

TERRY SETCH

An essay by Martin Holman for the publication
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Troubling Over the World as Matter

by Martin Holman

1936-50

Terry Setch was born in Lewisham, south London, on 11 March 1936, the only child of Frank and Beatie Setch. His father was a ship's boilermaker and welder on the Isle of Dogs; he died in 1967. After the Second World War, his mother worked in a school canteen; she died in 1998. Family life and education were disrupted by the war; after short-lived evacuation to Ashford and Crewkerne, Setch moved with his parents from temporary billets in the north Surrey towns of Surbiton and North Cheam to a rest centre in Sutton. Around 1950 the family was allocated the ground floor of a house in Sutton, before moving to the rural setting of Tattenham Corner. By 1956 his parents had settled in Morden to be closer to his father's work.

Setch was naturally shy as a child and often unwell. At school in North Cheam art was his best subject and drawing was a constant activity at home. He remembers drawing his mother's fellow canteen workers and being praised by their supervisor who showed the boy's sketches to his brother, Gerald Cooper, principal of Wimbledon School of Art. He recognised Setch's natural facility as a draughtsman and Setch attended Saturday art classes at the art school in 1948-50.

1950-54

As a student at Sutton School of Art, where he enrolled in 1950, Setch was criticised by his tutors for doing too much of his own work - drawings from his imagination, mostly in pencil and ink on coloured paper, with wax and body colour for highlights. But he argued his case with the principal, Edward Bulley, who relaxed the requirements of the standard intermediate course and permitted Setch to follow his own interests.

One of these interests was nature, and the aspect of the Surrey countryside that appealed to Setch was its wild, tangled landscape. He enjoyed solitary walks, preferring an area that once had been an estate to the more natural terrain of the Downs because 'it had a past: people had been there and had cared for it; there were presences in this closed land, and it linked to a taste for melodrama in my painting.' ¹

Among the first artists to impress him were the northern Renaissance painters, Hieronymous Bosch, Dürer and Altdorfer; and Picasso, largely because his work was alien to all that his seniors admired. Setch had also come across the sepia compositions of Samuel Palmer: their thick, vigorous lines and pastoral vision of a world of magic and fable struck a chord with his own experience of landscape. These intense, dark and emotional qualities drew him to contemporary British neo-Romanticism, exemplified by Graham Sutherland whose huge commission for the Festival of Britain, 'The Origins of the Land' (1951), strongly attracted Setch with the 'scrubbed-on' quality of paint and its emblematic forms.

The deepest impression, however, and one pertinent to his mature work, was left by Munch's paintings, etchings and lithographs, exhibited at the Tate Gallery, London late in 1951. Setch recalls the impact of Munch's technical stridency: the bluntness of the painted mark and the build-up of painted surfaces. The experience confirmed his ambition to be an artist himself. ²

Setch had already conceived the notion that the purpose of artists was to 'do something big', both in scale and theme. A large-scale, multi-parted work called Suburban Carnival was planned at Sutton but not executed. However smaller paintings displayed properties that might now appear to anticipate later work. Images were mounted on card to create a layered effect, and he developed his own process of distressing previously pristine materials to invoke a mood-setting colour or texture. By rubbing watercolour into heavily wet paper and with a rag wiping away the colour, he triggered his imagination into visualising half-revealed ragged forms, such as a profile or natural shapes. This technique also

had the effect of 'weathering' the artists' standard colours that he used into closer resemblance with the tones he saw in nature, and helped to evoke a pictorial space for his mind to work on. In the process, which was repeated over and over, the edges and surface of the paper became frayed, and Setch regarded this state as 'part of the magic of the thing'.

1954-56

On the recommendation of the Slade professor, William Coldstream, who interviewed him, Setch's entry to the Slade School of Fine Art was deferred for two years until he had completed his National Service. Assigned to the Royal Corps of Signals (1955), he was sent to Catterick for basic training where an injury contributed to progressive loss of hearing in subsequent years. Stationed in Verden, near Bremen, Germany, making art was difficult, but his boredom was relieved by painting jobs, including a mural celebrating the Desert Rats for the camp's education wing, and decorating regimental citations. He was able to visit nearby collections, seeing paintings for the first time by Caspar David Friedrich, and in Hamburg visited the immensely popular touring exhibition of Picasso's 'Guernica' at the Kunsthalle early in 1956.

1956-60

At the Slade, Setch gravitated quickly towards abstraction. Through a student friend at the Royal College of Art, Setch had become aware by late 1956 of the radically new techniques of Richard Smith and Robyn Denny, such as dripping paint and burning. He wanted their painterly quality in his own work, and paintings from this time included large imaginary heads that Setch worked until a recognisable subject was consumed by matter and pictorial gesture. He also tried burning surfaces and on other occasions applied oil paint straight from the tin in thick layers to 2.6m high sheets of hardboard.

Setch recalls a period of intense, constant experimentation when he contended with divergent influences then operating within the school. Among fellow students, Dorothy Mead and Dennis Creffield were inspired by their former teacher, David Bomberg, as forceful advocates of an expressionistic response to form. Setch rejected the routine of the life-room and remained in the minority of abstract artists at the Slade. Among those who encouraged him were his tutor, the painter and writer on art, Andrew Forge, whose own work had developed an expressive semi-abstract approach. Coldstream also approved of his move towards abstraction.

Preferring to work alone in the studio he had improvised on a school landing, Setch took no active part in these debates. None the less he described himself as a 'big vessel', drawing in different ideas. An important external stimulus was Francis Bacon. Setch had known of Bacon's work at Sutton, and had seen his solo show at the Beaux Arts Gallery, London in November 1953. By the late fifties, he was drawn to the surfaces of Bacon's paintings and how the trace of the brush or the hand remained visible in the paint to become part of the structure.

A greater impulse came from progressive American and European art. Like many of his contemporaries, Setch visited the exhibitions at London venues which, from 1956, contributed to an intensive period of assimilation for British artists. Pre-eminent among them for Setch were 'Some Paintings from the E.J. Power Collection' at the ICA in March-April 1958, as it included a painting each by Willem de Kooning and Jean Dubuffet, and two each by Franz Kline and Jackson Pollock; the solo and group shows by American artists at the Whitechapel and US embassy galleries; and the 'New American Painting' at the Tate Gallery in February-March 1959, a show that had originated in New York and promoted recent abstract painting as the dominant contemporary art movement. In June of that year, because of the affinities he perceived in Setch's paintings with current American art, Coldstream invited Setch to meet Adolph Gottlieb who was in London for an exhibition of ten year's work at the ICA.

Apart from the heroic scale and public dynamism of his paintings, the importance of Pollock to Setch was the subjective 'human quality' in the American's largest work. It did not seem abstract to Setch at

all, and revealed a new form of physical contact with a painting that was no longer restricted to the wall and frame, but could be walked over and even jumped on.

“One of the most interesting moments in my development’, Setch later recalled, ‘was seeing the film of Pollock working and talking about being in the painting. That still holds true and I am sure many pre-Pollock artists were in the painting... but Pollock was talking about it in a physical way.”³

The natural, uncontrived way that Pollock’s forms tangled and mixed with themselves into clusters became progressively influential in Setch’s later work.

Absorbing these influences in the year of his diploma, Setch stated in 1959, when he was included in that year’s ‘Young Contemporaries’ exhibition in London with painters like John Hoyland, Paul Huxley and Brian Young:

‘Only after many drawings (often from the figure) does the abstract assert itself. This does not imply that drawings are preliminary studies for a painting, but rather that they aid the growth of an attitude of mind where forms no longer pertain to the visible but take on their own identity... A painting... must possess a certain ‘presence...’ that is the life of a painting and the total sum of a painter’s actions and feelings.’⁴

This statement has retained its validity, supporting Setch’s assertion that he remains a figurative artist.

Setch felt he made his most important work at the Slade during a post-diploma year in 1959-60. Given unusually extended access by Coldstream to the life-room, he drew intensively from the figure, ‘getting in touch with my guts and nervous system’ to capture the anxiety he detected in the marks of Bacon and Pollock. He also experimented with automatic, quasi-surrealist drawing techniques for greater spontaneity and a more visceral response. Forge noted that Setch and fellow student Graham Bevan ‘were the first students since 1951-52 to think seriously about the relation between current abstract art and the life room.... [Their drawings] are among the most original work done in the School during the decade, and they were responsible for a powerful impulse towards abstraction.’⁵

1960-64

Setch joined the staff of the pre-diploma department at Leicester College of Art in autumn 1960, invited by its new head, Tom Hudson, on the recommendation of Michael Chilton, a friend of Setch’s at the Slade. Hudson had been a colleague of Harry Thubron at Leeds College of Art, and both had collaborated with Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton, who were teaching in Newcastle, to devise a basic design course that drew on Bauhaus methods. It sought to make students aware of their own expressive potential and that of their materials. Through carefully constructed exercises, teaching progressed from simple mark making to complex three-dimensional constructions. Basic design provided insights into process and the physical formation of a work that need not claim aesthetic status; as such, it developed a rigorous formal language. Hudson promoted this approach at Leicester and, later, at Cardiff.

For Setch as much as for his students, this was a conscious period of learning, at odds with the ideals of the Slade. Two methods in Hudson’s training had lasting use. The first, as Michael Sandle, another friend from the Slade who taught at Leicester from 1961 to 1963, also recalled ‘was always a *leit-motif* of Tom Hudson’s: the notion of the development of an idea, rather than to be satisfied with its first manifestation.... ‘It is actually possible to think in more ways than one about a certain notion.’⁶ The second was a general concern with the physical construction of the object and the examination of its formal components.

In this constructivist setting, Setch stopped painting and began to produce reliefs and rounded objects that were a hybrid between painting and sculpture. Suspended and engineered from leather, metal and plastic piping filled with colour, *Black-Reminder* extended with a visceral physicality the residual cradled body form emerging in his last Slade drawings. Setch was encountering synthetic materials for the first time, but his choice of leather reflected a characteristic need for media to connect with his immediate situation and activity. Leather resonated with the body and the resident boot

industry of Leicester, from whose local expertise he learned about the tensions and capacities of the material he knew he wanted to build up from the inside. Drawing as an emotional outlet was translated into stitching, using a leather-sewing machine, and tubing that traced a fuller figurative form. A further influence at this time was the content and structure of *Mondo Cane*, Gualtiero Jacopetti's 1961 film which documented violently eccentric human behaviour in a sequential format.

Playwith Heart (Valentine) (1963), investigated further the interaction of different materials, textures and marks, and looked forward to later aspects of his work. The leather pouch was sewn, painted in sensuous tones, and fixed to a background setting of coloured marks and patches. Made in oil and emulsion paint on canvas, these marks mimicked the assimilation of tachiste techniques into popular domestic fabric designs. The transformed style then became the basis for his own art, a constant theme in subsequent work.

