



Devotional
PAINTING

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Hebridean artist Rebecca Styles brings her passion for grand landscapes to Cornwall.

This summer, the spectacular setting of Cape Cornwall hosts one of the UK's up and coming new artists, as landscape painter Rebecca Styles takes up an art residency at Brisons Veor. The collection she is creating will be exhibited at Whitewater Contemporary this September in a collaboration that brings Rebecca from her home in the Outer Hebrides to the heart of Cornwall's art scene. Rebecca's practice has, until now, been

concentrated on the dramatic landscape of the Isle of Lewis at the western edge of Scotland, where she lives and works. Over the last two years, this stunning location has inspired a series of collections which have been exhibited in rural locations across the Hebrides – in very remote locations by

design, so that her paintings are exhibited within their context. Interestingly, this counterintuitive but clever choice of show locations has added greatly to collectors' interest in the work, and has attracted buyers from as far away as London and even America, who want to experience not just the artwork, but the place that inspired it.



Rebecca's first solo show, *Bigger Than Us*, was exhibited in spring of 2022 at Grinneabhat Gallery in the tiny

Hebridean village of North Bragar. This was followed in the summer by *Alchemy*, a site-specific collaboration between Rebecca and Scottish poet Heather Mackay Young in the semi-derelict setting of Baile na Cille Church, Uig on the Isle of Lewis. Her most recent project, *Finding Lewis*, was on show at Talla



TOP
'Aura' – pigment and gold on linen

ABOVE
'Passage Of Time' – oil pigment on gold linen

Na Mara Arts Centre on the wild Atlantic coast of the Isle of Harris last winter. Now, this summer residency at the opposite end of the British Isles offers Rebecca the chance to make work in response to the equally dramatic landscape of West Cornwall, and present a show that will surely fascinate collectors of Cornish landscape art. “In Scotland, my studio stands beside the Atlantic at the furthest edge of Europe,” says Rebecca. “As an artist I have an interest in the way the coast and the tempestuous weather systems of the Outer Hebrides have shaped and carved the land here. As islanders, we are servants to the environment, always in battle with, and in awe of, the power of the elements. My passion for making art comes from observing this constant shift and shaping of the landscape, so the opportunity to make work at Cape Cornwall – to consider the formation of its coast, its colours and its topography, and the way the southwesterly weather effects the landscape there, will really extend my ongoing body of work.” As an exclusively project-based painter, an artist who pursues international residencies and even relocates her home and studio every few years, Rebecca is always looking to engage with new places and themes. “My commitment to the residency at Brisons Veor

stems from my love of coastal investigation,” she says, “so during my time at the southwest tip of Cornwall I will be reflecting on my impressions of the land and seascape there, in contrast to that of the Hebridean climate.” Rebecca was born and raised in West Yorkshire but has spent much of her life moving locations in search of unique landscapes. She lived and painted in both Devon and Cornwall before exploring the beauty of Derbyshire and other counties in the midlands and the north on her a



narrowboat ‘Puck’. In 2020 she took the astonishing step of buying land on the sparsely populated Isle of Lewis and building a house and studio. “I spent my childhood holidays on the Isle of Arran,” she explains, “and that had a huge influence on me in terms of my appreciation of the outdoors and the world’s natural

wonders. And I had always hoped to live somewhere that could only be reached by ferry,” she adds, “where there is only nature, peace and isolation.” On Lewis, she was at last able to make paintings on a scale appropriate to her subject: much of her work is large, over a metre square, reflecting the visual power and infinite beauty of the landscapes she paints. “Moving to the Hebrides was life changing,” she says. “This wilderness makes you assess everything

INSET
'Cirrus' – oil on canvas



ABOVE
The artist working in Baile na Cille Church, Uig, Isle of Lewis



TOP
'Take Me There' – oil on canvas



ABOVE
'April Showers' – oil on canvas



ABOVE
Artwork made onsite at the *Alchemy* exhibition
at Baile na Cille Church, Uig, Isle of Lewis



you thought you knew about yourself. Here everyone is small, everyone is vulnerable, and so begins the worship of the landscape that surrounds you on a grand scale. I paint now with reverence, like a prayer or an incantation meant as an offering or act of devotion. I want my paintings to be spaces where others can free themselves, even just for a moment. Our emotions are so easily blocked, we forget or refuse to listen, or to see, or to react to the beautiful, brute reality of nature anymore.” She describes her collections as “immersive, experience based, honest accounts of my emotional reactions to places and situations,” painted with an emphasis on creating landscape with landscape – using foraged earth pigments, grit, charcoal and other found materials that she mixes with her oil paints. Accordingly, she



is a recent recipient of the Visual Artist and Craft Makers Award, and a Creative Scotland Artist Bursary for her work involving local raw pigments and traditional paint making. Rebecca is constantly searching for new minerals and natural colours to use in her work, both in her immediate environment and from landscapes around the world. “Right now, for this residency project, I am waiting for a special delivery of a Vivianite pigments from Australia,” she says of a phosphate mineral found only in particular geological environments, named after John

Henry Vivian, the first to discover the mineral in Cornwall in the 19th century, “it is our only known natural blue-ochre earth colour.”

This material commitment, as well as her creative commitment to painting, is essential to Rebecca, and has become a way to truly engage with the landscape and the act of painting itself. “I have always found paint to be an emotional medium,” says Rebecca. “When I am working, I get lost in all those wonderful layers of colour. It is that luscious mix of earth and oil that I enjoy, the alchemy of it, knowing that pigments – which are simply coloured earth – can speak to us over thousands of years through the medium of art. That’s special. I love that I can take a rock from the ground and pound it into a pigment, into an oil paint that then lets me express my awe and appreciation for spectacular landscapes. That makes the act of painting all the more important to me.”

Rebecca’s Brisons Veor collection will be on show from 26th August to 27th September at Whitewater Contemporary, Polzeath, PL27 6SR.

 rebeccastyles.co.uk

 whitewatercontemporary.co.uk