



Glen Scouller



▲ *In the Kasbah, Asilah, Morocco*, watercolour, 28×21in (71×53.5cm). 'This early watercolour was done without any pre drawing. The brilliant white of the painted walls and their contrasting colourful borders and doors, together with the strong areas of pattern were the main elements that attracted me to this subject. I used different sizes of brushmarks to capture this. The discordant colours of the houses also excited me and perhaps subconsciously reminded me of the work done in Tunisia by Klee, Macke and Moilliet.'

Puddles of captivating colour

Working at speed, with confident delivery, **Glen Scouller** intuitively achieves spontaneity as he infuses his watercolours with colour and light and even uses oil pastel or oil crayon if the subject demands it, as **Caroline Saunders** discovers

Succinct mark making, fluidity of line and splashes of vibrant colour are ever present in Glen Scouller's watercolour paintings. 'I try to paint as boldly as possible and without any inhibitions. I think a painting is a bit like a signature, it should flow from left to right and vice versa. If it jars in any way there is a problem and it needs to be changed. When I'm working on a piece I like to keep the whole painting moving, that way it has a sort of rhythm to it.'

Evolving techniques

Matisse, Schiele, Rodin, Degas and two fellow Scottish artists, Eardley and Melville, have had a big impact on Glen due to the sublime quality of their line drawing. His contrasting warm and cool colours are a direct influence of Fauvism and Post-Impressionism. When Glen began painting in watercolour in the early 1980s it was the work of Paul Klee, August Macke and Louis Moilliet that had a lasting influence.

Over time Glen's technique has evolved. Initially he made a drawing directly with a dip pen and Indian ink and then added colour on top. Abandoning this method for a bolder approach, he worked directly with watercolour on a blank sheet of paper with no preliminary drawing. In the early 1990s he started adding pencil on top of broad areas of wet colour to provide a richer, more interesting surface texture and a spontaneous feel. 'I don't feel precious about trying to preserve a pure traditional watercolour technique so I am happy to add oil crayon or whatever, to make the painting work. Line thickness is very important – I can create perspective by varying the pressure on the pencil. However, sometimes I get really frustrated with a piece...that's when the lines get thicker. Occasionally it can turn out really well.

'Sometimes when the subject demands it I will use a white oil pastel

to preserve a gleaming area of highlight or to create an interesting area of texture prior to adding any colour.'

Glazes

'I tend to work in transparent glazes, or puddles as I call them. I don't worry too much if the colours run into each other. Too much over-working can make the colour drab. Watercolour can easily lose its sparkle and unique limpid quality. I either let this first glaze dry or I put a further layer on top before I draw into certain areas that need definition. At this stage it's a judgement call whether to work with smaller brushes, adding detail or stronger colour, or perhaps to blot out areas and rework parts. Sometimes I use large sheets of blotting paper to rescue or lighten/tone down a colour and speed up the drying process, plus it can also add textural interest as well.

'Mistakes happen as a result of working at speed; sometimes marks can

be removed by sponging and blotting out, scratching out or by the judicious use of oil crayon or Chinese white watercolour. I prefer to leave mistakes and corrections, this adds to the richness of the piece.

'Working outside where the light can change quickly and dramatically

▼ *Kim*, watercolour, pencil and oil pastel, 21×28in (53.5×71cm).

'The whole painting was completed in about an hour or so, painted and drawn rapidly to capture the dappled light hitting the figure, table and objects. Permanent magenta, ultramarine, emerald green, cadmium yellow, bright red and Payne's grey were the colours I used here. I first used a white Caran d'Ache oil pastel to lay in where I thought the light areas would be, then I rapidly introduced large areas of mid-tones and, while still wet, drew into the whole composition taking extra care to get the head of the figure just right.'



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demands a fast approach and I enjoy and embrace the challenge.' Glen prefers to sacrifice drawing accuracy for a more lyrical approach. There are no strict rules – he aims to put an unusual slant on the arrangement and spends time wandering round a subject to assess different pictorial possibilities. Generally he starts a painting from scratch without any pre-drawing. He refuses to draw the subject slavishly either in terms of analytical/topographical accuracy or exact colour

▼ *Bird and Cat, Fallacho, watercolour, pencil and oil pastel, 21×28in (53.5×71cm).*

'In this painting I made the focal point the area with the birdcage. Halfway through painting the old lady appeared and I rapidly placed her off centre. I used a palette of French ultramarine, yellow ochre, lemon yellow, cadmium red and Payne's grey. I seem to recall I used mainly a 1in Pro Arte mop and some Chinese brushes. I went back the next day and made more drawings and watercolours of the old lady hard at work making lace – she made a great subject.'

rendition. 'One colour has to work with another. I latch on to certain objects/shapes in the composition and build on that, letting things happen during the painting process. I think colour sense usually combines with knowledge and experience of how colours perform next to each other. It's usually a case of trial and error when working at speed – I'm always learning – it's all part of the painting experience.'