The leather pieces were shown in the exhibition 'Six Artists' at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery in November-December 1963. With Setch, Sandle and Chilton were Christina Bertoni, Laurence Burt and Victor Newsome, and they showed twice as the Leicester Group although their underlying interests were too different to justify a group identity. All taught in Hudson's department and shared the Old Rectory at Kibworth as their home and work place. The art critic Nigel Gosling, in an enthusiastic review for *The Observer* that set the group within the context of Hudson's philosophy, commented that:

"...the works you notice first are those by Terry Setch. He carries the possibilities furthest and with most dash. He may conceive a line as a scratch on paper or the curl of a piece of tubing. Colour may appear in dots or patches or embodied in a solid form. Textures vary from soft to rough or shiny or spongy, like the puckered yellow bag in *Playwith Heart* (Valentine). It is at the same time visceral and lyrical".⁷

The local press dubbed Setch the 'aesthetic jester of the group [who] can at once subdue the jollity with a macabre and spine-chilling piece' and gently lampooned the show with a cartoon featuring Setch's *Hidden Temple Flower*, another leather and plastic construction against a painted background.⁸

In 1962 Setch met the artist Dianne Shaw, then a student. Together they moved to Wales in 1964 and their only child, Eve, was born in 1972.

1964

In September 1964, Setch became senior lecturer in painting at Cardiff College of Art.⁹ Hudson, who had been Director of Studies since April, encouraged the appointment. The previous summer he had invited Setch to teach at Barry Summer School, and Setch stayed on the summer school's staff until 1969, becoming organising tutor in painting.

The second and last exhibition of the Leicester Group (now including Hudson) took place at the Grabowski Gallery in Sloane Avenue, London, in September-October. It arose primarily from the interest shown by the critic and curator Jasia Reichardt in 'Six Artists' and in the group's choice of object-making and assemblages; she saw it as a socio-philosophical alternative to Pop, abstract, kinetic and other recent art trends in London. She chose the show's title 'The Inner Image' because:

"all these artists do more than to transform the things seen and experienced in their day to day life... they resort rather to cryptic hints and symbolic references and no images are transferred directly from the urban landscape into their work. ...many ideas seem to have a more direct connection with notions that are not necessarily visual."¹⁰

The seven pieces by Setch in the exhibition implied a release from the figure as his principal subject. The emblematic plastic flower in *Indoor Flower* (Interior) provided a link with earlier work by juxtaposing elements: it projected from a fixed background of bright household emulsion that alluded to a modern domestic setting. In *Candle Flower*, the setting itself became prominent. As a floor-based work, it invoked an environment with a column of corrugated plastic placed adjacent to a gaudy scalloped-edged frame surrounding a finely perforated panel like a fire-screen. With its ambiguities of space and surface pattern, and its exaggerated brashness, the work was as much popular artifact as aesthetic object.

Elements in all the works were either bought or fabricated to order in man-made materials; with their brightly coloured finish, they synthesised taste in the home with purely formal problems of organisation and display. With *House with Seven Flowers* in mind, Reichardt described Setch as:

“...probably the first to create a poetic equivalent of a suburban environment. The semi-detached, two-up, two-down, one back, one front, furnished and inspired with Woolworth-type ready-mades is one of his themes. Here a cup doubles as a flower. The flower - a human leisure-time folly, is a concept and not a representation of a living, growing, thing. Setch shows it as a magical, unreal, concoction against the formal grid of the house.”¹¹

In a review that displayed his continued support for the Group, Gosling pursued the same idea, describing Setch's work as 'lyrical Pinterish evocations of suburbia'.¹² The same comparison was made by Norbert Lynton in *The Guardian* when he pointed out that Setch's:

“...commitment to the horrors of plastic bric-à-brac... is so complete that his three-dimensional pictures have something of the piercing vacuity of Pinter's totally recalled passages of vox pop – one almost admires them as one waits for some point to emerge.”¹³

1965-69

During 1965 the constructivist emphasis in his work was superceded by a return to painting. The change came partly because of Setch's growing interest in modulisation to create integrated images using common archetypal forms, and partly in response to his new surroundings. Setch was struck by the presence and structure of the high stone walls that were so much a feature of the Newport Road district of Cardiff where he was living, an area that included the prison. The walls presented themselves as a ready-made symbol that he could apply equally to art and the human environment.

His first idea was to make simple wall-mounted cubic structures to set against a coloured background. Interlocking store-display units were bought from a local shopfitters' supplier for the framework. Setch enjoyed this way of working: he could buy existing elements to put into his art and so bypass conventional notions of composition. It also seemed apt to invoke a theme found locally with materials produced nearby. *Abstracta* and *Wall Flower*, both made in 1965, resulted from this process.

A parallel construction intervened to alter his direction because, once completed, it seemed to encapsulate for the artist an entire strand of thought and activity. Each unit in *4 in 1*, placed sculpturally on its own base, was intended to represent a material or process. The daffodil was plastic and shop bought. Modelled in clay and fired, the gnome combined an elevated sculptural tradition with a maxim of urban domesticity; partly broken down and painted black, it shared with the daffodil a quality that Setch has enigmatically described as sinister. The brass figure-like *Art Object* used basic forms that represented for Setch a tradition in modern sculpture, and juxtaposed with the daffodil, appeared just as original and the wall section of metal radio chassis' symbolised building blocks or bricks. Each was simultaneously an art object and about the home environment, and Setch regarded the combination as so conceptually complete in its integration of cultural opposites that he decided not to pursue further this way of working. It remains almost unique among work of this period for being still in the artist's possession and on show.

4 in 1 was included in his first one-person exhibition, which took place at the Grabowski Gallery in December 1965-January 1966, alongside recent work by Hudson in a wide range of processes and materials. John Russell, who illustrated the piece in his commentary on London for the American magazine *Art News*, queried the strength of impulse in the two artists' work:

“If there is a work of art in the idea, they work immensely hard to bring it out. The result is never less than interesting, but it rarely projects.”¹⁴

Although Lynton found a similar hesitancy, it was compensated for because:

“Setch pursues the unbearable and the ubiquitous with a huntsman's zest and a marksman's skill. Only the urge behind his activity seems uncertain. So powerful a presentation of contemporary banality cannot be totally satirical or denunciatory. The ancient love-hate paradox that the twentieth century has given other names to, unstabilizes here one's whole range of aesthetic responses. This experience in itself is worth a great deal.”¹⁵

Pop art and modern jazz became strongly influential for Setch from the early sixties. Drawn to their use of 'junk' materials, he is still influenced by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein: images of their work first circulated in American art journals and, by the mid-'60's, in group and solo shows at the ICA, Whitechapel and other venues. Setch also saw in Claes Oldenburg's objects and happenings a shared interest in paradoxes of taste, and envied Hudson who by 1964 had visited Oldenburg's Ray Gun Theater in New York.

Among the jazz musicians he most admired from the early sixties were Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and especially Albert Ayler whose frenzied playing unshackled the formal framework to find a basic, personal melodic expression beyond the conventions of jazz. Setch perceived an affinity with so-called 'difficult sounds' that had stimulated him since he was at Sutton, when he bought recordings of Shostakovich and later, the layered sounds of Charles Ives. As in painting, he was not looking for familiar form but the underpinning structure:

"You have to step outside the mainstream to assess your place. I respond more to the chaotic than to the subliminal; something personal emerges from anarchy."¹

In the Walls paintings, Setch wanted to deal 'with the "face" of the wall and its linear pattern... . This led to paintings in which the wall became a formal device.¹⁶ His progression from the constructed units had been gradual but logical. With drawing an essential tool for enquiry into new forms, the Walls theme first emerged in drawings on coloured card in 1965. These invented systems to accommodate the stone wall imagery was first implied in the centre metal panel of the construction Abstracta; the advantage of painting lay in integrating the abstract concerns of scale, number, space, interval and colour. As such, Setch described these large paintings as having 'three levels, the strong coloured background, the wall system and the subject/nature.'¹⁷

The intended aim of the paintings was to transpose back into art the values nurtured by industrial production as it reinterpreted the language of modernism for the home as design. This irony prompted the choice of acrylic paint and a synthetic formal structure composed of units of primary 'stonewall' shapes. These were drawn methodically like a fragment of handwriting on a page, repeated systematically as if they continued beyond the periphery of the canvas. The paintings were first shown in the same Grabowski Gallery exhibition that included 4 in 1. Setch developed this theme through subtle variations over four years.

A characteristic of Wallscape 1 was complex channels of colour between the units like two layers of imagery. These set up spatial ambiguities on the flat surface that were accentuated by implied coloured verticals. The de-naturalised creeper form added a further dimension in paintings from 1966. The result was an aesthetic clash, a dissonance that affected shape and meaning. His second solo show at the Grabowski Gallery in March-April 1967 featured these paintings as well as a short-lived experiment with figurative still-life imagery such as grapes, apples and a tree trunk, against a patterned background. Writing in The Guardian, Norbert Lynton saw the obvious reference in Blue Poles Wallscape 1966 to Pollock's large canvas 'Blue Poles: Number II, 1952' as Setch:

"...doffing his cap in homage to the dead hero at the same time as chiding him. At least the oddly dead-pan vigour of his pictures seems to be wondering what all the Abstract Expressionist arm-waving was about."¹⁸

With its dovetailing of the values of art and of popular taste in the home, Setch's intention was more complex than the critics grasped: 'an improbable cross between Jackson Pollock and Patrick Caulfield', wrote Nigel Gosling.¹⁹ Edward Lucie-Smith thought Setch was going further than Caulfield to 'set up a series of tensions, and these tensions, I imagine, are the real subject.'²⁰ Work from this series was sold to a private collector in Chicago when it was included in 'Young Britain: The New Scene', a show organised by the ICA to tour US venues in 1967-8.

The significant feature in the next generation of images was the layering of distinct types of representation. Superimposed on the hand-drawn stonewall pattern in SGB Wallscape (brick on brick) was a rectilinear system of coloured rectangles, and placed over these textures were facsimile bricks in vacuum-formed coloured plastic. Horizontal and diagonal arrangements of the grids were used and

Lynton's reaction was that: 'the conceptual stomach heaves, but the perceptual senses are engaged and stimulated.'²¹ Attaching objects to the picture surface harked back to his work in the early sixties and was revived primarily as a conscious desire to restrain the formalism of the image. Events in his own life also helped to shape the structure: the death of his father and his marriage to Dianne, both in 1967, was partially the source for the superimposition of one system over another.

