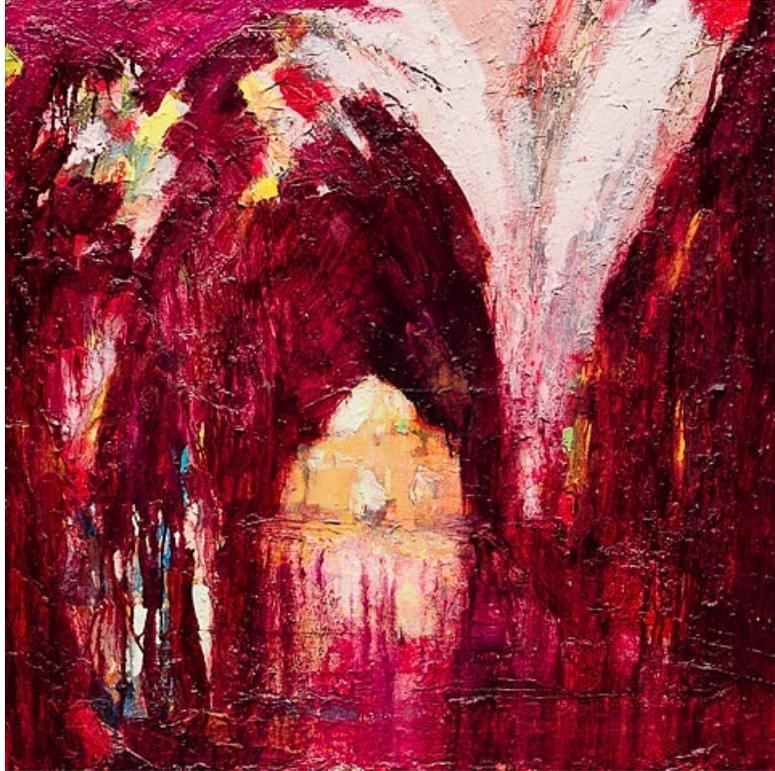


## INTERVIEW WITH PAUL WADSWORTH

by art journalist and writer Lisa Pollman



**Paul Wadsworth**, *Festival*, 2015, Oil on canvas, 90 x 90 cm

**You live and work in Cornwall, United Kingdom. For those who are not familiar with the landscape and environ of Cornwall, what aspects of this southern seaside town are depicted in your artworks?**

I lived in Porthleven for thirteen years before moving to Porthtowan. Two years ago, I moved to Newbridge between Penzance and St Just. I live out on the moors of west Penwith, which has had a great impact on my painting. My studio is an old barn surrounded by hills and all aspects of ancient wild Cornwall; fields separated by stone walls, tumbling down granite buildings, ancient stones placed in the landscape centuries past and wild wiry trees blown and bent by southwesterly winds. The moors offer the most amazing beauty of a landscape hit by all the various types of weather that Cornwall throws at it. I work on location and just stepping out of the studio into this raw landscape provides me with great energy, alongside the need to paint and try and capture the atmosphere of this beautiful area.

**I've read that your pieces represent a "work of the mind". Please elaborate.**

In my paintings, I put as much as myself as possible. The changing moods of the moor does have an input into the painting and effect how I react and feel on a particular day. I am quite a physical painter and install those moods through the application and physicality of the paint. The "work of the mind" is this installing of the self and the portrayal of the actual living and breathing landscape around me.

Painting back in the studio, the works can become more reflective of my own personal experiences allowing for narratives to appear in the paint, telling stories of travel, relationships and whatever else life throws at me. Sometimes I refer to these works as magic garden paintings, a magical landscape created through experience where anything can happen.

**Do you feel that your experience with the ocean, through surfing, has given you a more intimate knowledge of the properties and movement of water that you're then able to translate onto a canvas?**

The sea has had a major influence on my work. I love to surf, swim, kayak, fish or just walk along the beach. The sea is a great place to go when you need space and time to reflect. Sitting on a surfboard, waiting for the next wave, gives you space to think. The rhythm and movement of the water definitely adds to the way I apply paint.

