



AMONGST THE

British Landscape

BY BETHANY HOLMES

As I sit on the floor in my studio, I consider how it was only just over a year ago that I made the decision to reduce my full-time work commitments. I needed more time to paint and to push my own creative business, as it was becoming more and more successful. From starting out painting in the corner of my spare room, I now have my very own studio — and it was the best decision I have ever made.

I have always been a creative person. My grandfather was a photographer and my grandmother enjoyed painting, often with me when I was a young child. From early on I knew I wanted to do something creative. I studied textile design at university, so I knew from that moment I would go into the creative industry.

A change in my circumstances led me back home — a lovely little town in the southeast of England. My boyfriend's family had two old stables that had been renovated 20 or so years ago but were now completely full of rubbish ... you know how it is. My boyfriend, Ben, suggested we clear out one of the stables, give it a good clean and a fresh lick of paint, and make it into my studio. ▶



Today, I can't imagine it being as clean and tidy as when I first moved in! It's full to the brim with scraps of paper, old paint tubes, half-painted canvases, primed wood panels, and vintage lockers bursting with odds and ends. I would like to think that my studio is a calm place. *When I'm in the studio I feel I've escaped from everyday life — I don't think about the time, the fact that I've got a load of washing to do, or that I haven't even thought about what we're going to have for our evening meal.*

When I moved into the studio, I discovered three vintage lockers that were full of rubbish. I love these lockers and promised myself I would keep them organized so I would know exactly where everything was located. For a short time I had a locker dedicated for warm neutral paints, colder neutrals, green, blues, pinks, etc. It is 14 months later and although I still want this to be the case, it'll never happen! I tried this system for about a week, but sure enough I failed. I tend to grab the paints that I'm drawn to and just leave them on the floor, lids off, along with paintbrushes still thick with paint. Then a week later, I'll pull out more paints and the same thing will happen again!

In my home I have a place for everything; however, my studio is my release. I go in there and it doesn't matter if I get paint everywhere or if nothing has an exact home. Yes, it would probably make my business a lot more efficient, but I know where everything is. When you're in the middle of painting, using your hands, a squeegee, and a cloth, the last thing you want to do is go and put the lid back on the paint and put it back where it came from! ▷