Setch had a further objective, and in his review of Setch's exhibition at the Grabowski Gallery in October-November 1968 where these works were shown, Hudson was the first to highlight critically the artist's desire to make every element an operative part of the work.

"The process of construction is now indivisible from the subject, without recourse to personal memory and hand-craft. The latest work shows this use of mechanical mass-production processes, the facsimile object mated with the principle of contradiction."²²

Also in this exhibition were smaller works on the Walls theme that facilitated two subsequent developments. Silk-screened on to plastic panels, they exploited directly the notion of mass-production in the making of 'synthetic Modernism'. The idea was taken further when Setch was one of four artists commissioned by the Welsh Arts Council in 1968 to create a poster (Wall Split) to be displayed on commercial hoardings across Wales.²³ Limited to two colours, Setch used the spare, fluid pattern of the stonewall units that featured in his drawings of the time; he felt that no other approach could compete with the sophisticated designs of contemporary advertising and fulfil the commission's purpose of drawing public attention to new art.

The second use of printing involved applying the basic system of stonewall units to linen with hand-cut stencils; painterly marks in pigment and white emulsion were then transposed from an earlier painting. The results were shown at his one-man show at the Grabowski Gallery in July-August 1970. Setch viewed the process in Blue Poles Replica (1969-70, not illustrated) as a permutation of layering. It allowed him to intertwine on the same plane the symbolic representation of a cultural dilemma: the low-art values attributed to mass-produced design derived from art, and their opposite of a hand-made, gestural activity reminiscent of Pollock.

1969-73

Setch was represented by one work (from 1969) in an unlimited edition in the Arts Council exhibition 'Multiples: Three Towards Infinity' at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London in November 1970-January 1971. The ethos of the show, which was international in scope, inevitably interested him: it promoted the creation of objects by artists in techniques unfamiliar in an art context that could be sold to a broad, popular market. Setch had taken part in smaller shows of multiple art in Cardiff and Birmingham in 1968-9, and in 'Play Orbit' at the National Eisteddfod and the ICA in 1969-70 when 105 artists were set the task of inventing toys suitable for production. The significance of this way of working lay in the possibilities of the smaller scale and the materials he employed rather than the nature of the multiple itself.

The concept of multiples was tangential to Setch's abiding concern with the changes that high art techniques undergo to assimilate them into domestic popular taste; and the artist's touch has remained of critical importance to his own work. However, by using clear plastic sheeting of a density suitable for moulding, Setch made Thunderball (1968). The image comprised strips of printed fabric, carpet weave, chopped up painting, thread and a punched grid of orange plastic, scattered at random and layered between two plastic sheets fixed together with eyelets. By integrating every element into the formation of the work, including the holes perforating the surface to fasten the plastic, the role of the conventional support was effectively eliminated from its construction. Setch also wanted to make a conscious reference to Pollock's painting on glass, 'Number 29, 1950'. In Hans Namuth's film, which had a profound effect on Setch, Pollock is shown arranging strips of coloured glass, coiled string, wire-mesh and pebbles on the glass to create a rich and varied surface before starting to paint. Setch thought of Thunderball, included in his Grabowski show in 1970, as a successful distillation of his fascination with Pollock, 'the classic genius of modern' as Setch has described him, and with the way

avant-garde styles are consumed by popular taste. A second work, *Fragments of Thunderball*, reprised the notion.

Thunderball was also a systematic analysis of a process. The work originated in an Axminster carpet design called *Thunderball* that Setch had come across by chance in a Cardiff shop. Attracted to its dynamic visual qualities, he bought a yard piece to take home and study like an easel painter analyses a still-life subject, teasing it apart almost forensically. This length of carpet seemed to him to epitomise the absurdities that he perceived in the relationship between manufacturing and the conventions of modern art. The genesis of its pattern was traced back through multiple references to hint at the designer's original painted sketch.

It was, he stated: "designed within a concept of abstract art - for sale by the yard - i.e. [an] infinite art picture... This design marries two distinctive styles in art - Cubism and Abstract Expressionism - the latter perhaps occurring unconsciously through the method employed to make the image."²⁴

The design suggested a quirky connection with Pollock and with another inspirational image for Setch, Picasso's *'Demoiselles d'Avignon'* (1907). Setch sought a way of amalgamating these diverse sources in one painting, and the carpet's broad facets and swirling gestural lines in muted colours provided the formal channel for Axminster *Thunderball* (fig. 4). When Setch needed an impasto effect to render a surface symbolic of the carpet's dense woven pile, a colleague advised him to use wax. Mixed with pigment, the cold wax also toned down the broken browns, blues and yellows of the carpet to approximate the Cubist palette. More significantly, marks made with a palette knife became part of the structure, reminiscent of the effect that Setch had admired in Bacon, and hastened the transformation of subject matter.

Axminster *Thunderball* was a prize winner at the eighth John Moores Liverpool Exhibition in 1972. William Feaver, writing in *The Listener*, responded to this:

"work-over of... shameless luxuriant High Street design; for him it was in a batch of... big, bouncing, roller-coasting pictures [that] protest that painting isn't dead, that photoplay isn't the only way out of either the abstract or the figurative impasse, that there are fresh painterly values still to be developed". Feaver concluded, "It's clear that blazing Axminster topography is well on the way, with all systems go, to becoming tomorrow's Good Taste."²⁵

Reviewing Setch's last solo show at the Grabowski Gallery, in June-July 1973, James Heard singled out this painting:

"Terry Setch is a forceful painter who prevents his images from becoming decorative by ingenious use of apparently worn-out mannerisms.... His achievement is that he makes his spectators recognise and question their preconceptions about art with a capital A."²⁶

1973-74

A new direction became apparent in the Grabowski show in 1973: it included seven works on the theme of the beach, the largest being *Sisley*, *Marconi* were also present. In 1969 Setch's immediate environment had undergone a significant change when he and Dianne moved from a Sixties housing estate in north-west Cardiff to a Victorian house in Penarth, the seaside resort on the outskirts of Cardiff. The affordability of property, and not its proximity to the estuary of the Severn, had been the location's attraction. But the place had rich associations that Setch found stimulating: associations with trade because of the coal and oil industries; with summer leisure and family holidays; and with art and communication. Nearby, Lavernock Point was the setting for the swan-song of the Impressionist painter, Alfred Sisley, some of whose last open-air landscapes were made in the vicinity in 1897. In that same year, the inventor Guglielmo Marconi first successfully transmitted signals in Morse code across water from the Point to Flat Holm, an island in the estuary.

The move to Penarth soon released in Setch a desire to tackle the revered landscape tradition although he did not know what form this could take. From his first experiments with rolling stones over canvas, involvement with the physical milieu of the beach was considered as the key. He was guided

in this belief by the ideas of the Land Art movement. These had made him more conceptually alert, and he sought a way of integrating them into painting, a task he perceived as embracing opposites. The catalyst was provided by his reading about the sacred culture of American Indians and it led to *Touch the Earth*, a breakthrough to a new way of working.

The imagery he found for this painting resonated both with the beach as the meeting point of sea and land, and with his established philosophy of recycled emblems. The decorative fish motif was derived from a shop-bought towel such as pleasure-seekers use, and Setch drew it into the sand of the foreshore to assimilate the device into his concept of the work. Other actions also took place that bordered on play, such as constructing a raft from driftwood and scrap; the detritus he sought was natural material and not man-made matter. A statement by Setch described the 'back to basics' process he felt was appropriate to this new stage in his career:

"I take a large sheet of canvas to a spot on the beach - 'my territory'. Place the canvas on the earth, weight it down with stones to stop it blowing away. I light a fire with sticks and driftwood because it is cold. To avoid being swamped by the tide I work fast. It seems that this canvas with its painted 'fish bathroom towel motif' should associate itself directly with the sea and the other fish. Maybe by putting the canvas into the sea the fish will actually swim away; they never do of course. They are already netted and trapped on the surface of the canvas. I then haul the 'catch' in and dry it over the fire. Collecting the material from my territory, the ashes and charred timbers from the fire, my ready made implements - a stick to fish with, rocks, mud, sand, etc. - all I can carry, I return home."²⁷

This large painting was exhibited once, in an exhibition of ten recent paintings and additional watercolours at University College, Cardiff, in January 1973.

Having found a point of entry into landscape, Setch's aspiration for Sisley, Marconi were also present was to find his individual voice within the landscape genre. The painting was started in winter 1971 and during its protracted genesis, it marked several turning points. To make it more easily portable than canvas, tarpaulin was used; Setch had six 1m widths seamed by a firm of yacht-sailmakers, Penarth Canvas and Cordage (who continued to supply him until 1988, when he ceased using this material). Another advantage of tarpaulin was that it could be submerged in sea water satisfactorily without buckling. Setch then painted with a stark, uncompromising technique, washing shellac over emulsion to create an atmospheric pink tonality reminiscent of department-store prints.

Although met at the time with incomprehension by some fellow artists, this extreme solution seemed unavoidable to Setch. The 'sticky, stained, watercolour effect' of shellac gave the work its personal identity, likened by the artist to the quality that distinguished a product, or a bought object, from an original work. Animated by a blunt facture he termed a 'paint trash mark', the work was deliberately offensive to the high-art values it parodied, and for Setch was immensely liberating. No wax was used, and the sail lashings were retained, tied in front of the image to disrupt any illusion. The signs and symbols that conveyed notions of the past, present and future were inspired by a cartoon-like process of making totemic structures (fig. 6) of objects found on the beach: he likened it to Picasso's sculpture 'Bull's Head' (1942), metamorphosed by the artist's intervention from a bike's saddle and handle-bars. Part of its potency lay in the cycle of discovery and retrieval that followed every tide that pulled the elements apart so that next day Setch searched the shore to recover them and rebuild the stacks. As each totem corresponded to one panel, a lateral means of organising the image emerged which, by stitching the panels together, allowed Setch to reinstate a favourite structural principle; the resulting regular vertical accents have occurred throughout his career, from *Wallscape 1* to *Into the Picture and Out of the Picture* (fig. 30) made 1996-99. Beach detritus from his daily ritual was also incorporated into the work, not by attaching it to the surface, but by scattering it in the spectator's space in front of the painting.

