

Meet the Artist:

# Trish Ampleford

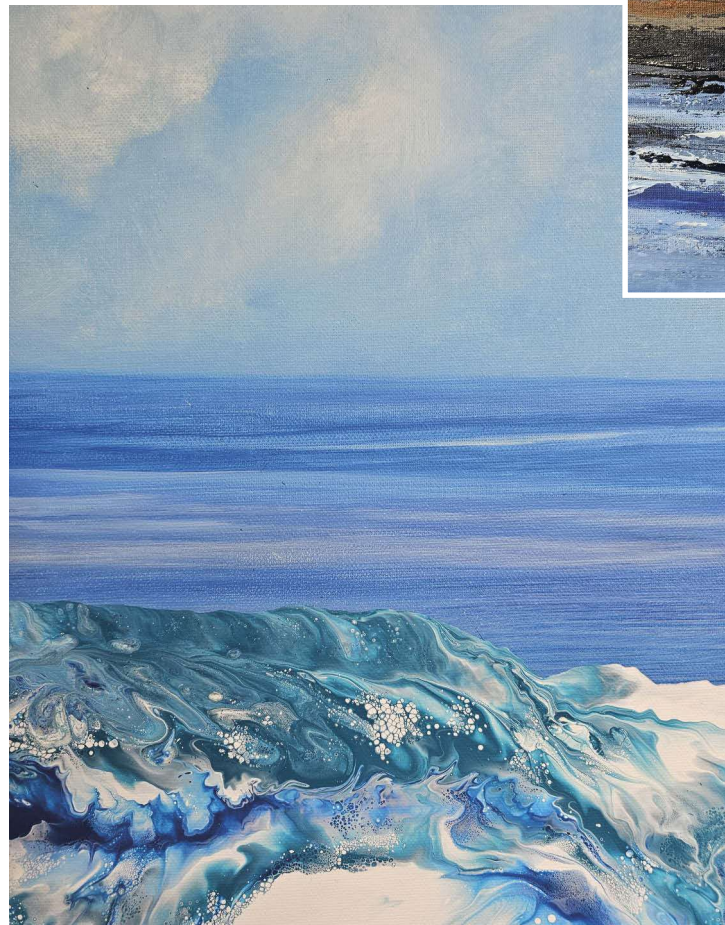


In the summer, most of us dream of the sea if we can't get there in person, and it is this longing to be by the waves that inspires Trish Ampleford, a relative newcomer on the Oxfordshire art scene. Her first exhibition was in May last year as part of the Artweeks festival.

**Esther Lafferty** spoke with her to discover more.

**T**rish's paintings depict curling, bouncing and mysterious waves, rich with the summer sea colours of a mermaid's jewellery box, topped with dashing white horses.

"When I'm painting, just seeing the movement of the paint and watching a wave form on the board or canvas takes me right back to the sea," she grins. "I can almost feel the water lapping at my feet."



She carries on: "Seascapes are my real love, mostly, they're inspired by the sea off the Cornish South Coast and the waves that lap into Cornish coves. We often visit Cornwall, and it has always been my calm, happy place. I'm even content when I am sitting watching the waves, during a storm. When it's stormy there's more theatre: I simply love the motion of the waves, the power and the sounds of the ocean. Emotionally I feel very connected to the sea. Perhaps that's because I lived by the sea when I was tiny – near Clevedon on the Severn estuary – and often visited my grandparents in Brighton as a child, so it got into my soul."

Trish describes how she feels a pull from the rhythm of the sea, the crunch of the sand, and

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**I simply love the motion of the waves**



that sound that you hear on pebbly beaches, like Brighton, as the water recedes back into the sea. And although it might be contentious, the call of seagulls too.

“My husband and I do a lot of coastal path walking, and most of the time there’s no one else around. That feels very liberating, as if I have escaped real life. Freedom: that’s what the sea symbolises to me, it’s romantic and it’s mystical. I’m fascinated by the legends of the sea from Greek mythology: I love Poseidon and the water gods, the sirens, the Nereids and the idea of the lost city of Atlantis,” she continues. “Although I paint the surface of the sea, for me it’s also about the mystery beneath the waves. It is otherworldly down there, with such great forces, and there’s so much that we still don’t know about the depths of the ocean. We’ve all come from the sea, it’s essential for all of life. It’s vital and primal, beautiful and dangerous.

I also love that the sea has an absolute constancy, with its currents and set tidal patterns, and yet it’s contradictory too. It’s always changing, no two waves are identical. But it’s always the same, which is reassuring and essential. It’s so powerful and full of energy and yet so fleeting too. You think nothing’s happening, just a swell, and then all of a sudden you see that rising wave,” she continues.

It’s “that moment when the water rises and you see the colours as the light shines through it” that most captivates Trish. Although she paints some calm seas, she is best known for



lively textured curls of the breaking wave, in summer-sunshine teals, turquoises and cerulean blues with touches of peacock green and crisp sharp whites.

“There are so many shades of blue, and surprising amounts of green in the sea if you look closely. And there’ll be gold if there’s any sun; just a flicker of gold along the edge of the wave. Although they’re all from my imagination, I watch lots of videos of the sea to study the colours. You’d be surprised how varied they are. I generally opt for the colours of Cornwall, my spiritual home. The turquoises and teals, greens and silvers, dance on the surface and although the sea is dark below my paintings are usually joyful, with a hint of holiday magic.”

Trish’s art is very intuitive, created from emotion, and she has a talent for capturing the movement of a wave which, apparently forms in different directions, so there is more than one shape within a single wave. “It’s like portraiture,” she adds. “You can’t put your finger on it exactly, but you know if it isn’t quite right. How a wave flows, how the water moves, has to look and feel just right.”

Trish’s works are also textured, for which she uses various artist moulding pastes which take several days to dry before she can begin to add the paint. It is this texture, once the colour is added, that adds depth to waves, she explains, and then, when she is looking for a contrast against the dynamism and crash of the wave, she creates a smooth finish on an adjacent part of the painting with spray paints.

“And sometimes, I even put paintings in the bath to wash off a layer of paint before it dries properly, leaving just a hint of the colour behind. It amuses me that water is even involved in the process,” she laughs.

She also occasionally works on flat boards with high flow paint, manipulating the fluid paint with a straw and a hair dryer. “With these, because fluid art is so unpredictable, I feel the method that I use to create them reflects the way the wind works on the surface of the sea. The ocean is just magical in so many ways. I hope I capture some of that in my art.”

[trishsamplefordart.co.uk](http://trishsamplefordart.co.uk)