Materials

Glen's favourite papers are Saunders Waterford Not 300lb and Fabriano Artístico Rough 300lb. He likes the natural non-mechanical surface texture of the Saunders paper. He generally stretches the paper on both sides of the board when making watercolours – even when working outside he always has a bucket of water and a large sponge handy. The paper would coggle badly if it wasn't stretched. Heavier paper would not require stretching but is more expensive to buy and heavier to transport. He uses watercolour board

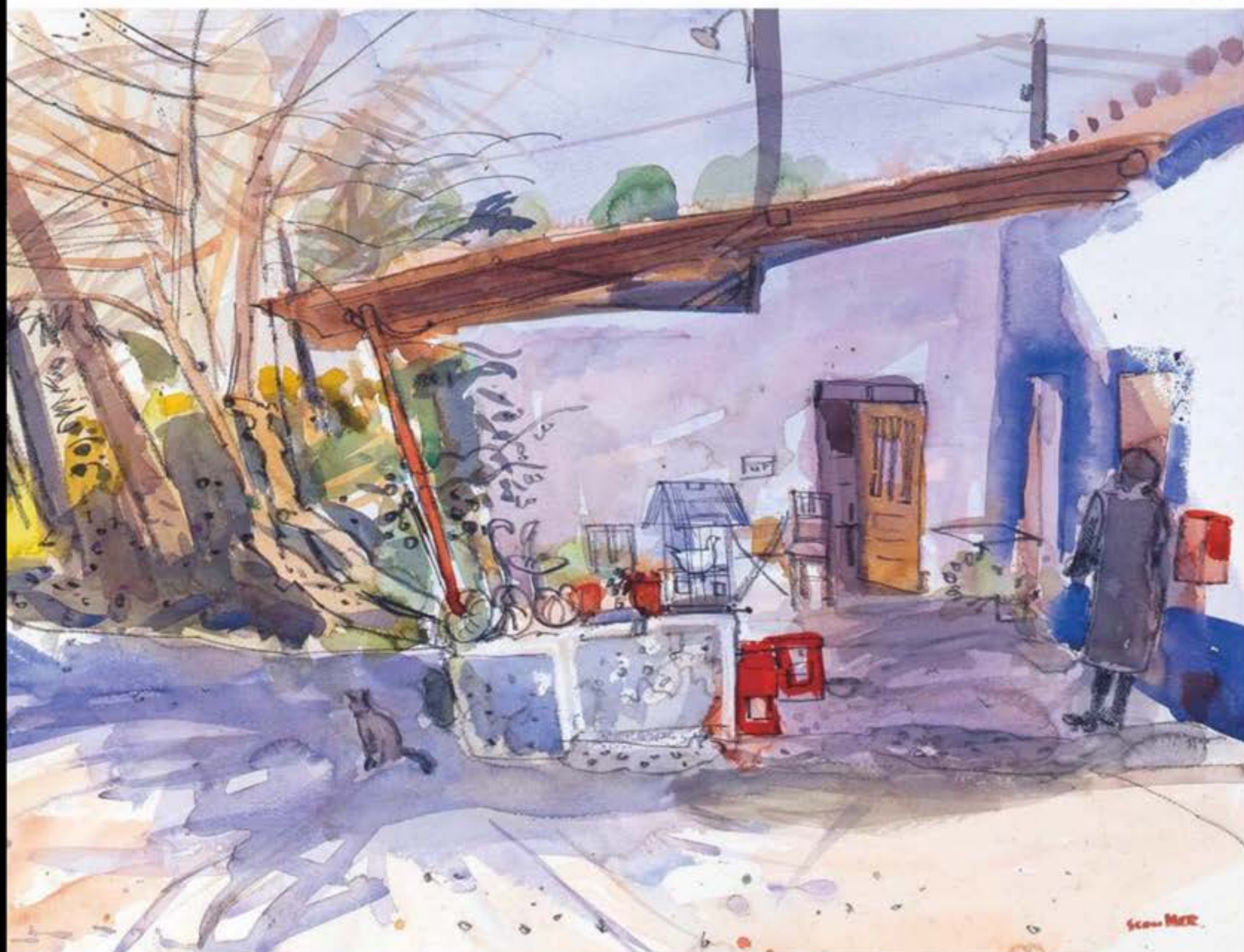
for small postcard-size paintings.