1974-75

Setch described the tarpaulin paintings that followed in the volatile and histrionic vein of Sisley, Marconi were also present as 'entirely tasteless objects made with a great deal of care'²⁸ They deliberately presented a challenge to the spectator to question his preconceptions of the traditionally descriptive narrative of landscape painting. Setch exploited the low-art perspective on that tradition to find innovations of his own. He examined the genre's association with amateur art, especially amateur artists' reliance on the simplified, clichéd treatments by which new ideas eventually become acceptable, for vestigial signs of the original influence. In two related works, *The Wheel* (not illustrated) and *The Rock*, the emphasis was placed on the synthetic nature of the composition, the formal references in which were clear but no longer descriptive. Colour was crude and applied harshly, and the condition of the tarpaulin drew attention to this roughly marked surface. After its long submersion in sea water, the linen had buckled, pulling away from the rope that Setch had had stitched to its edge, to form a tense uneven surface that became an integral part of both paintings. In this way, the objecthood of the works overrode most expectations of naturalistic description.

However, this transition to a new mode of working was accompanied by uncertainty of focus, and Setch distributed these innovations over a diverse body of paintings. The approach was still too new to apply it to a major opportunity in London. For 'British Painting '74', a survey exhibition at the Hayward Gallery of 123 artists that was selected by Andrew Forge, Setch used tarpaulin for *In the Twilight of the Gods*. Conceived specifically for the gallery, it was the largest painting he had made and in its forceful conical forms and muted colours, it was related closely to *Axminster Thunderball*.

Setch made his first visit to the United States in 1975, during a trip to North America that had started in Vancouver. He met artists in their studios in California, including the figurative painter and sculptor Roy DeForest and the ex-patriate British painter, Trevor Bell. Setch did not return to the country for twenty years when he visited New York for the first time.

1976-78

When Setch moved in 1976 to a spacious studio in the former Co-op factory near Cardiff prison, he drew again on the dense surfaces of the work related to the *Thunderball* carpet. One line of enquiry began with coating small pieces of actual carpet with dyes, oil and wax to transform the materials into a sensation of landscape. With the space to do very large work, he also worked assiduously on paintings about walking a wooded tract of land. The sensory model for a group of large works with the common title of *Monet's carpet is nature's floor* was Setch's memory of the shrub-oak landscape of *Machynlleth*. He first visited this part of the Dovey Valley of Mid-Wales in 1969 and he and the family returned there for holidays with friends on several occasions.

Characteristically he sought a reference in art and having seen during a recent trip to Paris Monet's '*Grandes Décorations*' (1914-27) in the Musée de l'Orangerie, the notion of a continuous painting took shape. As it emerged, the piece also related directly to that facet of Pollock's method that first attracted Setch, namely that painting permitted diverse forms of physical contact. Although the surface suggested a forest floor, the image was wall-mounted in front of the spectator. (When Setch had worked in situ on some of the panels, he draped canvases above and around him, over branches.) The repetition of lateral forms in the thick, crusty surface ensured a structure that could be extended over a wide expanse. In its largest version, exhibited at *Oriel*, the gallery of the Welsh Arts Council in Cardiff in January 1976, the 2.6m tall image extended over 11m. It comprised three panels hung on a shallow arc reminiscent of Monet's original, the space between the panels disrupting the naturalistic illusions in a surface rendered palpable with mulch, twigs and branches, acrylic binders, shredded newspaper steeped in wax and polyurethane foam.

Setch again revived in the Monet's carpet is nature's floor paintings the practice of hanging elements away from the surface on wires. The value and effect of this act, however, differed from its previous uses by being literal; it extended the physical allusion to nature into public space, and it was augmented in *Beachscape Car Wreck I-III* (1978-9). This trilogy of large-scale paintings had developed out of small studies in encaustic on carpet that shared the common title of *Penarth Beach Car Wreck* (fig. 8). Seven studies were exhibited in 'Summer Show 3' at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 1980; reviewing the show, the artist and critic Adrian Lewis described them as 'mysteriously engaging in the same way as lay-ins for mythological Moreaus. This is knowing modernism courting the elephant-skin, not the virgin gaze of naïve provincialism.'²⁹ The studies provided technical groundwork that, with the artist's increased exposure to his new subject matter, grew in scale and composition. To amplify the painted imagery and its presence for the spectator, scraps of upholstery and springs from the interiors of dumped cars were wired to the surface of unstretched tarpaulin in *Beachscape Car Wreck I* alongside beach detritus and other objects retrieved from the site.

The abandoned cars were found close to Sully Island in an area of beach below a headland over which vehicles had been driven, probably by joyriders. Setch remembers that finding this sequestered spot unleashed a desire to re-enact childhood fantasies, setting in train experiences that were formative to this painting and an effective starting-point for a decade of activity. He began to play at driving the cars, then to apply white emulsion to them and changing their surfaces in other ways, such as piling tyres on the chassis. Some of these tyres he burned, partly as a ritual of appropriation, and partly as a token of the vandalism that had caused this scene. He observed how natural effects of the high tides and winds were also reshaping these hulks, exposing bare metal and scrubbing away bodywork to occasional glimpses of colour. At this point, the beach became a second studio.

Two factors that were to be especially important for the work which established Setch's reputation in the 1980's achieved their definitive forms in the *Beachscape Car Wreck* trilogy. The first was the development of the wax technique. By varying the ratio of wax to turpentine, Setch could adjust the density of the pliable, spreadable substance so that it remained workable for a long time before setting into a buttery consistency. It was important that the process was his own, and the benefits were twofold: he added scorching, scraping and folding to his repertoire of marks; and more significantly, he came to the realisation that to align his paintings to natural systems of the tide and mists, he need not resort to sculptural techniques like casting. Imagery could be buried and retrieved on the surface within the aesthetic setting of painting.

The second factor was the re-emergence of the figurative element. Initially conceived as a stylised presence rather than a natural depiction, it was there to trigger the excitement of being within the natural arena. The form Setch chose followed closely the shape of an anthropomorphic object, constructed from metal parts perhaps in the style of a Julio González sculpture, that he had found in the refuse at Leicester College of Art. He had referred to it at intervals in his work since the early 1960's, and it was important to him that he had come across this object by chance. Discarded by its unknown creator, the ready-made form had its own 'pre-history', and became available to be transformed by Setch in the manner of Picasso's junk sculpture. It prompted the shape of the art object unit of 4 in 1; it was used in *The Wheel*; and subsequently it provided the figurative inspiration for *Pollution II* (not illustrated), two standing beach sculptures (1980), one of Setch's contributions to the *Hayward Annual* in 1980, and for later works.³⁰

Setch received a Major Artist Award from the Welsh Arts Council in 1978, and bought heavyweight metal structures with which he devised 'hanging trolleys'. To these he could attach his large unstretched tarpaulins so that the work could be placed away from gallery walls and occupy a discrete space of its own. In the same year Setch, who had long been concerned with the public's encounter with his work, stated that "I'm after a busier role for the spectator [that is] both intellectual and physical."³¹

In his catalogue essay for Setch's one-man exhibition at Cardiff's Chapter Arts Centre in May-June 1979, Ian Walker considered one of the contradictions he perceived as operating in the artist's most recent work:

“These newly crafted images have a feel of age-old permanence, yet this solid materiality is belied by their impermanence. They are, for example, unstretched, literally hung against or before a wall; no frames are used to give them more substance than they have in themselves. They also incidentally are liable simply to fall apart quite soon. Such a paradox in the making of these pictures is physically parallel to a three-fold mental ambiguity in their imagery. Smashed car, ancient monument and piece of modern art come together as one.”³²

In 1979 Setch exhibited for the fifteenth and last time with the 56 Group Wales, an exhibiting society formed in 1956 by artists with a preference for abstraction, Setch had joined in 1966.

1980

Early in 1980 Setch moved to a new studio in a building shared with other artists. Located in Bute Street in Cardiff's former commercial centre, and in view of the mudflats at low tide in the Bay, it had been a horticulturalist's warehouse. The high-ceilinged, 5m square space was arranged on two levels, with a pit 2.4m deep at one end that enabled him to work on large tarpaulin drapes. The studio was damp and, apart from a skylight above the pit, had no daylight. Setch was satisfied with these conditions and used the studio regularly for eighteen years: he thought it strangely reminiscent of the place on Sully Island where he had first come across the junked cars, and an aid that helped him enter vicariously into the environment of the beach.

His participation in two important group exhibitions attracted new critical attention to his work. The first was the Hayward Annual 1980, selected as a personal choice by John Hoyland, and shown at the Hayward Gallery, London from August to October. The core of the exhibition was made up of older artists, eighteen painters with an average age of 45 who had:

“...maintained a dialogue with Europe and America [since 1960]... it was American painters of the first wave, Pollock, Rothko etc who probably made the deepest impression and from whom many of those showing have continued to draw inspiration.”³³

Hoyland sought out artists working away from the limelight,

“People like Terry Setch down in Cardiff - I think his work is really going to shock some people, it's going to make them sit up if they've got any idea at all... He's painting these great passionate powerful crazy paintings year in year out, and nobody's taking any notice of them. It's great to bring someone like that in.”³⁴

The critics mostly concurred. Since the selected artists were predominantly painters, John Spurling interpreted the show as ‘a new sense of gathering force, a coherence not so much of style as of belief in painting for its own sake’ and nominated Setch's Beachscape Car Wreck trilogy as “an appropriate centre for the exhibition.”³⁵ Although Peter Fuller described the core section as thin, Albert Irvin, Gillian Ayres and Setch were the exceptions because:

“...they know intuitively that to be significant and successful, a painting cannot be just ‘marks on the canvas’, but, through the materiality of its forms, must constitute a symbol, if not of perceived reality, then of our affective life.”³⁶

The second important group exhibition was ‘Summer Show 3’ at the Serpentine Gallery, London, in September-October. Like Hoyland at the Hayward, the sculptor Stephen Cox deliberately included some older artists in his selection, and Setch showed eight paintings, all small studies except for Visual Pollution (1980, not illustrated) which, at 3m high and 9m feet across, filled one wall.³⁷ Painted on three equally sized linen panels with turned-over seams and eyelets on each side, Visual Pollution referred both to the pollution on the beach and conceptually to the disruption of a clean canvas by the artist once he applied pigment to its flat surface.