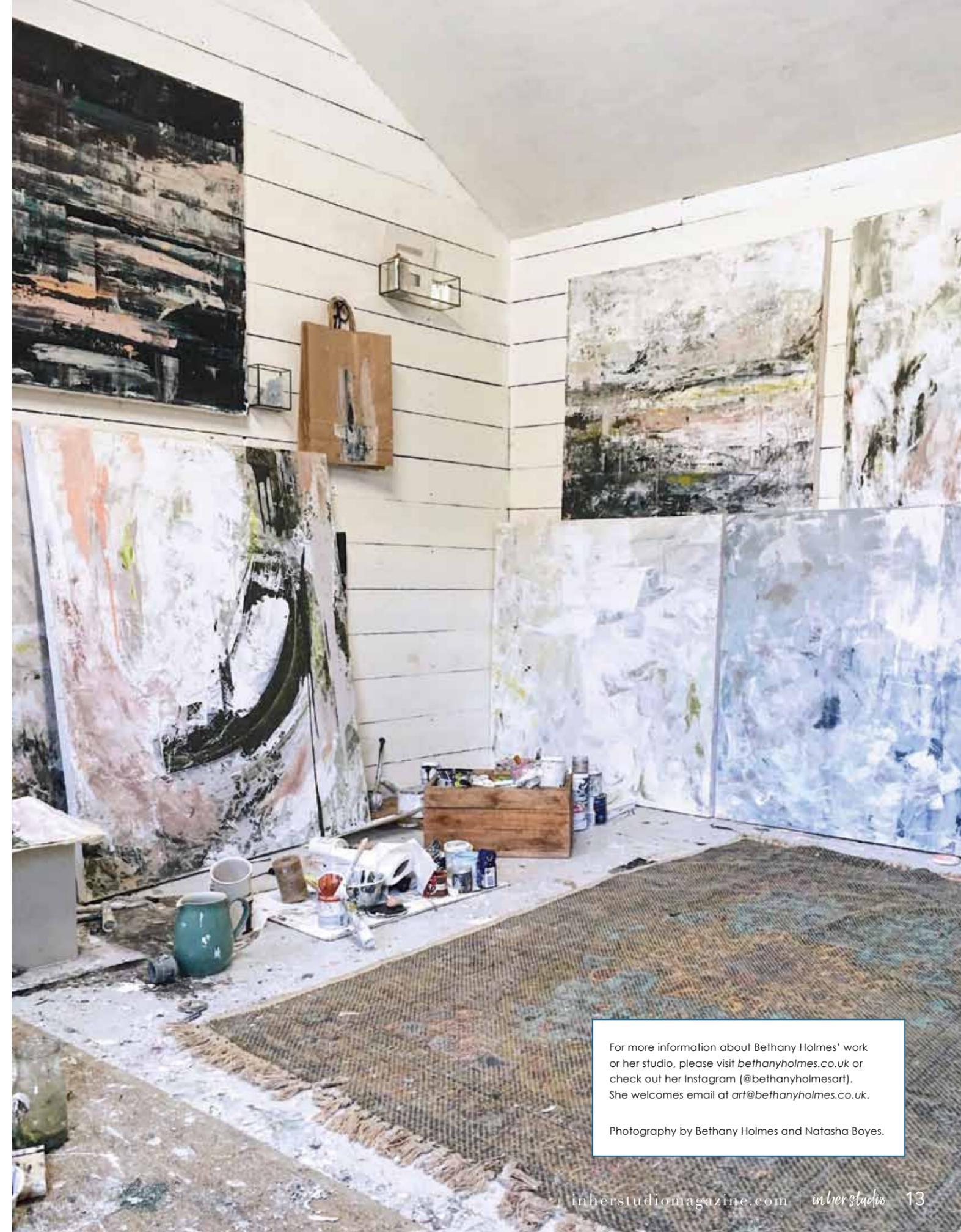


In the depths of winter I'll put the fan heater on and work in artificial light, occasionally opening the top of the stable door to check that all the colors are going in the right direction. When I shut the door again, I'm a million miles from home — I'm in my own world. I'll put on my playlists, or a podcast, and get completely lost in the paint, textures, and, most importantly, color. At the first warmth of spring I usually open the top of the door again and let the light flood in. It's lovely to creep into the studio first thing with a cup of tea and listen to the birdsong that surrounds me. Then in summer, the whole door is flung open. The studio is such an inviting place at this time of year. The floor is pale gray concrete and is always nice and cool. When it's really hot (which is rare in the UK!), I open the windows as well and let the breeze flow in. The evening sun usually comes around and warms the place up by about 6 p.m., which I usually think is an acceptable time to have a glass of cold white wine whilst I paint into the evening. >



Although a calm space, my studio is an extremely productive environment. I work surrounded by commissions and pieces I am experimenting with for my next series of works, which hang on the wall or are propped up. Pieces I am currently working on lay on the floor alongside Ozzy, the farm border collie. Current larger paper pieces are bulldog-clipped together and hooked onto a nail in the wall.

I look to nature for my inspiration, as well as the relationship between the landscape and my canvas. I use texture, color, and marks to explore and investigate how I see the British landscape. My paintings evolve and change; they are a process of covering up and sanding back, revealing the layers beneath. *My paintings grow organically, much as the undulating British landscape changes, develops, and progresses.* The land is flat, so you can see for miles and miles. This environment is the inspiration that keeps my paintings flowing. Behind the studio, I love gazing at the big sky, as the colors change throughout the day, culminating in the reds and oranges of the evening sunset.



For more information about Bethany Holmes' work or her studio, please visit bethanyholmes.co.uk or check out her Instagram (@bethanyholmesart). She welcomes email at art@bethanyholmes.co.uk.

Photography by Bethany Holmes and Natasha Boyes.