



Art and industry

Unlike many artists who specialise in urban landscapes, **Sarah Moncrieff** finds beauty and interest in derelict and industrial scenes. Words: Claire Masset



The quaint Oxfordshire town of Woodstock may not seem like the ideal setting for an artist who paints urban sites, but this is where, from her tiny garden studio, Sarah Moncrieff creates large-scale industrial scenes.

With a keen eye for striking shapes and structures, Moncrieff has become quite an expert at spotting local industrial sites with artistic potential. Her striking depictions of roads, building sites and concrete structures offer a fresh perspective on the industrial environment. "Whether we like it or not, industrial wastelands and concrete structures are a big part of our lives," she says.

Her fascination with urban sites began when she was working in Coventry as a solicitor. "I started painting the urban scene because I was interested in what people see every day. I asked myself: Could I look at it in a different way? Could I make it challenging to look at?"

One of Moncrieff's most powerful paintings represents Coventry's Ring Road: huge swathes of white paint depict the road as it circles around the town, while high-rise buildings lurk in the background. "I like big, bold structures," Moncrieff admits. And, since moving to Oxfordshire, she's found that there is no shortage of these in the area.

ABOVE LEFT *Cement Works*, oil on canvas, 150x100cm **ABOVE RIGHT** Moncrieff sketching at the derelict cement works in Shipton-on-Cherwell

A derelict cement works in the nearby town of Shipton-on-Cherwell offers the kind of striking, almost surreal, scenes she loves. "I love wandering around the site in the early hours of the morning."

Her work is constantly evolving. "You learn all the time as an artist. An idea starts bubbling and it develops very slowly. With all my paintings they start as an idea and they evolve. You can go off on tangents." She wishes she had more hours in the day to focus on some of her new ideas. "I like building sites – it's a snapshot of something being built at a certain time. I also like roadways – I really like Spaghetti Junction." Closer to home, she has started working on a painting of her local airport.

"I'm trying to make something beautiful and powerful from the familiar, vast or ugly structures of our urban surroundings. I ask the viewer to see something poetic in the unpoetic. To appreciate our surroundings especially at a time when many of us are tightening our belts and staying closer to home: that's got to be a worthwhile pursuit." ■

Sarah Moncrieff gained a degree in Fine Art from De Montfort University. She will be exhibiting at the Art in Woodstock festival, 24 October – 1 November. www.sarahmoncrieffpaintings.co.uk