Setch described his activity on this occasion as ‘making sculpture in paint’, a comment that had a dual meaning. Firstly, it alluded to the painting as an object on the wall and to his continuing practice of working with assembled totems of junked detritus. At the second, simultaneous level of the ‘represented’ reality of the visual surface, Setch's work had acquired a greater symbolic complexity. As the critic Sarah Kent pointed out:

“The beach, a messy and polluted burial ground, is seen as the site of social and moral conflict where opposing forces and interests do battle - where the sea assaults the land, industrial growth encroaches on nature, and exploitation encounters conservation. There is rage in Setch’s pictures. Their ugliness not only challenges good taste, but is a statement of disgust at the negligence of industrial society.”³⁸

One bold form in the centre panel was a yellow fist raised in salute with an oil drum in its clasp. Other devices fuelled an atmosphere of melodrama: wine-red wedge-shapes like theatre curtains segmented the composition into three sections that corresponded with each panel; space was sharply defined, but shallow in a cubist or stage-like way; and wands of a severe yellow tonality enforced a hierarchy on forms. This technique conformed to traditional painting in that flat colour,

“...would remain subservient to the object”, Setch remarked, “but once I start to use those traditional qualities of light and dark, warms and cools, they set up some kind of dispute between object and depiction.”³⁹

1981-83

Visual Pollution was shown alongside work by the American painter, Julian Schnabel, and fellow-Briton, John Walker, at ARC, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, in ‘Baroques ’81’, one of several important international survey exhibitions at this time that confirmed a significant trend towards picture-making in the preferences of writers and curators. Setch was also included in the ‘XIII Festival International de la Peinture’ at Cagnes-sur-Mer in southern France in summer 1981. More significantly, he was among the painters selected by Wolfgang Becker for ‘13 Britische Künstler: eine Ausstellung über Malere’ which opened in early December at the gallery in Aachen reserved for new acquisitions of the Ludwig collection. In his review for Artscribe, the painter and writer Timothy Hyman described the show as:

“...probably the best grouping of current British art so far mounted anywhere, selected with real acumen and flair, and sympathetically hung.”⁴⁰

Setch showed a triptych on cotton canvas tarpaulins, the largest of which measured 5m in width with a drop of 3m. Called Once upon a time there was OIL, it was the first of three works with this general title made in 1981-2. The order of its three units was interchangeable, an idea that recalled the presentational possibilities in 4 in 1, and the polyptych format was a variation of the bold vertical accents that had featured in the structure of his paintings since the sixties. Because he was now exhibiting more regularly, Setch had a renewed awareness of how multipartite pieces worked together, and presentation consequently grew in importance for him.

The principal development in this first triptych in the series was the use of a literal human figure. With the painted words ‘oil’ and ‘danger’ (some of which were reversed as if to be read from ‘within’ the picture space), it offered an equivalence between landscape and the human body, or its presence, that originated partly in Setch’s interest since studenthood in surrealism. Although the painting did not have the expressionist or psychologising tendencies of surrealist art, it was conceived in a style that was unusually graphic in its delineation of the totem-like still-life forms (witness to the fact that Setch had in mind Sisley, Marconi were also present throughout the painting process). As one critic pointed out, Setch’s ‘...organic/mechanistic imagery... [is] always metaphorically to do with ripping open a seam of anxiety’.⁴¹

Other critics placed this triptych and the paintings that quickly followed it within the traditions of British landscape and romantic painting.

“Just as shorelines are the battlegrounds of sea and land, so his canvases are battlegrounds of meaning and form, depth and surface, these conflicts themselves acting as metaphors of elemental and personal turmoil,”

wrote John McEwen in *The Spectator* in 1982.

“...there is a sombre grandeur in the purpose and design of Setch’s pictures. Ultimately there derive from Constable’s fury rather than Turner’s mystery, and exhibit a disdain worthy of either for anything so cheap as a moral... They are not dainty or pretty paintings, but

The first triptych also differed from Setch's established practice because the pigment was acrylic. Setch explained this choice on the exploratory nature of the work; to clarify the narrative, he wanted imagery that was explicit and not compromised by a luscious material like oil paint. Hyman, describing it as 'the most interesting new work I'd seen all year' and heralding 'a new certainty of vision' in Setch, responding to, 'this spiky way of drawing that recalled James Ensor, and to its colour. Yet transposed onto loose canvas,' he wrote, 'all the waste and dross has suffered a strange sea-change, so that the whole field is alive with beautiful Bonnardish purples, roses, and azure lights, and we float in a symbolist dream-space.' Hyman's review concluded that 'its wild anarchic flavour makes it unmistakably of a present moment, where anything goes, but ... it retains also a certain classical authority.'⁴³

The second and third works in the series, both diptychs, were made concurrently with up to ten other paintings including *Andromeda* (1981-2) and *Raft* (1982). All used encaustic and oil on unstretched cotton canvases that were bolted through eyelets to a large metal frame during painting in Setch's Bute Street studio. Being intentionally portable, they were also taken to the beach on occasions (as had been done with the first triptych) to 'enact certain issues' affecting their subject matter; beach-wrecked car imagery, for instance, was revived in one panel. While Setch's direct experience of the rubbish-strewn and effluent-tossed beach was central to his inspiration, he has stressed that, 'the paintings are not themselves political statements but that social and political issues may be raised by them.' Although the 'Once' in the title... 'appears to refer to the past, the painting itself is about present and future predicaments.'⁴⁴ These images were about loss and discovery, and how forms disappear and reappear on the canvas as they do on the beach in the process of their transformation by natural elements. Through metaphors, such as wax for the substance of the beach, they were opened with equal validity to, among others, the interpretation of 'trying to describe the planet we live on and which seems to me to be quite horrific.'⁴⁵ The critic Tony Godfrey described Setch's paintings of this time as revealing 'a particular sensibility, a unique voice troubling over the world as matter.'⁴⁶

Two related solo exhibitions occurred late in 1982, the first taking place at Nigel Greenwood's gallery in Sloane Gardens, London, in September-October. Greenwood first represented Setch in the previous year, following the critical attention given Setch's work in the 'Hayward Annual', 1980, and continued to do so until his gallery closed in the early 1990's. (Meanwhile Anne Berthoud handled Setch's small paintings for several years from 1980 at her Covent Garden gallery.) The exhibition included *The Moon Falls as the Flags wave* and other single-panel paintings from 1981-2 that, in the resonating aftermath of the Falklands War of March-June 1982, attracted an overtly political reading that went beyond Setch's intentions.

More accurate was Monica Petzal's observation that:

"These are paintings to get lost in; there is a wealth of possible meaning and interpretation - there is no right way of looking at them. As evidence of one person's attempt to bring his personal reality into form which is unified, accessible and powerful, they hold meaning for us all."⁴⁷

The second exhibition followed in October-December at the Arnolfini in Bristol where the galleries had sufficient space to hang the first and third *Once* upon a time there was OIL alongside a retrospective element of work from 1977-81 and, unprecedentedly, seven small paintings from 1952. (The second painting in the OIL series was not included, but it had recently been shown at the Biennale of Sydney.) *Once upon a time there was Oil III Panel 1* (1981-2) was purchased by the Tate Gallery in 1983, the first painting by Setch to enter the national collection, and was included in the international survey exhibition of 'Emerging Trends New Art' at the Tate Gallery 1983 in September-October 1983.

In 1982 Setch also made his debut (and, to date, unique) appearance as a screen actor in 'Nat Pinkerton', a 24-minute detective story in film noir mode with a surreal angle by Ian Walker. Setch played the title role, and the film was screened at the ICA, London.

1983

In late August 1983 Setch travelled to Australia with Dianne and Eve to begin a three-month summer semester residency at the Victoria College of the Arts, Melbourne. This was his second residency overseas: early in 1981 he had been a visiting lecturer at Emily Carr College of Art in Vancouver, a three-month appointment that culminated in a large work related to Visual Pollution that was shown in Setch's solo exhibition at the Frans Wynans Gallery. The opportunity to work in Australia had been set up by John Walker, who was teaching in Melbourne as well as in New York. Setch's fellow artist-in-residence at the College was the Scottish painter, John Bellany.

The transition to this new terrain, with its intense light, was a challenge to Setch; an artist keenly susceptible to his surroundings, he had insufficient time to overcome completely this dislocation, although the foundations for his next major cycle of paintings were partly laid in Australia. In his search for subject matter, he gravitated naturally towards the coast, but finding St Kilda Beach flat and radically different to the Severn Estuary, he looked inland. Fascinated by the fire-scarred landscape around Lorne, with its layers of ash and green, and with Australian aboriginal art as a channel for imagery, he explored the theme of figures in a group. Setch opened these paintings to ideas associated with his British work, allowing a prophetic or troubling but still unexplained quality to drive the narrative, as in *Running Man* (1983). In *The Seer* (1983) two figures are gathered around a wrecked car in a setting interpreted by one critic as:

“...an inchoate yellow-brown mass of a landscape that could grow nothing, offer no prospect of survival. Setch makes the surface itself suggest the grotty decline of our culture and environment.”

He concluded that Setch and Bellany:

“...paint as if they have no faith in tomorrow; yet they have enough faith in painting still to keep doing it.”⁴⁸

These canvases were typically 2m high by 4m wide, and materials were supplied by the college. Beeswax was provided, and with properties that differed from Setch's usual oil-based and pliable mix, it presented technical challenges as a medium for oil pigment, contributing to the luminous, yellowish tonality and buttery surface of these paintings. Setch also decided that a hard edge was needed because of the density of pictorial content; paintings, therefore, were stretched. An exhibition with Bellany and the British-born sculptor Clive Murray-White at the Christine Abrahams Gallery in Melbourne followed the residency in November-December 1983.

In November, Setch delivered a lecture at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra. Called 'By Setch out of Pollock', it dealt with his own work and its debt to Pollock, especially the American's painting 'Blue Poles' (1952). The painting had been acquired by the gallery in 1974 and was still a controversial purchase.

1984-85

Setch's desire, on his return from Australia, to deal more specifically with the figure converged with his growing commitment to the peaceful protest against weapons proliferation orchestrated by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Not only was this in Setch's opinion 'a very big issue - are we going to help the planet or not?', this cause also had an immediate, local dimension. Members of Cardiff CND were among the first demonstrators at Greenham Common, the women-only camp on common land near Newbury, Berkshire, outside the US airbase where Cruise missiles were first sited in September 1981.

Dianne Setch was actively involved with the campaign and Setch accompanied her on two visits to the camp where the hard conditions struck him deeply. 'The women's gesture was so powerful, their presence so determined,' Setch commented. 'I needed to make a series of paintings of those women, just being there: standing sitting, waiting in all that discomfort.'⁴⁹ Sheltering under polythene wrapped over branches, people established a presence close to nature. 'Rather than being temporary visitors', one curator observed about the figures in *Which side of the fence? Greenham*, 'they seem to be an organic part of the wet grey-green landscape, obliterating the fence like a creeper.'⁵⁰

Uppermost for Setch in his treatment of this subject matter was a three-way correlation between artistic practice, the protestors' struggle against a brutal threat, and society's sensibilities with these elements. Writing about *Eviction Greenham* (1984), which showed two figures sharing the same continuous space although one is a large face and the other a less distinct presence, Stuart Morgan wrote:

i "It is unlikely that this is intended to be read as an allegory of the active and passive or the political versus the purely intellectual sides of the women's movement. The creation - is it by composition or coagulation? - of the figures, the very act of helping something come naturally into existence seems important, a parallel to the coming into being of a state of freedom by means of the location and persistence of committed energies."⁵¹

The painting was selected for the John Moores Liverpool Exhibition 14 in 1984 and won third prize.

