

Davis show offers serenity as he makes journey from bleakness to new horizons

It was fine to see the “May flooers” out around Hay’s Dock, even if the sun was definitely not . . .

The east side was thoroughly misty, though there were reports of places as near as Gulberwick being bathed in sunshine.

Rolling mist makes for some strange sky, land and seascape effects and the Shetland landscape and its ever-changing moods have been captured by Weisdale artist Peter Davis.

His latest exhibition *Of Time and Water*, which began at the weekend, is an extensive showing of his bold watercolours at the Gadderie at the Shetland Museum.

Peter is also known as a member and conductor of the Shetland Choral Society but in this instance it’s the brush not the baton at use in his creative endeavours.

He is an established local artist and I would say his style has evolved over the years to become much slicker in delivery. You may recognise his formulaic style, with much use of washes and pools of colours often overlapping.

I would say his approach is planned and quickly executed – his days of “happy accidents” in this medium are long behind him.

It’s on a big scale but this draws you into the pictures. For Peter watercolour “becomes almost a microcosm of the natural world”.

The paintings cover a four-year period which record not just the seasons but also “a personal journey from bleakness to new horizons”.

In the execution of these paintings, his mastery of the “wet on wet” technique, with careful use of pigments, can dominate and sometimes detract from the subject matter.

A little unevenness on the eye is caused with the variety on show, from conventional landscapes like *Sand Water* to the more prevalent abstracts like *Snow at the end of the Day* – from the recognisable to the often puzzling.

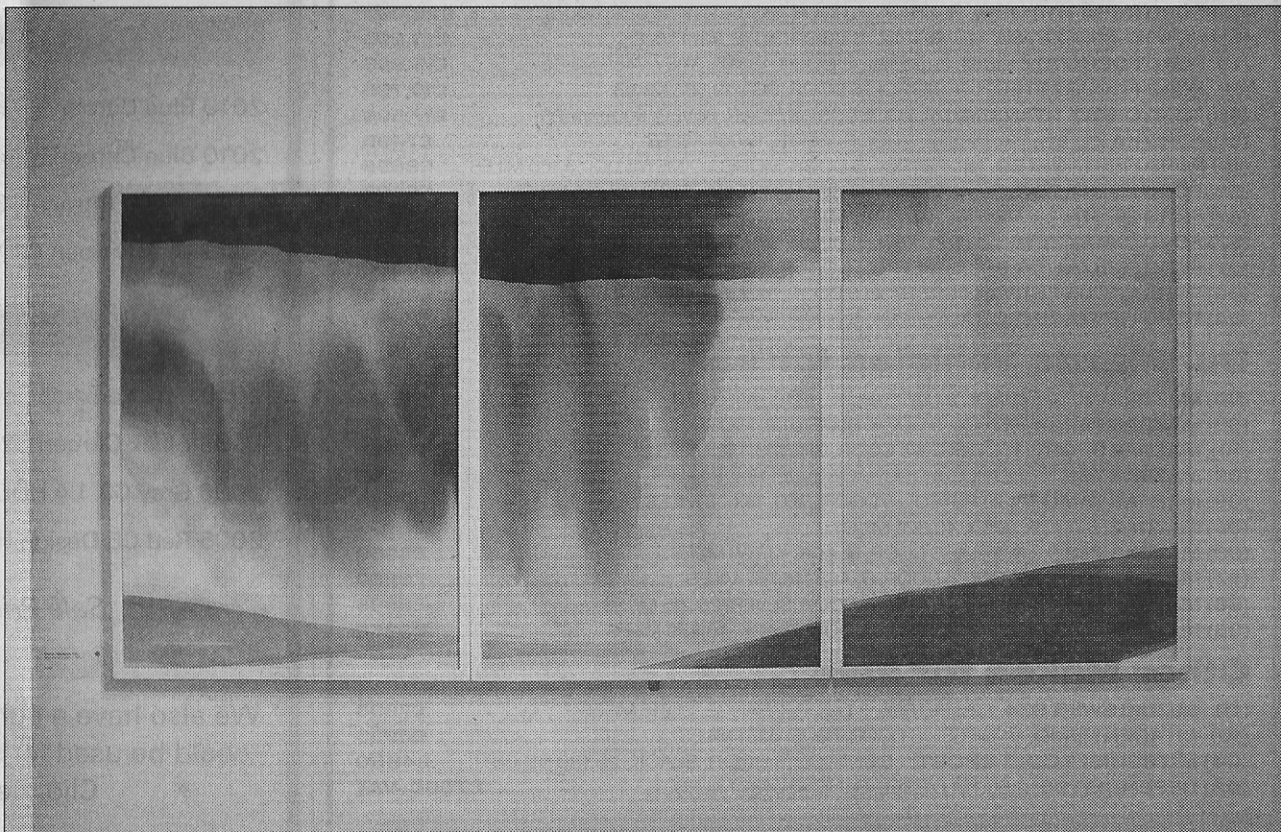
Sometimes you’re not sure whether you’re looking at something with recognisable reference points or something more abstruse.

The overall effect in the Gadderie of these often mesmerising pictures is of serenity, with both warm and cool colours relaxing the viewer.

And they are very contemplative, as Glenys Latham, an art lecturer visiting from Bolton, and her husband Bob thought.

Glenys is currently working on a project called “Shetland Skies” and has spent five weeks in Shetland, gazing heavenwards. In fact there is a social media site just for this very subject. She finds the exhibition “fluid and flowing” and very evocative.

Also casting a critical eye is a former teacher of mine Ronnie Gray, never short of a wise crack. I ask him if he is impressed. “Totally



Storm over Weisdale, a tryptych by Peter Davis.

Photo: Stephen Gordon

overcome” is his reply. “Isn’t that one upside down?” is another quip. It’s safe to say he’s probably on the more strictly representational side of art appreciation.

The exhibition is not all serious; there’s a humorous piece, *On Ellen Gray’s Bottom*, where a nude and landscape imagery intermingle.

Peter says in his artist’s statement that one of his favourite times of year

is winter when “elements of landscape are at their most minimal”. Still weather is well represented here – I find *Skerry at Dusk* arresting and *After the Snow Fall* has suggestive gentle tints of colour.

This is a very pleasing exhibition that explores the evocative quality of light and variety in the Shetland landscape in Peter’s inimitable tranquil style. It runs until 30th June.

Stephen Gordon