

## *Midsummer memories*

### **Gwenda Sivan**

The art piece titled "Midsummer Memories" is a series of three mixed media tempera and acrylic paintings on canvas in two different sizes. I endeavored to explore two main themes: time of day, and memory, intertwined with a seamlessly light air of nostalgia.

As a person of mixed heritage, I spent many summers of my childhood in a village house called a "dacha" in Eastern Europe. The landscape in my pieces is rendered from several areas around the dacha where I used to spend the long days losing track of time. As a child my measure of the passing of the day was the vibrant sunrise, the blazing midday sun, and the sunset that would slowly wash across the sky. I wanted my paintings to evoke the feelings of serenity that

I retain in my memories, while depicting the way I see those scenes in hindsight, rather than them being accurate to the time.

Each artist that I researched had features in their work that could be utilised for one or both of my themes. "Memory" had a dreamy undertone to it that is prevalent in both Clarice Beckett and Claude Monet's work. I took particular interest in the colours, rather than technique, in Beckett's "Walking Home" and Monet's "Haystacks", as it captured the saturation and contrast of a European meadow throughout the year. To make sure that the dawn and dusk pieces were sufficiently different and accurately distinguishable, I put emphasis on studying colour temperature and tonal value.

The dawn piece is a bright invitation to the day, with warm pastel colours integrated with the slightly cool remnants of the night in the grassy areas of the landscape. The bodies of water integrate sections of the sky into the land, lightening the piece. The clouds are illuminated from below, with the sun glowing on the horizon. The clouds lead the eye into the pieces that follow.

The midday piece is the most saturated, with vibrant colours in the sky and trees proving the warmth that one would experience from being present in the landscape. The clouds are voluminous where this painting connects with the dawn painting, and wispy from the gentle breeze that connects it with the dusk painting, softening the vibrant sky. The flowers and foliage are brightest here, as overhead sun always enhances colours on the ground.

For dusk, I settled on making it darker and cooler, with a muted palette that translated the serenity of a northern late-night sunset, as it signaled the true end of a day. The distant tree line is significantly closer to the foreground, with two stands of trees either side of the frame. The smaller space reflects how time has run out in the day, and the shading in the grass leads the eye to take one last look around before coming back to

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the foreground and the sleeping flowers.

The tree line in the background serves as a reference point for distance and time. At dawn, there is much left of the day, as reflected by the vast expanse and distant tree line. At midday, the mountains in the distance ease off into the horizon and the tree line is brought in, with trees on the right of the piece closer to the viewer, connecting it to the dusk painting.

Overall, I am very satisfied with my final pieces. I believe that they work together to provide movement of rising and setting and have successfully conveyed the feelings I felt as a child in my home village. I faced many challenges throughout my folio, trying to understand how I will convey what imagined into a painting style that I have never done before. I learnt a lot about composition, contrast and saturation, the intricacies of painting skies and the integration of the vibrant colour into a landscape. Throughout this experience I have watched my knowledge and skills in art develop beyond what I thought possible, and I plan to continue pushing my boundaries of creativity and skill.