The genesis of these paintings differed from the practice established in the early 1970's. Setch relied on secondary sources as much as direct experience, absorbing the stories relayed from the camp of the women's fervent comradeship and defiance at being persistently moved on by authority, and the continuous film and photographic coverage of the camp by the mass media throughout this time. Images were assembled from numerous drawings and notebooks during what Setch has recalled as 'an enormously productive period'.⁵²

Setch's next one-man exhibition, in October-November 1985 at the new Nigel Greenwood Gallery in Old Burlington Street, London, was devoted to the theme of *Greenham Common* and comprised four of the largest canvases, several smaller paintings and ten works on paper. The paintings were mostly made in Setch's studio at Cardiff College of Art; the largest drapes were 3m wide, stretched and framed. One significant feature was a higher colour-key than in work from 1981-2; another was the use of bold, rapid brushstrokes that were extended notably into 'the paint trash mark' with hot wax. In both was felt afresh the enduring influence of Munch: Setch had long remembered that artist's articulation of mortality in a thin line between life and death. Munch's paintings of workers from 1908 onwards, controversial in their day, now seemed analogous with Setch's concerns; a selection had formed an exhibition organised by Newcastle Polytechnic Gallery that toured British venues in 1984-5.

The strand of pictorial rhetoric present in these paintings was extended at one stage to another current event that was dividing Britain. In *People - stand together Greenham* (page 56) made in August 1984, Setch combined imagery derived from his *Greenham Common* drawings with figures culled from coverage of the miners' strike. For the artist, the two events were united as causes of the dispossessed. The bitter dispute over the Conservative government's reform of the coal industry had escalated into a strike in June 1984, and demonstrations followed against the proposed closure of pits in south Wales and elsewhere. The painting was included in the 'British Art Show', the touring exhibition of work by 82 artists and artists' groups seen at four regional venues between November 1984 and June 1985. Setch was placed in the section called 'Critical Attitudes' with, among others, Art & Language, Terry Atkinson, Stuart Brisley, Tim Head, Jock McFadyen and Bill Woodrow, artists whose diverse practices none the less could be said to have a critical social dimension. By comparison with the hard ideological edge of some of these artists, Jon Thompson, the academic who was one of the show's three selectors, suggested that 'Setch's politics are less to the fore, but, by his use of materials to make metaphors of environmental decay, his pictures never fail to invoke a strong sense of social, perhaps even moral, decline'.⁵³

Appointments in the arts and education occurred in these and subsequent years. In 1985 Setch was elected to the Faculty of Painting at the British School at Rome, and was a selector of the TSWA National Art Competition. Other appointments included examiner for the MA in painting at Chelsea College of Art (1986-9); election to the Faculty of Fine Arts at the British School at Rome in 1987; external examiner in the Faculty of Art, University of Reading (1989-92); and as art advisor to the Derek Williams Trust in 1997. In 2000 he was a selector of the Swansea Open exhibition, organised by the Glynn Vivian Museum & Art Gallery, Swansea.

1986

Throughout his career, Setch has viewed drawing as a separate activity that was none the less allied with painting. Drawings were often worked on as long as a painting because he regarded them 'as important as paintings'⁵⁴ consequently they have frequently been included in exhibitions. The function of drawing, however, and its relationship with painting have changed during his career. In his post-diploma year at the Slade, Setch worked almost exclusively in charcoal on paper to resolve the life-room discipline with ideas about abstraction. The hard, flat and systematic shapes of the Wall Module drawings (1964), in black Crylla acrylic paint on coloured card, mirrored the prevailing aesthetic of his Walls paintings but were seen as distinct from them. In the 1970's he started to fill sketchbooks with notational drawings of the beach. Then, as his paintings were becoming increasingly laden with material, drawings helped him to clarify the underlying structure. He took up pastel to explore colour accents in deep-laid fields of charcoal on crumpled paper that were related to the encrusted surfaces of the paintings and recalled his childhood practice of distressing pristine materials. Only since the 1990s has drawing once again detached itself from painting to become a separate activity.

Drawings were the basis for the cycle of six unstretched paintings on dyed hessian with the general title of Rehearsal. Begun in April 1986, they grew out of chaperoning his daughter Eve to workshops in Indian classical dance in Cardiff, she was preparing to take part in a production of Trystan and Esyllt that was being co-ordinated by the touring company, Theatr Talesin Wales, with Asian cultural groups in Grangetown. Setch, captivated by the communal intensity of the rehearsals and the vibrant visual qualities of the costumes, sketched these preparations; he sought to evoke both in the loose, open style of painting and in the encrusted waxes, given a decorative glitter sheen with metallic paints. The six panels, each 3m tall, stitched and eyeletted, were hung close together on metal supports around three walls of the Nigel Greenwood Gallery in January-February 1987; the blank fourth wall represented the audience. This choice of presentation highlighted an intended homage to earlier art; the panoramic sequence of theatre and display inferred Watteau's fêtes venitiennes, Goya's tapestry cartoons of the 1780's and Turner's interiors at Petworth House.

1987

When Setch was one of nine artists to receive a commission from the South Bank Centre, London, he reverted to the subject matter of the beach.⁵⁵ The artists were invited 'to make large-scale works on subjects of their own choosing which refer to events or issues affecting contemporary life in Britain'.⁵⁶ The resulting exhibition, 'Art History' was shown at the Hayward Gallery for ten weeks from October 1987 as a present-day counterpart to the public murals on socially-relevant subjects from earlier in the century by Diego Rivera, and it took place concurrently with a retrospective of the Mexican's work in the lower galleries.⁵⁷

Recent events gave fresh impetus to Setch's long-standing view of the beach as a residue of modern civilisation, and justified this new exploration of familiar territory. The explosion at the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in the Ukraine on 26 April 1986 raised new fears about nuclear power. Although a mere three percent of the reactor core escaped, the leakage was sufficient to kill those near it and to damage food and crops worldwide. The disaster touched Wales: Welsh sheep were among the livestock affected. With the gas-cooled nuclear reactor at Hinkley Point in Somerset, located fifteen miles across the Estuary from Penarth beach, Setch's work for the Hayward, Touch the Earth Again, confronted daily anxieties with robust directness. 'My thoughts and fear converge on this place', he explained.⁵⁸

The commission enabled Setch to experiment with a new material. He found discarded in a kerbside skip a wide roll of polypropylene, a strong thermoplastic material like PVC, and the circumstances of its discovery added to its value for transformation. Light enough to carry, the blanket-like sheet was ideal for working on the beach where it was marked with sludge in an activity like drawing, to 're-enact previous events on the site'. Furthermore, the material could be printed on, bonded and burned through. In his studio, Setch scattered objects collected on the beach between a waxed tarpaulin and

a layer of polypropylene. The process that he had successfully employed in Thunderball was effectively revived but with a variant: to reveal some of the forms sandwiched between tarpaulin and synthetic sheet, he used a heat gun to burn through the sheet and into the wax. Every element thereby became a working constituent of the painting, carrying meaning and extending metaphors.

This method also gave to the image a new complexity. Over eight panels of varying dimensions that together measured 5.5m high and 7.3m wide, a dual sensation was sought of flatness and of a perspective rising in stepped fashion back from the surface and which exposed partially excavated depths beneath. The sheep depicted at stages through the composition were construed as being on this rising horizon, while two figures were placed prominently in the lower foreground. Imagery was drawn from various sources. One figure was derived from a drawing by a survivor of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, and the other (a shadowy silhouette of the artist himself) from markings often used by police at the scene of a crime and from the role-playing of CND demonstrators witnessed by Setch. A plastic flower was found and placed in a vase improvised from a partially melted traffic cone. They were collaged to one panel close to remnants of a sofa, and generated the central notion of landscape as a metaphor for home. The dramatic confrontation with the piece was underscored, once again ambiguously, by the rope lashings of the tarpaulins that hung off each panel from where they were tied to an armature against the gallery wall.

1988-93

Significant changes in Setch's practice in these years marked a new challenge to aesthetic conventions. His objective became an equivalence between the reality of place and the image, in a work which required no hidden armature or support. Experiments with polypropylene on canvas followed, of which *Beach fruit (detritus)* (1988) was a curious but instructive early example. Included in a South Bank Centre touring exhibition on the theme of the 'Tree of Life', the image was built up on a richly coloured and heavily waxed sheet. Wanting to avoid the symbolism associated with the theme, Setch instead referred to his own garden. Wax objects, invoking familiar natural forms, were collaged into the dense surface; in effect, Setch was reaching back for inspiration to the mid-1970's and Monet's carpet is nature's floor.

When tarpaulin was supplanted by polystyrene, more significant developments were released by this reappraisal of past methods; *Dissolving Garden* was one of the first products although the beach became the focus of subsequent works. The advantage of polystyrene was that it provided a rigid foundation on which layers could be built using wax, heat or compression. It could also be bought in panels of a similar size to ship's canvas, 2.6m by 1.3m. When waxed polypropylene sheeting was placed on top, sandwiching layers of found objects, the application of extreme heat fused some ingredients and melted others into a diffuse and reworkable terrain that rippled into contours like the land. To emphasise the flux of these textures Setch set up the opposition of fixed and loose elements by sprinkling kaolin, a white powder used as filler, over the surface. To seal the vibrant result for the purposes of presentation, a further innovation was to wrap the image beneath a taut layer of polythene, a step which itself unleashed new aesthetic possibilities. With undisguised irony, Setch was transforming the values of the same petro-chemical materials despoiling the beach through art; 'a frisson Walter Benjamin might have dubbed the aestheticising of (green) politics', one writer mused.⁵⁹ Each panel was also edged with angled metal uprights; derived from shelving systems and thus not linked with art, they were not strictly frames but part of the surface.

Equating his actions in the studio with the place itself, rather than by conventional methods of pictorial representation, Setch evoked the beach, where forms were eroded, buried, reshaped and resurfaced by weather and water, and human activity (in beachcombing, walking and play). Writing about the triptych *Above and Below the Tide*, Paul Moorhouse made the important point that:

surfaces of the paintings form a record of the dynamic processes which operated during their execution. The flow of wax across their surfaces echoes the ebb and flow of the tide on the beach."⁶⁰

These processes alluded equally to artistic concerns and to the experience of landscape. The reflectivity, water-like transparency, tension and adhesion of polythene over the dip and rise of craggy matter implied shifts of perspective and atmosphere, just as objects scattered and embedded in the painting tangled into related abstract forms in the suggestive manner reminiscent of Pollock. A further allusion to Pollock lurked in the behaviour of kaolin which, when heated, was dispersed and scattered as if mimicking the painterly mark. The electricity of the heat gun also drew the powder upwards to cling to the underside of the polythene wrapping, creating an effect that confused the eye as it searched for a conventional arrangement of space.

