

# Philip Dawson

Philip Dawson's paintings are inspired by Nature – from walks taken through Barnsdale Woods and around Rutland Water to other favoured locations further afield. In his own words he is a 'painter of Nature's rhythms and patterns.' The sheer joy he derives from capturing these moments in paint is clearly seen in his vibrant works of art. Philip lives in Oakham with his wife where he not only completes his paintings but frames them too. Nicola Hardy talks to Philip about his art, inspiration and favourite local spots

Photography: Elli Dean

I first encountered Philip's work at his one-man show back in 2014 in the Victoria Hall Gallery.

His paintings had such a lightness of touch, fluidity of movement and vibrancy of colour that I found them extraordinarily beautiful. I became an instant fan! I confessed my admiration for his wonderful paintings then, and two years later I am delighted to be profiling him for Essential Living.

#### When did you realise you could draw?

It all started the first day at infant school. I remember it well. The morning was spent reading and writing but in the afternoon we were asked to draw something we'd seen on our way to school. I drew a caterpillar tractor! My parents were most complimentary, as parents would be. They marvelled at the perspective – I didn't know what that was, but apparently there it was in my drawing. They also liked my use of bright colours and the realistic way I'd captured the metal tracks. I don't recall thinking it was special – I'd just drawn the tractor as I remembered it.

#### Were you encouraged to pursue art as a career?

Yes, both my parents and teachers supported my desire to explore art further. Whilst doing my A-Levels, I decided I wanted to be a painter – so I went on to do an Art foundation course at Loughborough Art College. During this year, however, it dawned on me that the life of a fine Artist could be financially challenging, so I embarked upon a Graphic Design Diploma instead.

#### What was your first job?

After a three year Graphics course I stepped into the world of publishing and later became an Art director. I worked with journalists, advertising and marketing people. This gave me the opportunity to confront all the visual considerations involved when producing a publication - an invaluable experience that helps me with my painting publicity.

#### When did you start painting again?

I've had some great opportunities and exciting times working in graphics and still do, but becoming self-employed allowed me time to paint. I set my own briefs and answer them in my own time - and paint for painting's sake. I love making things as well, from modelling and furniture making to brick laying and gardening. I see all these activities as being creative. In fact I enjoy anything that involves my hands, eyes and mind.

#### What and where inspires you?

My subject matter tends to be landscapes and nature. Walking in Barnsdale Wood, The Birks of Aberfeldy, The New Forest, or any wood, particularly when bluebells are in flower, is one of my greatest pleasures. I'll record inspiring scenes on paper and take photos for reference purposes - sometimes of small areas or details that may come in useful during the painting process. When looking at nature I rarely see the final picture - I look for hints; colour, light quality and composition.

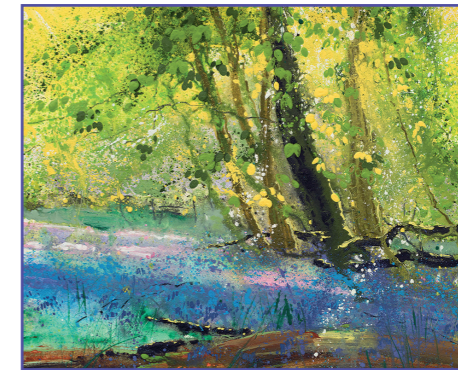
“There's so much visual excitement to be enjoyed, shared and cherished that I am compelled to observe and interpret in paint.”

#### How do you plan your paintings?

Serendipity plays a big part in my painting. Sometimes the outcome is more exciting that way - although I don't necessarily realise that at the time. A painting is never finished - it just comes to a stop - sometimes quite quickly. I like to take liberties with the subject and this can be risky. I strive to produce an engaging drama by taking colour as far as it will go. Exaggeration occurs as I paint. I always want to give my paintings a point of view - mine - and I do that by asking myself these questions... What is it that attracts me to that scene? Is there a satisfying arrangement of patterns and shapes? Is there an exciting quality of light? What colours prevail? How can I make the scene even more compelling?

#### Is the final presentation of your work as important to you?

Definitely! I do all my own mounting and



framing, giving careful consideration to the desired overall effect. For mounting my paintings I use conservation quality mount board. The frame shouldn't compete with the painting in any way – it must complement it. With modern interiors in mind I go for minimalist plain wood moulding – usually ash with a lime wax finish or tulip wood painted white in earth pigment paint. I try new innovative ways of

framing such as 'float' mounting where the painting appears to be floating within the frame. I always keep in mind what people might want for their homes - I think about different colour schemes as well as the shape and size of the canvasses.

#### Which painters have you been influenced by?

I'm more influenced by recently living and contemporary artists than traditional ones. I admire the work of Alfred Chadbourn and Hamish MacDonald – renowned for their daring use of colour, John Miller – famous for his beach icons of tranquility and Jean DuCocque and Kurt Jackson for their dramatic 'Celtic' landscapes.

Philip has recently been accepted as a member of The Leicester Society of Artists and The Welland Valley Art Society and has exhibited in both their annual exhibitions. Itch Gallery in Mill Street, Oakham and Dotty Gallery in Twyford also show Philip's work.



## PHILIP'S FAVOURITE RUTLAND PLACES

✳️ **Barnsdale Wood** in all seasons, particularly Spring at bluebell time and Autumn.

✳️ **Favourite shop** It used to be the Art shop, but now that is closed it's Colemans. With shops in both Stamford and Oakham they have a wide selection of artists' materials. If they don't have what you need - they will order it in - always with a smile and assurances that it will arrive promptly.

✳️ **Favourite eating place** I don't eat out often, but when I do I enjoy eating in The Wildwood Kitchen and The Lord Nelson, both in Oakham, particularly when the family is home.

✳️ **Best kept local secret** (more of a little known secret, I think) There's a place just outside of town where, some of the older locals in our community tell me, an artist lived decades ago. In this humble little abode all that remains is flaking paint, crumbling walls, mosquitoes and sheep poo. But there's a mural within this tiny hovel that can still be seen to this day.

[www.philipdawson.co.uk](http://www.philipdawson.co.uk)  
Prices range from £195 - £600