

In 2014 we ran a competition in collaboration with [Great Art](#) and [Discover Art Magazine](#) for a free place on our September holiday. The winning artist Nicola McLean was asked by Discover Art Magazine to write about her experience with us. We think she had a good time! Here is a copy of the feature published in the November edition of Discover Magazine.

review painting holiday

From coast to coast

Nicola McLean, the winner of the GreatArt Postcard Challenge, describes her Cornish painting holiday prize with artist Ashley Hanson

Nicola also won £750 worth of art materials and a 12-month membership of bgallery. See page 10 for details of the other prizewinners.

Nicola McLean in the studio and (right) with a painting she completed on the holiday

I was lucky enough to win first place in the GreatArt Postcard Challenge set in the first print edition of Discover Art magazine. There were several generous prizes, one of which was a place on a painting holiday with the colourist Ashley Hanson in beautiful locations around Cornwall.

The idea behind Ashley's workshops is that rather than trying to imitate or replicate exactly what we see, the artist should instead allow colour and shape to lead the way, creating a personal interpretation of the subject. Ashley's work is influenced by coastal landscapes in and around Cornwall and America, and he uses complementary colours and markmaking to create his vibrant pieces. As I am a more

representational artist, the 'Freedom in Painting' workshop seemed like the perfect one for me to learn a new way of approaching my subject.

Ashley and his wife, Denise, who organises and coordinates the painting holidays, invited the eight participants to their home for drinks and a home-cooked meal on our arrival the first evening. It was a lovely way of meeting everyone and learning more about Ashley's artistic journey and process in a relaxed and informal setting. We saw Ashley's studio and the series of paintings he is working on and found out more about what we would be doing over the next few days. We stayed in converted farm buildings about a five-minute drive away from the Hansons' home at Bodmin.

The first two days of the course were spent on location armed with sketchbooks, paints, pencils and cameras. We visited Port Isaac and Trebarwith Strand on the north coast on the first day, and Charlestown and Fowey, from which we took a ferry to Polruan, on the south coast on the second day. Each location had a wonderful mix of nature and manmade elements and there was enough variety so that everyone on the course found their own particular inspiration.

We travelled in convoy to each location where Ashley had us complete either a series of rapid sketches or exercises that concentrated on markmaking, composition and space, which enabled us to look at the landscape from a different



Ashley Hanson leads the group at Charlestown Harbour and (inset) in the studio



Find out more about Ashley Hanson's painting holidays and courses at www.ashleyhanson.co.uk or call 01208 776566.

perspective. Then we had the opportunity to wander off to find our own corners in which to draw or paint more detailed sketches. I had never sketched outdoors before so this was both nerve-wracking and empowering as I got more confident and less concerned about people watching what I was doing. I am now more confident about doing this in the future.

During each day location, Ashley spent time with the group sharing his in-depth knowledge of the landscape and his take on what inspires him and how he translates that onto the canvas. He is passionate about his art and the Cornish coastline and that comes across in his paintings and his methods of mentoring. We each had plenty of one-to-one time with Ashley and he made a point of finding out what inspires us and what we wanted to achieve from the course. His aim was for each of us to make even one small

change from how we normally approach a painting, even if that was simply to choose a different colour palette.

The third and fourth days were spent in the studio where I found Ashley's tuition on colour mixing and creating swatches invaluable. It was difficult to let go of my notion of creating a highly representational painting but although I learnt that I am not likely to become an abstract artist, I enjoyed learning to look at the subject matter differently and trying to create something that was less

realistic and representational than my usual style. The last day was finished off with a critique of each artist's work followed by a wonderful meal at a restaurant in Lostwithiel.

Both Ashley and Denise made this a wonderful week; they put a huge amount of effort into making sure that everyone takes something useful away from the course and I think it is testament to their ability to deliver a great painting experience that several of us are already hoping to return for a second workshop with Ashley next year. ●

Fowey seen from Polruan on the first day of the course



Testimonials and Photo's from Our Previous Painting Holiday's

I am hoping to work towards a solo exhibition for next year - so much input was gained by having a concentrated time to give thought to future work - with the influence of Ashley's vibrancy of colour and energy of mark-making hopefully making an influence in my new body of work.