Setch's habit of delving back into his personal repertoire of sources for new inspiration was identified by Tim Hilton. Alluding to *International Waters*, another triptych, in his review of Setch's major one-person exhibition that toured public galleries in Cardiff, London and Edinburgh in 1992-3, *The Guardian's* critic commented that:

"Setch is a serious painter but Pop Art is coming into his 1990's work. A person visiting this show without prior knowledge of his career might imagine a ruling influence: the random assemblage on canvas by Rauschenberg a quarter of a century ago. *International Waters* is a tall three-part piece in which plastic shopping bags with blue and red lines look vaguely like American flags. Knowing the artist's political concerns it wouldn't surprise me to learn that he had the US in mind."⁶¹

And Jasper Johns, Hilton might have added, spotting the visual pun. 'He is an original,' was the verdict of John McEwen. 'He updates Turner; politicises Jackson Pollock; ruralises Rauschenberg.'⁶²

The coloration of these works had changed from the heavy, earthbound quality of ten years earlier to lightness redolent of wind and weather, of pool and reflected sky. Perhaps reviewing the uncertain path of Setch's work since 1983, McEwen speculated on the cause of this lighter palette:

"...[Setch] sees this as a general mark of optimism; but specifically it surely also speaks of his own gathering assurance, because at their best these are undoubtedly among the most memorable contemporary images of the landscape."⁶³

Setch recalls that by 1987 he had arrived at a turning point, having exhausted the imagery that had fuelled *Touch the Earth Again*.

Feeling at risk of being overpowered by the demands of big painting, he wanted to vary his synthesis of subjects, a desire that had largely induced this new cycle of activity.

The cycle included making smaller paintings. Surprisingly, for Setch has never been a sailor, his subject matter moved away from any notion of land to generate the sensation of being surrounded by water. Distilled from observations of Cardiff Bay and the Bristol Channel, examples of these sea pictures were exhibited in two solo shows, in Cardiff in August 1989 and in London in September-October 1990. The subtle gradations of colour in *Full Sails* (1990) were traditional, and the composition naturally composed, almost artless. With a generalised atmosphere irradiated with light and from a viewpoint seemingly in the water itself, the image was concentrated within pockets of space that engulfed the image. The tangibility of oil paint in wax encaustic became an analogue of weather, wind and speed. From this the imagery of sails, boats, clouds and water emerged and spilt like detritus over the picture surface, painted on board and measuring 30 by 60cm.

'Apart from Pollock, I think of Turner all the time', Setch has said, and he felt the example of both lay behind these images. Although scale was a foil to large paintings, Setch created the small works as hermetic pieces, not as samples of a bigger conception. They showed the intimate, more notational style of his sketchbooks, where topographical details were recorded, and the human events and activities registered that typified the foreshore. More significantly, they required a physical performance that brought about colour changes within a single arm movement and not with the full engagement of the body. But the effect was all embracing and intense, conveying a sense of being immersed in the picture. 'They deal with the view and how it is received,' Setch remarked in 1997. 'They weren't confrontational and the good, bad and ugly issue didn't come into it. They became things which people can see, more in the terms of conventional sea painting.'⁶⁴ He has continued to make small paintings.

One series dealt with groups of figures observing the total solar eclipse that occurred over Britain in August 1999.

The commission in 1993 for the mural in the restaurant of the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff, absorbed ideas related to these small works. It was not strictly a mural but a large painting executed with wax over a gesso base on muslin, backed by MDF. A panoramic view of the mudflats of the bay from Penarth to Cardiff docks, it was deliberately topographical in its record of a setting awaiting dramatic transformation with the completion of the Cardiff Bay Barrage in 1999 and the dredging of the mud-flats to create a freshwater lake.

1993-97

Setch began using styrofoam in the early nineties. The blue-coloured boards of extruded polystyrene foam were most commonly used for building insulation although styrofoam was also associated with popular craft because the dried foam plastic was easily sculpted. Setch valued the airy, high-keyed colour of the material but, more importantly for him, the material melted into craters when waxes, bitumen, solvents and other synthetic materials were applied. Into these depressions, plastic and other materials were added, then drawn and painted over in streaks and smudges. The result was an unpretty and unprecious surface that once again could be an equivalent of the landscape. Setch was not totally in control of every process he used; but he welcomed the effects set up by chance and accident to make new forms as one substance interacted unexpectedly with another.

Eight styrofoam panels were used in *Towards Lavernock, Winter/Spring* (1993-4). The painting arose from an invitation to make a new work inspired by a place or object in the care of the National Museums of Wales.⁶⁵ Setch chose Sisley's painting from July 1897, 'La Falaise à Penarth, Le Soir, Marée Basse' (The Cliff at Penarth, Evening, Low Tide) because it featured the same location as his own subject matter - the undulating edge of the cliffs, a favourite summer walk of Sisley's, and the shore far below. It also took further Setch's exploration, which started with his arrival in Penarth, of the culturally celebrated tradition of landscape. He postulated a walk to the headland along the shore, although Sisley's precise viewpoint had been lost in the erosion of the cliffs. Each metal-edged panel was a pocket of space: one replicated Sisley's painting and other panels built up the sensations of increasing proximity and of changing weather, of snow, mist, rain and a rainbow. Objects scattered over each panel emulated tide action, mimicked the light, and demarcated ground and sky. Crude wax-rimmed 'frames' surrounded 30cm square vignettes painted on anodised aluminium that proposed different ways of seeing: views of the cliff and beach conceived in the contrasting and conventionally readable style of Setch's small paintings that also harked back to the space of Sisley's original.

From this point Setch placed renewed emphasis on the edges of large paintings. In a manner reminiscent of *Visual Pollution*, waxen yellow vertical accents enclosed each panel of *Post Sisley*, the other view). This dramatic triptych was also confrontational in its use of layered and drawn imagery of sunbathers and playful gesturing children; of beachcombed detritus wrapped, fused and partly obliterated; and of jewel-like colours that bloomed in places like a rash on skin. This contrast of innocence and spoilage re-emerged in *Mudlarks* and carried the dichotomy of attraction and repulsion to each aspect of the work. Images of young people touched on Setch's earliest memories and on pleasures that were not available to him during his wartime childhood. They were also inspired by the sentiment that Setch enjoyed in Laura Knight's paintings of children from early in the century. *Mudlarks* was reworked after it was first exhibited in 1995, and the frame changed. The original surround was formed by attaching plasterer's 'handy-angle' metal edging to the panel so that it became integrated with the work. But with the historical source of this image in mind, Setch wanted to confound ideas about framing that also came from art of earlier eras. With a conventionally moulded frame as his starting point, he added silver foil and then wrapped it in thick yellow-coloured plastic. Instead of being rigid, the result was soft but ambiguous because the transparent plastic mimicked the bulk and lustre of a gilded frame.

Solo exhibitions in these years reflected the parallel strands of activity. Only small paintings were included in shows in Fishguard, Dyfed, in summer 1995, and at Penarth in September 1997. New work on a larger scale was shown at the Raw Gallery, London, in April-May 1995, when one reviewer noted that 'His pictures are not simply metaphors for the endlessly changing tide-line, they also exemplify the transmutation fundamental to all art' and assessed them as 'Sows ears into silk purses.'⁶⁶ In The Times, Sacha Craddock suggested that 'What used to be an angry wrestle to bring order out of chaos has turned now into the visualisation of a lyrical idyll.'⁶⁷

1997-2001

The building in Bute Street containing Setch's studio closed in 1997 for refurbishment that was completed almost two years later. Setch then worked mostly at home, a location particularly suitable for making small paintings. But in this period he also made several large paintings, three of which were among the 31 paintings, prints and sketchbooks included in the three-artist show, 'Oil and Water', at the Centre for Visual Arts in Cardiff in January-April 2000. The largest was Into the Picture and Out of the Picture where different notions of the 'view' were explored in a combination of pictures within pictures. These extended over six narrow panels of styrofoam that measured 2.6m in height. To an extent the work was a workshop of ideas, such as the rapidly drawn figures in movement. But within the shifting focus of its structure was embedded a deeper concept of loss and parting. The flux that Setch had observed in nature provided a parallel on which to personalise the disparate events around him from far and near that were reshaping constantly his sense of the world, from the anguish of civil war in Bosnia to the blow of his mother's death in 1998.

The synthetic character of his work has been expanded by drawing on imagery provided by the worldwide web. His most recent project has the general title Internettide, an on-line work in conjunction with the Centre for Research in Fine Art at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff. Setch selects images for incorporation into a composition from the material received by e-mail, a gallimaufry of forms that can become as rich and indiscriminate as the jetsam and refuse deposited on the foreshore at Penarth. With its ability to scan, manipulate and transform images, digital technology provides an equivalent of Setch's painting technique, the collage being printed on to cloth. This work has become more conceptual, its locus not on an established geographical point but in the figure of the artist himself, a common figurative presence in these pieces.

"The nature of my work has to change, and I have always been trying to get things right from a personal angle. I have got to follow my own path: I am not a 'joiner' or part of an 'ism'. I have tried to create an identity that is my own."

Terry Setch retires as Senior Lecturer in Painting in the School of Art and Design, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, in June 2001, after 40 years in art education.

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Footnotes

1 Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from the artist are from interviews with the author held in Penarth on 27-28 July 2000.

2 As a beneficiary of a junior art department and as student and tutor, a participant in full-time art education from the age of 14, Setch is, as the painter Derek Southall has pointed out, 'among the most art schooled generation ever in ceaseless contact with verbalisations about art, the sponge-like stance of immature artists and the unceasing vagaries of academic enthusiasms.' Artscribe 38, London. December 1982, p.47.

3 Terry Setch quoted by Alistair Hicks, The School of London, Phaidon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.84.

4 Terry Setch quoted by Theo Crosby, 'Young Contemporaries', Architectural Design, London. June 1959.

5 Andrew Forge, 'The Slade (3); to the present day, Motif 6, London. Spring 1961.

6 Michael Sandle quoted by Marco Livingstone in his essay 'History in The Present Tense', Michael Sandle: Sculpture & Drawings 1957-88, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1988, p.12.

