



CONTEMPORARY BRITISH ARTISTS

French painter Eugène Delacroix said 'Painters who are not colourists produce illumination and not painting.'
 This month **Anthony J. Lester** features two artists for whom colour is all-important.

The two artists on whom I focus here are miles apart, not only geographically but in their painting technique; however, their joy of using pure, rich pigments is the same. As we approach autumn it is reassuring that warm colour and sunshine continue to reverberate from their canvases.

There was never any doubt regarding **Alan Cotton's** destiny – 'Since I was a child I've wanted to paint and be part of the landscape and express its moods. My first brushes were made by my mother from her own hair – but I did not end up with a bald mother!' Having completed his grammar school education he went on to study at

Bourneville School of Art, then, after three years in the Painting School at Birmingham College of Art, completed his training at Birmingham University. In the late 1970s Cotton became a Research Fellow at the University of Exeter and after several years as Senior Lecturer in Painting and Art History at Exmouth's Rolle College he resigned in 1982 to

devote himself fully to painting.

With his sensuous passion for paint, the intervening years have brought much success with an impressive string of over 40 solo shows, including exhibitions at the public galleries of Dorchester, Exeter, Plymouth and Stroud, as well as displays in New York's Hammer Galleries, the Canada Arts Gallery, Victoria B.C. and the City Gallery, Dinan, Brittany, France. However, it is perhaps David Messum Fine Art who has championed Cotton's work most fervently. Apart from showcasing Cotton's paintings at exhibitions at the John Davis Gallery in Stow-on-the-Wold and the Jersey galleries of Falle Fine Art and Selective Eye, the London-based gallery has for the past dozen years mounted what has become an annual display of the artist's most recent work. Such is Cotton's following that it can be guaranteed that hundreds of collectors will be flocking to the next event which opens on 15th September in Cork Street.

Although Cotton captures the reflective waters of Venice, the bulk of his thick impasto canvases are devoted to landscape. For over fifteen years he has had a love affair with the sun-baked hinterland of the Mediterranean and for this year's show his travels have taken him to the unspoilt Lange region of Italy. Here the effulgent sunshine bounces off the walls and tiled roofs of hill villages such as those in Piemonte, vistas he finds particularly suited to his technique of palette knife painting – 'the richness of the surface with the textures and the kind of marks I use are the very essence of my work. One of the advantages of the knife is that you can use it in so many ways. Sometimes you can put down a layer of paint and then scrape it off so that you have a softness underneath and can scumble or drag paint on top of that to get some of the undercolour showing through. Sometimes the mark needs to be very direct, so you simply pick up the knife, mix the colour and make the mark and leave it physically on the surface in one go.'

Above. Alan Cotton (born Redditch, Worcestershire, 8th October 1937), 'Piemonte - Spring Vineyards', oil on canvas, 24in. x 24in. Signs work 'Alan Cotton'. The artist is represented by David Messum Fine Art, 8 Cork Street, London W1X 1PB (tel: 0207 437 5545, fax: 0207 734 7018), where he will stage a solo show of over 70 paintings (£1,350-£7,850) between 15th September - 2nd October. A fully illustrated catalogue is available at £10, including postage. Alan Cotton can be contacted by writing to Brockbill Studio, Church Road, Colaton Raleigh, Devon EX10 0LH. (David Messum Fine Art)

In startling contrast are dramatic views of the West Coast of Ireland – ‘the rugged romanticism has a particular appeal for me. The clouds always seem to be coming in off the Atlantic and creating wonderful contrasts of light and shade.’

Apart from offering his paintings via the one-man show, Cotton, often described as a Romantic painter, has hung his striking work in numerous mixed exhibitions such as the Royal Academy (1995 ‘Provence – The Luberon Plain’, £1,250; 1999 ‘Connemara – Early Morning Across the Bay’, £1,850), the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol, the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists and the Kenn Group of Artists, of which he was Chairman between 1980-87 and is currently President.