Debbie Zoutewelle, September 2013, West Sussex



It was beyond my expectations and extremely helpful. You both worked so hard and the workshop was brilliant. Thank-you so much for giving us such a creative and inspirational time!

Petra Rohr-Rouendaal, September 2013, Birmingham



Certainly moved me out of my box! Very interesting concepts , Ashley talks inspiringly. Good course, food delicious and very friendly environment.

Birgit Ackroyd, September 2013, Isle of Wight

Very helpful, exceeded my expectations. It was an excellent experience. Helped me move on. Thanks.

Margo Sharp, September 2013, Birmingham



I had fun painting in the open with the encouragement and guidance from Ashley on hand. Ashley's classes at the studio were also an eye opener, imparting some basics of mixing colours and some advanced techniques in painting that I had never seen before. Ashley is a very good instructor who boosted our confidence in many ways to learn to assimilate and appreciate the natural environment around us, as well as freely express our feelings in our paintings without any inhibitions.

Woon Khien Chia, April 2013, Singapore

The workshop was a highly purposeful environment and precious time was used appropriately. The demonstrations were thought provoking and stimulating. St Breward is pleasant, rural and the studio has the air of a retreat – perfect for painting and the artistic soul. Overall the workshop delivered something special and I think different and more 'out there' than the norm. Ashley is an inspirational tutor. Thank-you!

Alison Garner, April 2013, Cornwall



I enjoyed being outdoors, sketching, learning new painting techniques, learning about colour mixing, speaking English and getting to know you both. Thank-you very much for the excellent teaching Ashley and thank-you, Denise for the excellent organisation!

Regine Duevel-Alix, April 2013, Germany



Thank-you so much, both of you. Ashley is a very good tutor and such an enthusiast that it is completely contagious. I am buzzing with picture to paint in my head, like I never had before...it is almost a waste of time to sleep! You were both so generous with your time and care...very memorable and can't wait to come down to Cornwall again!

Jane Crane September 2012, Banbury



In all respects it has been very helpful in my development as a painter. Ashley gave his heart and soul as well as all his energy. It was by far the best course I have been on. You both put in so much.

Rosemary Bennett September 2012, Charlbury



An amazing warm/friendly atmosphere throughout. Thank-you Ashley for your exciting enthusiastic tuition. Thank-you both, for such a highly organised experience. Huge credit to you Denise for being you, looking after us so attentively and all your personal communication.

Janey Elder September 2012, Bath

Thanks to this experience I have been jettisoned into a new confidence about myself and my work and I know I shall be doing more painting in the future. My abstract has been hung in our living room by my husband, who wouldn't hang anything up in our room if he didn't like it.....so it must be good!

Susan Emms April 2012, Berkshire



Thank-you both SO very much indeed for a truly wonderful experience, you both worked so very hard indeed and we all benefitted tremendously.

Rosemary Hunter April 2012, Wales



Thanks so much for helping me get back into painting again on practical, emotional and professional levels. It was truly wonderful. Great people, great fun!

Hilary Tranter April 2012, London

I didn't know what to expect—but I have been delighted that it lived up to its title 'Freedom in Painting' - suggesting that the painting comes first, it dictates the subject matter. Its been very useful for ideas for future work. Ashley's a very passionate, selfless teacher. He tries to get into the mindset of each student and find out what they want to achieve. He really gives of himself. Excellent.

Kate Newington April 2011, London



Thank-you both so much. You made us all feel SO welcome and were very caring and attentive. I have really benefitted from this holiday and it will definitely influence my art in the future.

Louisa Whitworth April 2011, London



I am SO happy with and proud of the paintings I produced with Ashley in Cornwall. I have them both in simple frames on my wall and seeing them reminds me of the fun we had and the hard work too!

Jane Wateridge April 2011

East Sussex

Particularly enjoyed Ashley's individuality rather than a generalist approach.

Kathleen Dawson, April 2011, East Sussex

To find out more about our painting holidays for 2015 click on the links below:

[Holiday Mon 11th May - Sat 16th May 2015](#)

[Holiday Mon 21st September - Sat 26th September 2015](#)