

‘ For me the landscape reduces you to your basic self. It offers meditation in our busy world’



**Image:** Susie Lee and her painting *Mount Battock, Glen Esk*. **Opposite page:** Susie in her studio.

# Lee of the land

Laurencekirk oil painter **Susie B. Lee** uses bold gestures and subtles tones to depict the wildness and drama of Aberdeenshire's landscapes

## ART TRAIL

BY CRYSTAL CHESTERS

**Y**ou can see where Susie B. Lee gets the inspiration for her landscape oil paintings, described appropriately by one of her clients as 'emotive, passionate and dramatic'.

Lee's studio is a large, converted barn which practically floats among the thick clouds that hover over the Laurencekirk hills. From Susie's perspective, the view is a mass of sky with just a dark sliver of land beneath.

Appreciating the tradition of oil painting – one of her main influences is Turner – there is something timeless about Lee's landscapes, which echo the sombre hues of Aberdeenshire with a palette of tertiary purples, greens, browns and, as Lee jokes, '50 shades of grey'.

'I've always been inspired by landscapes,' says the Devon-born artist who moved to Aberdeenshire from St. Ives in Cornwall, where she spent ten years working as an artist, focused mainly on seascapes and abstract compositions.

'For me, the landscape reduces you to your basic self. It offers meditation in our busy world and a sense of spirituality. The light and grandeur of scenery is awe-inspiring. You just lose who you are when you see an amazing sunset or waves crashing; it's about catching that moment.'



Lee starts her paintings using house decorating brushes to create a thin, watercolour-like base, which is similar to how Turner worked. 'Sometimes I feel certain landscape painters don't really get that it's an energy; for example, you can get really good angles coming in from the sweep of a loch. It's almost like a dance; you get into the rhythm of it.'

Susie builds the painting up in layers, using smaller paintbrushes and palette knives to finalise detail before displaying the painting in her studio for around a month and continuing to tweak it to perfection.

Like many artists, she would like to be freer and is keen to experiment with lighter, brighter colours, particularly as we move towards the warmer months. She hopes to

exhibit at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition 2018, which tends to prefer colours that reflect the season.

'My plan is to lighten my palette,' she says. 'The West Coast is inspiring because of the colours – the sea, the beaches and the skies are just amazing.'

Susie is also keen to revisit more abstract techniques. 'It allows you to dream a bit. It's not overworking things; it's trying to be a bit happier with the beginnings, braver with my point of view.'

And a goal she has been working towards for many years is to exhibit at the Messum's gallery in London, which specialises in her kind of work. 'To exhibit in a really good part of London would be great; it would be a pinnacle for me,' she says.

[www.susielee.co.uk](http://www.susielee.co.uk)

**Below:** *The Garvock, The Mearns.*  
**Bottom:** *Lunan Bay.*