7 Nigel Gosling, 'Leicester power house', The Observer, London. 22 December 1963.

- 8 R.M., 'Sense of power in art from Kibworth', *Leicester Mercury*, 10 December 1963.
- 9 Cardiff College of Art underwent several changes of name, becoming the Art Faculty of South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education, the Cardiff Institute of Higher Education and the School of Art and Design, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff.
- 10 Jasia Reichardt's introductory essay in 'The Inner Image: Paintings of the Leicester Group', exhibition catalogue Grabowski Gallery, London, 1964, unpaginated.
- 11 Ibid. In a comment that anticipated his later work, Jasia Reichardt significantly went on to emphasise Setch's rich vocabulary of forms, so that 'All these relationships here acquire an enhanced importance.'
- 12 Nigel Gosling, 'Leicester comes to town', *The Observer*, London. 13 September 1964.
- 13 Norbert Lynton, *The Guardian*, London. September 1964.
- 14 John Russell, 'Art News from London', *Art News*, January 1966, p.9
- 15 Norbert Lynton, 'London commentary', *Art International*, London. January 1966, pp.83-4
- 16 'Profile/Setch' (interview with Alan Wood), *Arts Review*, London. March 1967, p.61.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Norbert Lynton, 'Terry Setch Exhibition', *The Guardian*, London. 20 March 1967, p.5.
- 19 Nigel Gosling, 'Heroic pessimism on a bicycle', *The Observer*, London. 12 March 1967.
- 20 Edward Lucie-Smith, 'The London Shows', *Studio International*, London. March 1967, pp.148-9.
- 21 Norbert Lynton, *The Guardian*, London. 16 October 1968.22 Tom Hudson, 'Terry Setch and Alan Wood at Grabowski Gallery', *Studio International*, London. December 1968, p.163.
- 23 The other artists were Allen Jones, Eric Malthouse and Jeffrey Steele, and with Setch they took part in a discussion with Cardiff residents on the Release programme on BBC television, 27 June 1968.
- 24 Terry Setch's statement in Terry Setch, exh. cat. Grabowski Gallery, London. 1973, unpaginated.
- 25 William Feaver, 'System', *The Listener*, London. 11 May 1972, p.633. Feaver highlighted works by John Walker, Mark Lancaster, Stephen Collingbourne, Sean Scully and Setch: they were 'The main attraction of the exhibition ... paintings which demonstrate the current fashion for all-over themes derived from wallpaper, tartans, tyre treads and do-it-yourself manuals.'
- 26 James Heard, 'Setch, Lucas, Hilliard', *Arts Review*, London. 30 June 1973, p.449.
- 27 Terry Setch's statement in Terry Setch 'Paintings', exhibition catalogue. University College, Cardiff, 1973, unpaginated.
- 28 Terry Setch quoted by Paul Moorhouse in his essay, 'Of Earlier and Other Creation: The beach paintings of Terry Setch', in Terry Setch, exhibition catalogue Oriel and National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, and Camden Arts Centre, London, 1992, p.17.
- 29 Adrian Lewis, 'Summer Show 3 at the Serpentine', *Artscribe* 26, London. December 1980, p.41
- 30 The other works by Setch in the Hayward Annual 1980 were the trilogy Beachscape Car Wreck (1978-9) and Pollution I Waterwheels (1980).
- 31 Terry Setch quoted in conversation with Glyn Jones and Harry Holland, *Link* 10, Cardiff. 1978, p.9.
- 32 Ian Walker's essay in Terry Setch. Paintings, exh. cat. Chapter Gallery, Cardiff, 1979, unpaginated.
- 33 John Hoyland's introductory essay in 'Hayward Annual', exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1980, p.5.
- 34 John Hoyland interviewed by James Faure Walker about the Hayward Annual, *Artscribe* 24, London. August 1980 p.39.
- 35 John Spurling, 'The Connection', *New Statesman*, London. 12 September 1980, p.27.
- 36 Peter Fuller, 'Hayward Annual 1980', *Aspects* 12, London. Autumn 1980, unpaginated.
- 37 Cox explained that his choice of 'older artists' (although the average age was 34) was 'largely determined by their maturity and particular individuality.' The attitude of the younger artist, he wrote, 'cosseted by the current subsidized system in art... tends not to be hardened by reflection, deep concern, self-doubt and struggle.' (Summer Shows 123, exh. cat. Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1980, unpaginated.) In addition to Setch, Cox selected Graham Ashton, Allan Buckett, Christina Floyd, Robert Koenig, John Mitchell, Gavin Scobie, John Sharp, Roy Turlington and Gera Urkom. Sarah Kent commented that Setch's 'gigantic canvases... dominate the show.... The work i the rest of the show is eclipsed by these giants.' (*Time Out*, London. 26 September 1980, p.67.)
- 38 Sarah Kent, 'Between two territories: a way forward in British painting' in *Flash Art*, London. Summer 1983, p.41.
- 39 Terry Setch quoted by Adrian Searle, 'On the Beach', *Artscribe* 41, London. June 1983, p.28.

40 Artscribe 33, London. February 1982, pp.55-6. The other artists were Frank Auerbach, John Bellany, Michael Bennett, Jennifer Durrant, Maggi Hambling, Howard Hodgkin, Ken Kiff, Leon Kossoff, Christopher LeBrun, Michael Porter, John Walker and David Wiseman. Hyman, however, found the attempt at a collective identity for the participants 'startling – and spurious'. He continued: 'It seems to me there are many legitimate ways of linking these very disparate artists, but I really doubt whether "painterliness" is one of them. It is basically, formalistic; it perpetuates ways of looking at pictures where surface is all-important... Such lifelong, obstinate misfits and solitaries as Kiff and Setch, Hodgkin and Kossoff have been made - only for a moment, but absurdly convincingly – to dance in chorus together, as the British contingent in the worldwide mobilisation, whose common theme is the "Return to Painting".'

41 Fenella Crichton, '13 British Artists', Aspects 19, London. Summer 1982, unpaginated.

42 John McEwen was reviewing Setch's one-man show at Nigel Greenwood Inc in 'Fruits of battle', The Spectator, London. 25 September 1982, p.25-6, and made a comparison with Julian Schnabel, fifteen years Setch's junior, whose retrospective had recently taken place at the Tate Gallery. 'Whereas Setch's [work] seems the hard-won product of experience and personality, Schnabel's at best is academic, a clever addition to a dominant art historical progression.'

43 Hyman, op. cit. (in note 40), p.56.

44 From the entry for Once upon a time there was OIL III, panel 1 in The Tate Gallery, Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1982-84, Tate Gallery, London, 1986, p.321.

45 Setch quoted by Sanda Miller in 'Les paysages de cire de Terry Setch' in Art Press 64, November 1982, pp.12-13.

46 Tony Godfrey's essay appeared in the catalogue to the XIII Festival International de la Peinture, Cagnes-sur-Mer, 1981.

47 Monica Petzal, 'Beachcomber', Time Out, London. 24 September 1982, p.70.

48 Ronald Millar in the Melbourne Herald Sun, November 1982. Memory Holloway paid the visiting painters the compliment of commenting that 'the intensity with which each of them worked has had a phenomenal effect on those around them.' (Melbourne Age, 30 November 1982, p.14.)

49 From a statement by Setch, photocopied as a gallery note for his exhibition at St Paul's Gallery, Leeds, in January-February 1987.

50 Angela Weight in her introduction to Which Side Of The Fence?, exhibition guide, Imperial War Museum, London, 1987.

51 Stuart Morgan, 'The 14th John Moores at the Walker Art Gallery' in Artscribe 52, London. May-June 1985, p.57

52 Several notebooks on the theme of Greenham Common were acquired by the National Museums and Galleries of Wales, Cardiff.

53 Jon Thompson in his catalogue essay, 'Critical Attitudes', British Art Show: Old Allegiances and New Directions 1979-84, Arts Council of Great Britain and Orbis Publishing, London, 1984, p.56.

54 Setch has held this opinion, expressed in July 2000, consistently since his student days, as averred in this statement from June 1959: 'The painting, 'Taking Breath', was worked simultaneously with many drawings. In fact, drawings are in themselves paintings (but for the difference in medium) and not subsidiary to them.' Architectural Design, London. op. cit. (note 4).

55 The other artists were Helen Chadwick, Ken Currie, Peter de Francia, Paul Graham, R.B. Kitaj, Alain Miller, Keitl Piper and Michael Sandle.

56 From the foreword by Joanna Drew and Catherine Lampert, Art History, exhibition catalogue, South Bank Board, London, 1987, p.3.

57 The critical reception of Art History was on the whole unfavourable. Because of its political content, this ambitious exhibition attracted verdicts from a spectrum of press opinion that was unusually wide for contemporary art. In the arts pages, Andrew Graham-Dixon, art critic of The Independent, judged it 'a well-intentioned failure' because 'In the absence of Rivera's spirit, it reads like a footnote to a blank text.' (3 November 1987.) But the art and critic Michael Archer, writing in Art Monthly (December 1987-January 1988, pp.24-5), identified the show's premise as flawed: 'the exhibition accomplishes little beyond the reflection of its own dubious reasons for existence. It is manufactured social relevance and ... bears scant relation to anything much at all.' The show, however, also drew fire from the leader pages. Bernard Levin's dismissal of the work in The Times (16 November 1987) was mild compared with the attack by the conservative commentator and historian, Paul Johnson. He questioned the use of Art Council funds: 'How can we permit such loathsome objects to be honoured in one of our public galleries? By what right, and on whose authority, is our money used to record those who perpetuate such material?' (Daily Mail, 16 November 1987.)

58 Setch quoted by Richard Cork in his introductory essay, Art History, op. cit., p.17.

59 David Cohen, 'Recent Exhibitions of British Figurative Painting', Burlington Magazine, London. November 1992.

60 Paul Moorhouse, op. cit. (in note 28), p.23.

61 Tim Hilton, 'The packaging of the polymath', The Guardian, London. 4 June 1992. Hilton addressed the question of interpretation with the opinion that 'vagueness is at the centre and the peripheries of Setch's art.'

62 John McEwen was reviewing Setch's exhibition at Camden Arts Centre, London, in 'Tide-markings', Sunday Telegraph, London. 20 June 1992.

63 Ibid.

64 Setch quoted by Chris Baker in 'Coastal Creations', Big Issue Cymru, Cardiff. September 1997.

65 Six other artists were also commissioned, and their work formed the exhibition Disclosure(s) that toured to galleries in Wales and Barcelona in 1994-5. In addition to Setch, the artists were Keith Arnatt, Harry Holland, Shani Rhys James, David Nash, Peter Prendergast and Lois Williams.

66 Sue Hubbard, 'Terry Setch', Time Out, London. 10-17 May 1995, p.51.

67 Sacha Craddock, 'Around the Galleries', The Times, London. 2 May 1995.