I think a painting should have a rhythm and movement, allowing for no dead ends as the viewer's eye travels around the canvas. This affects how I apply and bounce colour around the canvas. The energy of the sea as the waves pound on the beach is something that makes you want to capture and paint it. I suppose it's that living and breathing thing again. I would struggle living in a city away from the ocean and its moods!

**Please speak about the physicality of your work and the process behind living with each piece before it is completed.**

I work on location and in the studio, my processes changing depending on the subject matter. All landscape works start on location, as I need that initial reaction to the environment. I respond directly to the situation, the colour, the weather and the movement. They may not get finished immediately, as I like to spend time with the paintings in the studio. After the initial fast "explosive" time, comes a slow time when it's no longer about reacting to what is in front of you but reacting to what is on the canvas.

It takes time to live with the painting and time to look at its rhythms of mark and colour, texture and narrative. I generally have between five and eight paintings being worked on in the studio at any one time. I like to bounce from one to the other, adding colour and marks.

**On your website, you say that you "love the storytelling of Chagall". What stories or narratives do you tell in your artwork?**

The stories in my paintings mainly come from my travels in the Middle East and India over the last sixteen years or so. Through my own experiences or being a voyeur of others, a narrative arrives into the work. It's not a forced thing it's more of a gradual discovery as the painting develops. Figures arrive, buildings appear. I rarely have a strong idea of narrative when starting the painting but more of a playful application of paint that descends into chaos, from which something can grow. Magic garden paintings!

### **Tell us a bit about your “Black Cloth Project”.**

For five years, I have continued to work on The "Black Cloth Project". I have six black bags with same sized black clothes in each bag. They were initially given out to random people, who agreed to come and pose for me for two hours. In the studio, they posed with the cloth whilst I painted, drew and filmed what they did. There are no rules apart from the cloth couldn't be changed. So far, approximately ninety people have posed for me doing all sorts of things from dance to fashion to something altogether more strange and wonderful. The process works by passing on the cloth to a friend or acquaintance after posing. They then contact me and on it goes on, with each cloth building up its own identity. It's a lovely insight into the human condition. Because it's a one-to-one experience, a lot of talking and great conversations happen whilst posing.

### **You have spent time in the Middle East. What was your impetus behind going there? How has this experience had an impact on your artwork?**

I have travelled, painted and shown work in the Middle East for more than sixteen years. My initial invite came from a lovely lady called Alison Collins who has a gallery in Dubai called the Majlis gallery. At that time, she was the only gallery in Dubai. She invited me out to experience the area and see if it would feed my work. It did and led to many shows. It fed the narrative in my work and led to further travels into Oman, where I have painted and enjoyed its amazing landscape. Of course, Dubai has drastically changed since my first visit!

### **The “landscape” of the Middle East is certainly very different from that found in the UK. How do you incorporate aspects of the culture, peoples and topography from that region into your artwork?**

The Middle Eastern landscape is varied, from the deserts of the empty quarter to the amazing sea and coastline of Oman. The wadis are full of life. There are communities living off the land, colours to be seen in the clothes of the people and sounds of the water running through date plantations and the haunting sounds of the call to prayer emanating from the mosques. All these experiences are essential when I am painting back in the studio in the UK. I do work on paintings when traveling but the studio works represent a much longer process allowing for the experiences to emerge slowly over time.

### **Please tell us more about your book *Arabian Love Story*. Did you create this story or is an adaptation of one? How was the book received? Any interesting stories behind it?**

For one year, I worked on a series of drawings that became a book called "Arabian Love Story". It's a magical story of love lost and found within the Middle Eastern landscape. I was working on the drawings for a while before I realized it could be a book. The actual text, I wrote in a day as the drawings had already told the story and seemed to just flow easily. Was it a personal story? Who knows! I did a show with the original drawings and the book was well received in this country, Dubai and Muscat in Oman.

### **Any upcoming exhibitions where we can see your work?**

In the next six months, my work can be seen at The Majlis gallery in Dubai, where I have a solo show (February 2016) and the Bath Contemporary (March 2016). Other galleries showing my work are Beside the Wave Gallery in Primrose Hill London and Falmouth, the Gallery Tresco on the Isles of Scilly, the Campden Gallery in Chipping Campden and the Lynne Strover Gallery, Cambridge.