

# GORDON BRYCE

## SCOTTISH CONTEMPORARY ARTIST



GORDON BRYCE is a contemporary Scottish painter who lives and works in the North East of Scotland. Over the past twenty years Bryce has built up a reputation for immediacy and freshness of approach with work in many public and private collections. He has exhibited throughout the world including Yperifanos in New York earning him international recognition.

Born in Edinburgh in 1943, Bryce became interested in art at school where his art teacher at Edinburgh Academy, John Firth, first noticed his aptitude for art and nurtured the young pupils interest.

Encouraged, Bryce would often be found at the weekends visiting his art masters studio to work there. His interest was further fulfilled when he won a place at Edinburgh College of Art in 1960 where he studied

under Sir Robin Philipson and Sir William Gillies, two of the foremost Scottish painters of their time.

In 1968 Gordon Bryce moved to Aberdeen to take up a post at Gray's School of Art, where he first taught printmaking and practised both as a printmaker and as a painter in oils and watercolour. In due course he was appointed to Head of Fine Art at Gray's, where he remained until he resigned his post in 1995 to concentrate full-time on his painting.

During his years at Gray's he found teaching students very stimulating and exciting and gave him the time, space and confidence to develop concepts and approaches in his own work. In 1976 he was elected to the Royal Scottish Society of Watercolourists and to the Royal Scottish Academy.



**Sea and Skye:**

*"A topographical image hopefully attempting to capture the feeling of weather, or light and space so typical of the Sound of Sleat. The composition reflects a relationship between the cloudy sky, the island of Skye and the white surf."*

Although he has lived in Aberdeen for the past thirty years Bryce has utilised the whole of Britain for his stimulus. From the sweeping landscapes of Yorkshire to the wet and windy coast of the west of Scotland Bryce paints in series, visiting a particular place and completing several different paintings along a concurrent theme. He needs a "point of reference" in his pictures and fervently

versatility. But he has tried various mediums during his career occasionally dabbling in the likes of acrylics, watercolour and collage. Earlier in his career Bryce made many prints and, from its infancy, was involved in Peacock Printmakers in Aberdeen. There he executed an abundance of lithographs and etchings but found it quite limiting. Using a plate was far too cumbersome - taking it outside was especially inconvenient!



**Evening, Traigh by Arisaig: (left)**

*"This pointing of the shore with the tide out is about atmosphere and calm reflected in the variety of rock formations and pools so typical of the West Coast. The colour is to give a feeling of warmth and summer, light and weather."*

believes in the essence of being on location to capture the mood as opposed to working from photographs.

"His spontaneous studies on the seashore catch the sparkling vitality and airy breadth of the views beyond the blue, green, white and gray of the sea to the red basalt and black peaks of the Cuillins of Skye and the brown hills of Rhum and Eigg."

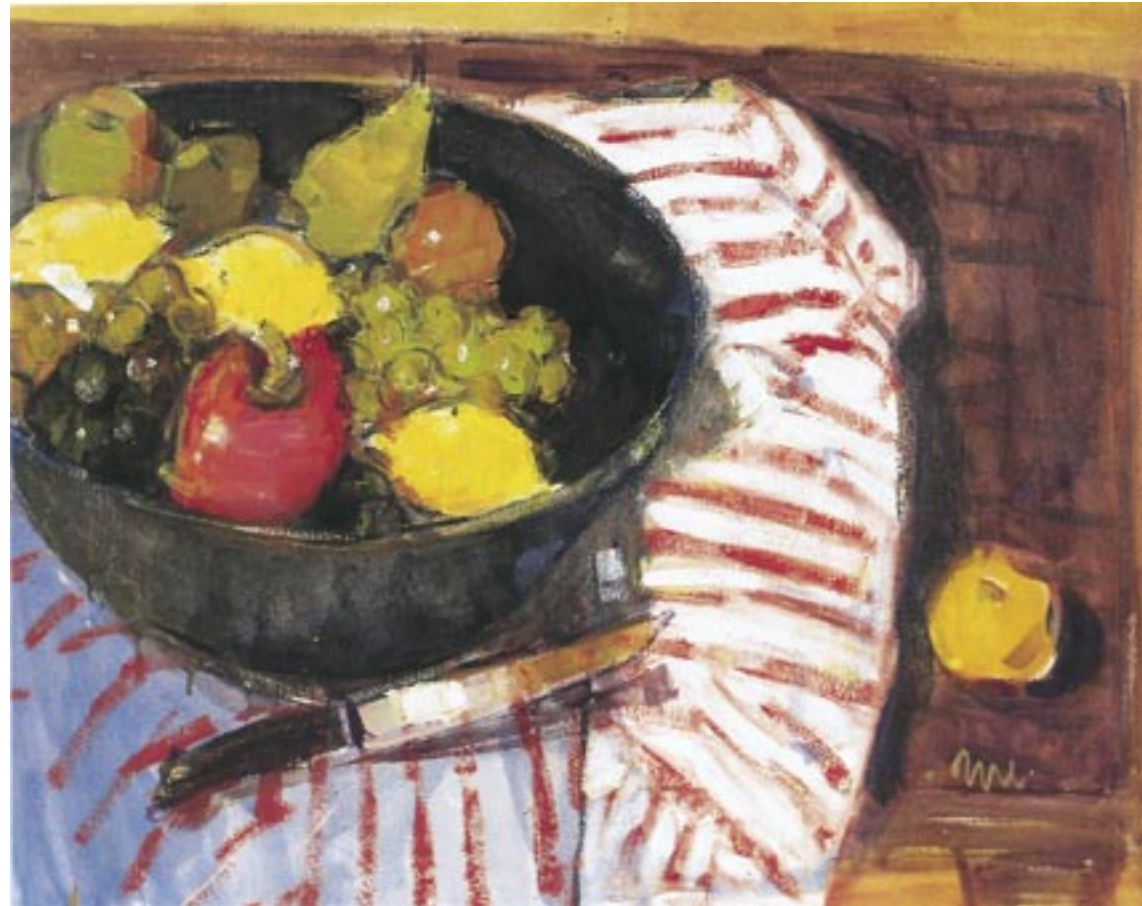
Painting is Gordon Bryce's first love, working mainly in oils for their