'I used to work on single sheets on a larger scale but now work a lot more with sketchbooks, which trains my eye to observe and record things that excite me and occasionally for planning larger-scale works.'

Glen uses a wide variety of brushes from very large squirrel hair mops to Pro Arte smaller mop brushes, some sables and some beautiful Chinese brushes with sharp pointed tips for finer lines.

'I mainly use Winsor & Newton Artists' watercolour in 14ml tubes and large ceramic pans in cadmium lemon, cadmium yellow, cadmium yellow deep, cadmium orange, bright red, scarlet lake, permanent alizarin crimson, permanent magenta, burnt umber, yellow ochre, viridian, emerald green, French ultramarine, cobalt blue, cerulean blue and Payne's grey, which is the nearest I get to black. I also use Old Holland 14ml tubes of violet blue grey and Caribbean blue. Recently I bought some Lascaux Aquacryl, which I

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▲ *Tulips, Dove and Daises*, watercolour, pencil and oil pastel, 21×28in (53.5×71cm). 'The strong colour and pattern of the tea cloth became the platform for this still-life set up on the studio floor. I liked the sharp contrast between light and dark and, while trying to keep the contrast strong, I wanted to keep the shadows colourful. I began by quickly blocking in the light areas with a white oil pastel, trying to gauge as accurately as possible where they were going to be – which was tricky as I was working on white paper. I then laid on some light washes to gauge where all the objects would be placed. Mistakes and corrections were left in for added interest.'

'I tend to prefer tertiary colours that are achieved by mixing rather than taken straight from the tube'



▲ *Strong Sunlight, St. Jeannet*, watercolour, 21×28 inches (53.5×71cm) This was one of the very first paintings I did in pure watercolour. I think at the time I was just having fun seeing what I could do with the medium. Again the subject was about light and colour and trying to give a sense of the intense heat of the mid-day Provencal sun. I basically built up layers of washes on top of each other moving the paint around at different stages of the drying process, working quickly as it was an extremely hot day with very little shade and the paint was drying almost as it hit the paper. Working from light to dark I began to see features that I could use as an excuse to create interesting areas of pattern and texture



▲ *Boats, Contre-jour, Algarve*, watercolour, pencil and oil pastel, 21×28in (53.5×71cm). 'The attraction was the dazzling, shimmering light reflecting from the sea in contrast to the elegant shape of the boat, which was almost in silhouette. The cool blues of the sea and sky complemented the warmer blues in the boats. The splash of red in the foreground boat provided a striking contrast to what is otherwise a cool painting. The first marks on this painting were done with a white oil pastel where I tried to place what would eventually be the bright light on the sea. I used a limited palette of French ultramarine, cerulean blue, cadmium yellow deep and Payne's grey.'

think will be great for really large-scale work.

'Sadly they stopped making Berol Karismacolour pencils in around 2005. I now use Staedtler graphite watercolour pencils and Derwent sketching pencils (light and dark wash, 4B or 8B). Sometimes I use Caran d'Ache and Sennelier oil crayons on the painting if the subject dictates it. Sennelier also make some wonderful oil and soft pastels that are as thick as broom

handles and great for covering large areas quickly.'

Store of knowledge

Glen revisits places, usually at differing times of day and different times of the year. 'All my watercolours are done *in situ*. Watercolour for me is very much a warm weather medium. I tend to draw in the morning to loosen up and paint from lunchtime until darkness falls. The heat of the day enables my colour to dry quicker and it's quieter, as locals and tourists are having their siesta, or lunch. My first painting trip to the south of France was a complete revelation. What you don't get from a photograph is the amazing colour in shadows or, importantly, the information. Becoming immersed in the subject for a sustained length of time and repeatedly drawing in the same location gives you a huge reservoir of knowledge and a vocabulary of images for use in studio work. That said, I have done some of my best work when in a new location for the first time – the excitement of the new and unfamiliar can be a really exhilarating and rewarding experience.' 

Glen Scouller

studied at the Glasgow School of Art, where he won several awards for drawing. In 1974 he started teaching in Glasgow schools and in 1986 began tutoring at Glasgow School of Art. In 1988 Roger Billcliffe gave him a solo show at the then Fine Art Society gallery (now Roger Billcliffe Gallery). In 1989 he was persuaded by Tom Hewlett of the Portland Gallery, London to concentrate on painting full time. Since then Glen has been awarded scholarships and received commissions and his work can be found in collections far and wide. Glen is an elected member of the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts and the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolours – this year he exhibited in their third open summer exhibition at The Meffan Gallery in Forfar, Scotland. To see more of Glen's work, view www.glenscouller.co.uk.