And what can we expect from the industrious Cotton in the future? Well, earlier this year he fulfilled a long-held ambition and travelled to India, visiting the frenetic city of Bombay, the more passive, palm-covered landscape of South Goa and then south-eastwards to Madras. No doubt, given time, we will be rewarded with canvases, capturing Cotton’s memories of the sub-continent panorama.

Like Cotton, Scottish painter **Glen Scouller** is a traveller and has also been seduced by the strong sunshine colours and deep shadows of the Mediterranean. His student days were spent at the Glasgow School of Art (1968-1973), where he was initially influenced by his teachers, Duncan Faichney Shanks (born 1937), James Downie Robertson (born 1931) and David Abercrombie Donaldson (1916-1996), and the Hospitalfield College of Art, Arbroath (1972, 1973). His talent was obvious, resulting in honours such as the Royal Scottish Academy Painting Award in 1972, followed the next year by the W.O. Hutcheson Prize for Drawing and a travelling scholarship to Greece. In 1974 he started teaching in Glasgow schools and in 1986 became a tutor at the Glasgow School of Art; however, the lure of painting full-time became such that three years later he gave up all teaching. The years in between had been interspersed with numerous painting trips – Crete (1974, ’76, ’77), Greece (1979), Shetland (1975, ’78), La Gaude, France (1980, ’81, ’86, ’88) – as well as further prizes, including in 1987 the Glasgow Art Club’s Lauder Award and the Scottish Amicable Award at the Royal Glasgow Institute



Glen Scouller, RGI, RSW (born Glasgow, Scotland, 24th April 1950), 'Winter Still-Life', oil on canvas, 42in. x 42in. Signs work 'Scouller'. Represented by Roger Billcliffe Fine Art, 134 Blythswood Street, Glasgow G2 4EL (tel: 0141 332 4027, fax: 0141 332 6573) and the Everard Read Gallery, 6 Jellicoe Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg, South Africa (tel: 27 11 788 4805, fax: 27 11 788 5914, e-mail: gallery@everard.co.za), the artist's work is also available from Open Eye Gallery, 75/79 Cumberland Street, Edinburgh EH3 (tel: 0131 557 1020), Corrymella Scott Gallery, 5 Tankerville Terrace, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 3AH (tel: 0191 281 8284, fax: 0191 281 5434, e-mail: corrymella@dial.pipex.com, <http://www.corrymella.co.uk/corrymella>) and the Portland Gallery, 9 Bury Street, St. James's, London SW1 6AB (tel: 0207 321 0422, fax: 0207 321 0230, www.portland-gallery.com). Price guide: watercolours, £850-£3,000; oil paintings, £1,250-£8,500. (Glen Scouller)

of Fine Arts, to which he was elected a member in 1989.

Since his first solo show in 1977 at the John D. Kelly Gallery in Glasgow, Scouller has staged some fifteen shows in his native Scotland, as well as being represented in many group exhibitions, including ‘Glasgow Boys, Old and New’ at the Fine Art Society, Glasgow in 1985 and regularly at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh and the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour, to which he was elected a member in 1997. Although London’s Portland Gallery have mounted Scouller solo shows (1989, ’92, ’94, ’98) and his work is represented at the annual London Contemporary Art Fair in Islington, art buyers south of the Border rarely get the opportunity of

admiring Scouller’s masterly crafted paintings. Primarily a portrayer of landscapes, town and village scenes and still-life subjects, his imagery is full of strong primary colours, his lyrical canvases and wonderfully fluid watercolours always being in the best traditions of the Scottish School. It is work of such quality and pleasure that not only have the likes of the Scottish Arts Council, Argyll County Council and the Royal Bank of Scotland acquired his work but so, too, have collectors as far afield as Japan, Australia, USA and South Africa. Following his successful show in June at Newcastle-upon-Tyne’s Corrymella Scott Gallery, Scouller is working towards a spring show at the Open Eye Gallery in Edinburgh and planning a painting trip to India.