As well as changing mediums, Gordon Bryce's working methods have changed significantly over the years, particularly in the scale he uses in his paintings. As many others did in the 1960's, he worked on a very large scale, so much so that his paintings could have been described as murals. However, in the late 1970s, when he switched from still-life to landscape and working outside rather than inside, the size of his paintings reflected his need to work 'en plein air

Gordon Bryces style could be described as a mixture of expressionism and realism"- "very vibrant, colourful and textural as well as paying attention to detail. The working methods he uses to arrive at his final pieces are relatively straightforward and highly sequential. Working on board or canvas he starts by giving the board or canvas a wash of colour to ground the painting and to give it a unity. He prefers to do this as he can then sand the board down to give an impression of tone and shape, rather than work straight onto white.

After Rain, Keppoch





**Kitchen Table:**  
 "Strong abstract composition with a black pan emphasising the richness of colour in the fruits in a red and white tea cloth to split the composition in two."

Working on the spot, Bryce builds up a painting in a series of washes preferring to go straight to paint to give a feeling of shape and surround. Once happy with his outside

**Mallaig, the Harbour:**  
 "Again one of a series of images concerned with the juxtaposition of boats and various crafts within a harbour setting on the west coast of Scotland."



beginnings he takes his painting back to his studio in Milltimber to build upon his image or use it as inspiration for another painting. If he does the former Bryce will work on his painting, building it up in a very fluid way, using quick and slow drying paints depending on the effect he wants to create. To create unusual textures and effects he uses various

tools such as screwdrivers, knives and card! He believes that this way is very calligraphic, like handwriting, where no two brushstrokes are the same using different brushes for different effects.

Bryce can revisit a location many times and each time come up with a fresh and original painting. Perhaps this is because he looks at his landscapes topographically but also takes into account the weather, time of year and

the light. All of which can make the same place look different at different times. The emotion he conveys is also a crucial factor. He likes to create an emotion or a feeling within the painting but he also feels that the spectators must do some of the work themselves, as the painting is not merely an illustration.

He has drawn on many influences on arriving at his own unique style. Although as a student he reacted against the colourist influence as represented by Anne Redpath her influence can be clearly seen in his approach to still-life with its rich colour and flattened perspective.

But it is in his paintings of the sea and land that clearer influences can be seen. Joan Eardley, who lived in the North east fishing village of Catterline, has had an admitted influence on Bryce. Her atmospheric painting of the sea, executed in an expressionistic, impasto style is echoed in his spontaneous seascapes of the West Coast of Scotland. He also admits to being influenced by the Scottish Colourist and Cadell in particular. Like Cadell, his images of the Scottish islands reflect a calligraphic approach and the memories of Gillies and MacTaggart are also resurrected in his paintings of the sea.

During the sixties, Bryce was very influenced by the figurative painters. However, he believes that he goes through different periods where his influences have changed and then have developed into something else. He feels that nowadays, influences



Morar

**Still Life with Black Teapot:**  
 "One of a series of still life cc using familiar objects. The colour is subdued with browns and, throughout to give a feeling of transparency and light."



can be taken from all around us, from art culture, to television and cinema, and that these influences will change accordingly as aspects of society change.

Gordon Bryce lives in the outskirts of Aberdeen and paints full time. His work is ever changing, exploring different themes and styles, while at the same time producing a quality that is timeless. His paintings are highly sought after and he has become a well-respected member of the RSA and RSW with a sackful of awards and exhibitions to his credit.

**Surf:**  
 "One of a series of paintings, started outside jAein air' and developed in the studio. The atmosphere and robust energy of the waves is harnessed in the strong sense of topography of the coastline around

