

short, cutting, poignant

drawing with *haiku* – anthony viney

## drawing with *haiku*

When I'm painting or drawing, I don't think in words. However, throughout the time I've been working as a visual artist, short poems have often formed unexpectedly in my mind – especially when I'm out walking in the Penwith landscape, or just sitting observing and meditating on nature.

For a long while I dismissed these short poems as not being part of my 'proper' artistic practice. But in late 2016 I developed an interest in Japanese concepts of nature and started to play around with writing *haiku* and other short poetic formats. I wrote a hundred or so poems in a few weeks and realised there was a strong parallel between them and what I wanted to say visually in my paintings.

So I began to include these short poems in my visual work. I treated the words primarily as texture, but knew they carried feelings similar to those in my paintings

and drawings. This fusion of artistic disciplines has encouraged me to delve further into some of the key themes in my work – themes such as transience and evanescence.

My short poems don't necessarily follow the usual structure of *haiku* written in English, or have the seasonal reference traditionally required. Yet they are based in nature and have a sense of transience about them. So I like to think they capture something of the spirit of traditional *haiku*.

The drawing 'Old pond', is based on Basho's famous *haiku* of the same name; 'Overnight advance' is based on red geraniums escaping a deep winter frost – even though ultimately we are all subject to nature's capture.

ant viney

overnight advance –  
geraniums escaping  
our bitter capture





empty theatre –  
catkins playing in the wind,  
grey backdrop

burnt white sands  
where tall grasses grow –  
tongues of fire





in the corner  
of a wooden window –  
a pine tree sings

the shadow of a bird  
passes across the sands  
and turns out to sea,  
and turns out to sea





old pond –  
a frog splashes  
the dark glass



hollow howls  
surround our house –  
in solid walls



## about *haiku*

*haiku* is a traditional Japanese poetic form, which is usually written in three lines containing the equivalent of 17 syllables in English. The three lines are usually asymmetrical 5-7-5 and there is normally a break or cut in the train of thought – indicated by a punctuation rule in English. The subject matter of *haiku* is often a meditation on nature and the poignancy of human life.

Over the last hundred years *haiku* has become an established poetic form in English – although the difficulties of transposing Japanese concepts into English have been formidable.

The most famous of all *haiku* poets is Basho. He lived in Japan in the 17th century, travelled extensively throughout the country and had many followers.

## credits

With many thanks to Chapel House PZ for kindly lending their walls for this exhibition as part of the Penzance Literary Festival 2017.

A number of the drawings in this exhibition are for sale. Please see the separate sheet for further details.

