



# Peter Joyce: Exploring New Routes

One visit to the remote marshland home of painter Peter Joyce and you are instantly immersed in his lifelong passion for art

Every surface, shelf and cabinet of Peter's home displays a wonderful collection of ceramic art made by some of the finest studio potters of the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries. Interestingly the walls are hung, not as expected with Peter's own paintings, but with the work of many instantly recognisable Modern British Artists. It is in the adjacent spacious studio with its large windows opening onto the surrounding marshland where his various sized paintings on board or canvas can be found. Portraying the local small fishing ports, wild coastline, marshes and polders of Western France, these pictures are carefully positioned around the walls and quietly demand attention.

The marsh area where Peter now lives has been reclaimed from the sea, which, depending on the tide, is either just a cowfield away or a significant trek over the shellfish-rich mudflats of the Baie de Bourgneuf. He walks daily across the marsh of this forgotten island, seeking routes which avoid the creeks and inlets to draw inspiration from the

richness of the fauna and light in order to fill himself to bursting point with endless possibilities for the day's painting ahead.

The paintings are unmistakably his. The familiar tilt and tipping of the view echoes the work he made for over twenty years in his beloved home county of Dorset. The horizon, as it always was, is at the top, but now is crowned by a vast Turneresque sky. It is inevitable that this should happen: where his paintings were once looking down from the high cliff tops of Purbeck, his eye now eagerly roams across the expansive marshland plains. He no longer paints the vertigo of the Dorset coastline; he now paints this mysteriously beautiful 'flat' place.

This change of perspective is not surprising and his exploring of new routes has not gone unnoticed in the art world. Recent successful exhibitions of new work by Peter Joyce have been enjoyed as far away as New York and Connecticut, at home in Bath, London and Cambridge and in his new home of France. Peter's inquisitiveness and fondness for this

unusual landscape has not gone unnoticed either by Harris Interiors Gallery in Peter's home town of Poole or by Melbourne-based writer Gary Topp. Nick and Caroline Harris will be exhibiting a selection of Peter's recent paintings at their gallery during October this year and their masterstroke has been to ask him to invite some of his favourite potters to join him. The couple have only recently begun to show ceramics, but will place themselves firmly on the ceramic map as Joyce has selected his friends and leading potters Robin Welch, Dan Kelly and Christian Bourcereau to exhibit alongside him.

Like Nick and Caroline Harris, Gary Topp has also been a guest of Peter's in France. The area has left a lasting impression on him too as one can read in his foreword to a new book about Peter's life and work which will be launched at the exhibition in Poole in October. His words begin to set the scene and leave one eagerly wanting to experience both the place and the paintings.

"It's a quiet place. The houses have fields and space between them and their lights reach out to each other through the thin twilight. There is a sense that mist or sea fog are never far away. And then



they close their shutters to the darkness.

"However, if you listen in the morning you will hear music coming from a flat sided white building - much like the other low flat-sided white buildings that occupy the surrounding marshland - and Peter will be warming his fingers up for the day. He will probably be drinking Jo's coffee from their repertoire of beautiful mugs, each one chosen because it carries the earth and human touch directly in its construction...In Bouin Pete and Jo live in the sea. Their house is literally built on the sea bed in the handful of kilometres that make up the reclaimed land.

"Whilst it may not have the immediate drama of the cliffs, it is extraordinarily mysterious and strange, insidiously so. It has something of the 'night' about it, a place where man has meddled with nature and taken a healthy chunk out of the natural order...An artist's response to a new place is often profound and there was a great sense of anticipation as the transition between the vertical worlds of the Purbeck cliffs slowly gave way to the flat lands of the Bouin marshes. It is literally as if the world has a new axis and spins in a different plain.

"Peter did not choose to radically reinvent his style, materials or palette. He had no reason to as his methodology has been honed and refined, but a determination to translate this to his new world facilitated a sense of creative urgency that has, in turn, prompted a new rhythm. These flat marshes contain a number of elements that make them immediately compelling to Peter and created a sense of joy and love and discovery very quickly...

"Peter Joyce is a scientist, social historian, archaeologist, cartographer and naturalist. His paintings are immediately beautiful and almost ridiculously complicated. His biggest struggle is always how much information to leave out - that is why they are always scratched and erased. They are always scratched and erased...Peter's colours are real and not imagined. They are not decorative, despite their tonal rhythm and surface attractiveness. They are glazed from the earth like a ceramicist. His palette has become more varied and more beautiful as it has become more literal."

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*Peter Joyce: Exploring New Routes, with Ceramics by Robin Welch, Dan Kelly & Christian Bourcereau runs 1 - 31 October, at Harris Interiors Gallery, 33 Church Road, Lower Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, BH14 8UF. Telephone +44 (0) 1202 744081. [www.harris-interiors.com](http://www.harris-interiors.com)*