

A way of life that nurtures the senses: The closer you are the closer you are!

I was brought up very far from the sea, but I was introduced to it as a very young child. Trips to the sea were all about happy family time and imaginative play. We were all somehow “different’ at the seaside. We were freer, a little bohemian and needed so little to be fulfilled compared to homelife. Growing up and as life became more challenging it remained the sea that we went to for healing. None of us doubted its ability to hold us securely as we processed enormous emotions. The sea has remained an unconditional source of love even when we have been numb from grief or poor health. It is for these reasons I paint it with passionate energy to express this powerful and empowering relationship I have with it.



It’s not simply about being in the sea. It’s equally about the knowledge that it is there, the anticipation as you approach it and the utter exhilaration of simply being in its presence. Every single occasion, I feel that I am witnessing something truly magnificent and awe inspiring, something that is working constantly sharing energy freely.

It makes me feel different things at different times. On a clear winter day as I walk out on to the common towards Hardee’s Bay, Ogmore by Sea I will hear the sea chanting to me to come forward. As the waves roll gently in and the pebbles noisily chatter it compares to the sound of an audience cheering and demanding for the band to start playing. In moments like these the beach is my stage, purpose built for me to shine. At these times I feel adored and exhilarated. It’s as if I am being awarded a prize of the greatest merit. At times like these I think “I hope everyone has moments in their lives where they feel this ‘vital’ to life”.

Other days the sea is my counsellor. I talk to it as I dip. I ask for solutions to difficulties. Sometimes, when I am feeling sorry for myself, I ask for forgiveness for being so needy and other times I simply shout out "Thank you!", "I love you". The sea will hold me, soothe me, or shock me to the point of an epiphany! The clarity that often comes from being present having felt safe enough to share my thoughts creates the space often necessary for solutions to emerge from within.

Opportunities to look out into a space relatively uninterrupted by the clutter of human development are becoming rare. Yet the beneficial rewards such environments afford me are insurmountable. There is a freedom that an expanse of open sea offers that ensures I give time and space for processing thoughts that get trapped in enclosed spaces. The sea somehow dilutes the intensity of thoughts that in enclosed spaces, such as the home, studio or town can feel overwhelming.

On those days when my body is troubled by the aches and pains of age; the disturbing sensations of an autoimmune disease and the existential worries that arise in anyone fully immersed in life, the sea is my healthcare specialist. Everyday feelings of dis-ease, discomforts are replaced by powerful, extreme feelings some of which are also uncomfortable, but they differ to the former because I am confident that they are temporary. Gaining a confidence in the belief that discomfort can be temporary is life changing. Fear and angst are replaced by hope, possibilities, tenderness, and self-awareness previously laid dormant. It is this knowledge that enables me to swim in cold seas in winter. Whilst the extreme cold numbs and shocks me when I first submerge my entire body, I never doubt that it's only for a moment and then is lost in a feeling of utter joy and exhilaration.

The sea is like a doorway into another realm and sometimes that doorway is firmly closed, and I am not invited in. On those days I just watch, learn, and witness both the fragility and destructiveness of this intersection where land meets sea and try to harness the energy as an onlooker. At these times I respect and love the sea more than ever for holding me safely at a distance whilst nature rebalances.

At these times the sea continues to share by exercising all 6 senses at once. As always Sight and Sound and even taste are easily alerted but at those times when the door is firmly shut, I believe it's my 6th sense, namely Instinct that is working at full throttle and another more dormant sense, smell that will become activated. Moments like these are beautiful in themselves. We rarely simply sit and take the time to be in the moment.

The people I have met both in the sea and out are another special gift afforded by this remarkable environment. Maybe it's the way my face lights up and smiles the brightest smile that draws people out of themselves. People share with me their fears and love of the sea.

The sea seems to encourage people to consider new possibilities and breakdown barriers. Conversations focus around 3 key topics: Temperature; Safety and my faithful companion- my dog.

I swim in just a basic costume even in winter and this makes people alarmed by the temperature of the water. Everyone I have had the pleasure of talking to has heard of the health benefits of cold water and I watch them begin to open their mind to the possibilities. Many people share with me that they take a cold shower and are always surprised to hear me say that I think that is harder. Full submergence in cold water quickly naturalises my temperature whereas, the drip, drip effect of a shower slowly contacting bits of our body at a time is quite painful.

There is so much fear and love out there in equal measures. I respect that the sea is more powerful than I and I have a hard and fast rule that if I am standing at the water's edge deciding whether it is safe to go in then it is obviously not safe to go in. If I am questioning the pull or the swell or the height or the break, then I will wait till later. To connect with our innate instinct is key to experiencing fulfilment and joy in this environment.

As I float in Hardee's Bay my beautiful dog sits patiently protecting my clothes and barks at anyone who will listen. She draws attention to us both. If she cannot see me she barks at the sea and wanders to look for me. Like me she feels a need to protect this space- a guardian, a visitor and integral to it's future.

I hope that you can connect with this environment through my work. I hope this exhibition imparts the love, passion, and respect I have with the sea. If the paintings stir you in any way, I would welcome understanding how they have impacted on you. I share my work as a way of helping us process both joyful and challenging emotions. The sea is continually changing, adapting environment where we can learn so many life skills and experience opportunities for reflection and create space for new possibilities to emerge.