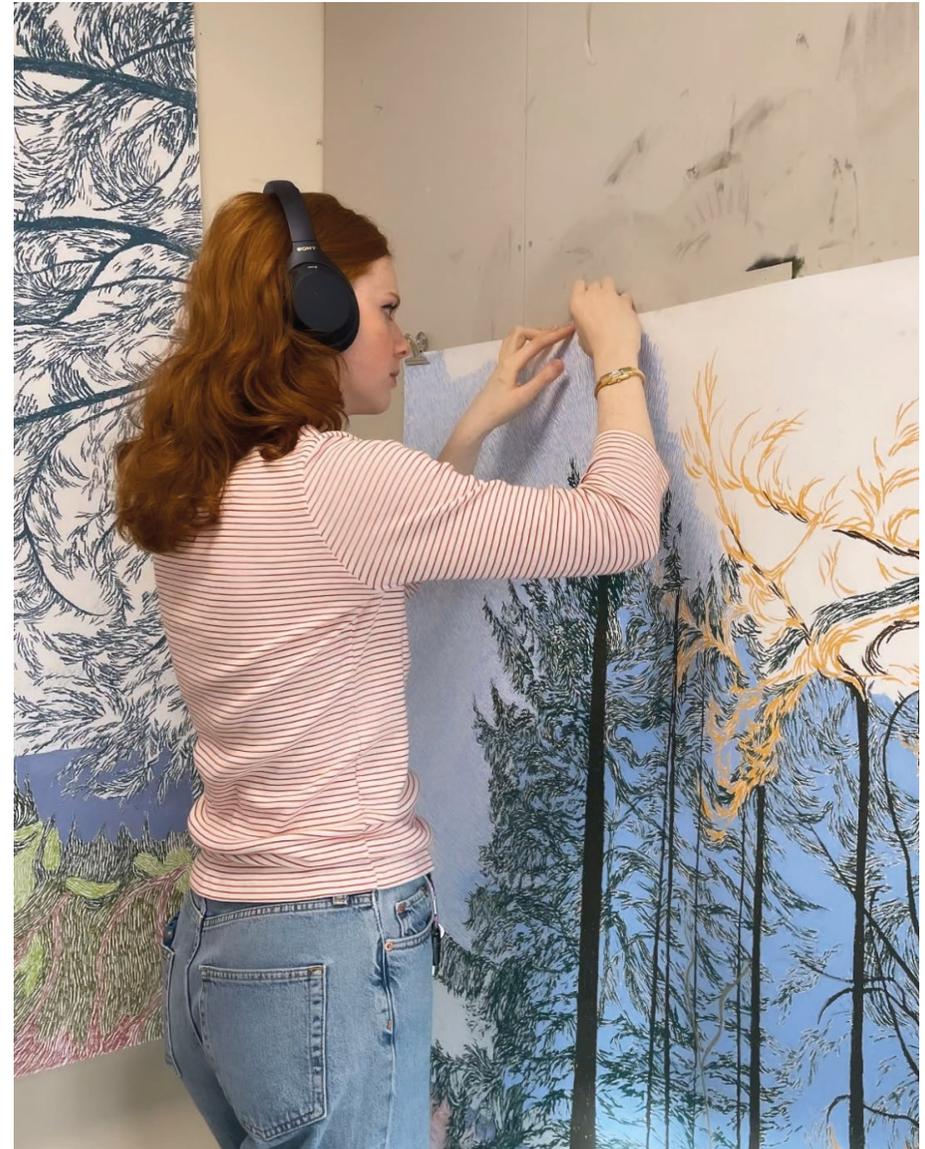
**BH** Without a doubt, my pastels. They feel like the most direct extension of my hand. I love their physicality and the way the pigment responds to pressure and movement. They allow me to work quickly and intuitively, which is essential to how my ideas develop. I can't imagine achieving the same energy or vibrancy in my work without them. I've tried other mediums, but it's just not the same!

**CG** You have participated in a few residencies across the UK, what was the most valuable thing you learnt about yourself and your craft?

**BH** Residencies have been incredibly valuable to my artistic journey. I've met so many wonderful people through these experiences, and the advice and knowledge I've gained from them has had a lasting impact. On a practical level, the dedicated time that residencies provide has been vital to the development of my practice, often creating space for new inspiration and ideas to emerge. It can be easy to get caught up in the flurry of daily life and other responsibilities, so these breaks have taught me how important it is to step back for both personal and artistic growth. The main thing I've learned is not to put pressure on myself. Even when the time feels rare, I've discovered that simply observing, sketching, and taking notes is often more valuable than producing something substantial. Inspiration gathered in these moments frequently drives the creation of new work later on.

**CG** And lastly, what is it you enjoy most about creating new work?

**BH** I really enjoy seeing a vision come to life, and it's exciting when things turn out the way I imagined. Completing a large piece is particularly rewarding, as the longer process makes the finished work feel even more satisfying. I also appreciate the positive responses from people, it's reassuring to know that something I care about is enjoyed by others as well.





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