

Keith Purser

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b.1944



Keith Purser
Elements

Jenna Burlingham Gallery



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*The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay*

From 'Dover Beach' by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

Keith Purser lives and works on the edge of a huge shingle bank in the shadow of Dungeness power station, in a village called Lydd-on-Sea in south-east Kent. His home, on the tip of a headland, faces onto a wide expanse of beach and looks out to the coast of France. This is a place of light and vast skies; of open shingle dotted with the few plants that can thrive in the weather-beaten environment, and with the abandoned supplies of the local fishermen. With a landscape so devoid of features, Purser finds himself free to make determined studies of its textures.

Purser's paintings are rich in surface and often include objects discovered on his daily walks. Sand, driftwood, netting, gravel, shells, sea glass and broken ceramics can often be found. In some paintings, an impression is all that is left, with the objects inscribed into their surfaces transferred and then removed. If one of these articles stays in the artist's mind for long enough, it becomes the spark that determines a painting, spiritually present if not physically. The irregular black shapes that features so often are, for instance, reminiscent of the dozens of fishermen's crates that pepper the shoreline.

Purser first sketches his compositions and then retreats to his studio at his home, from where he can watch the ships passing along the Dover Strait. Working with a calm palette of lemon and chrome yellow, ultramarine, cerulean and Prussian blue, along with the careful use of metallic pigment, he captures the light that inspires him. With flashes of whites and reds and the sparse black features, Purser recreates the light of the land, sky and sea.



1 Carthage, 2017 signed, titled and dated oil, sand and found objects on panel 38.5 × 96.5 cm (15½ × 38 in)



2 Echo Sail, 2021 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 41 × 118.5 cm (16½ × 46¾ in)



3 Flight of the Gull, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 44.5 × 76 cm (17½ × 29⅞ in)



4 Under Rain, 2021 signed, titled and dated oil, chalk pastel, sand and pencil on panel 73.5 × 48.5 cm (29 × 19⅞ in)



5 Storm Passing, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 46 × 99 cm (18 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 39 in)



6 Dune with Blue, 2021 signed, titled and dated oil, chalk pastel and sand on panel 43 × 121.5 cm (16 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 47 $\frac{7}{8}$ in)



7 Gulstrand, 2018 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 31 × 122 cm (12¼ × 48⅞ in)



8 Littlestone III (August), 2020 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 78 × 77 cm (30¾ × 30¼ in)



9 Set Sun, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 54 × 78.5 cm (21¼ × 30⅞ in)



10 Estuary, 2021 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 38 × 109 cm (15 × 42⅞ in)



11 Undercliff II (Carp), 2021 signed, titled and dated oil, chalk pastel and sand on panel 61.5 × 74 cm (24¼ × 29½ in)



12 Decommissioned 6, 2021 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 43 × 119.5 cm (16⅞ × 47⅞ in)



13 Meltwater, 2020 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 48 × 99 cm (18 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 39 in)



14 February, 2018 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 46 × 65 cm (18 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ in)



15 Rainship, 2014 signed, titled and dated oil on panel 46 × 33.5 cm (18 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in)



16 Sea Break, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 36.5 × 114.5 cm (14 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 45 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)



17 Gull's Nest, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 45.5 × 77 cm (17¾ × 30¼ in)



18 Erosion, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 45 × 98.5 cm (17¾ × 38¾ in)



19 September Sailing, 2017 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 51 × 107 cm (20 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 42 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)



20 Sun Over Chalk (October), 2018 signed, titled and dated oil, sand and found objects on panel 40 × 122 cm (15 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 48 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)



21 Flight, 2022 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 22 × 78.5 cm (8 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)



22 Chalk Hill Blue, 2021 signed, titled and dated oil with sand on panel 46 × 58.5 cm (18 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 23 $\frac{1}{8}$ in)



23 Growing Flight, 2012 signed, titled and dated oil, chalk pastel and sand 48.5 × 59 cm (19½ × 23¼ in)



24 Wallflower, 2012 signed, titled and dated oil, chalk pastel and sand 53 × 61 cm (20½ × 24½ in)



25 Long Dog I, 1997 signed and dated watercolour and pencil 36 × 48 cm (14½ × 18¾ in)



26 Long Dog II, 1997 dated watercolour and pencil 42 × 59 cm (16½ × 23¼ in)



27 Red Promenade, Hythe, 2011 signed and titled woodcut with hand-colouring 42 × 52.5 cm (16½ × 20¾ in)



28 Dogs in a Boat (Blues), 2022 signed and titled woodcut with hand-colouring 29.5 × 41.5 cm (11¾ × 16¾ in)

Biography

1944	Born in Bromley, Kent
1960-62	Attended Sidcup School of Art
1963-71	Travelled extensively in Europe and the Middle East
1978	Settled in Sussex for five years and became a member of the Rye Society of Artists
1983	Moved to Trebarwith Strand, North Cornwall where his output became more directly influenced by the landscape
1987	Relocated to Lincolnshire, where his subject matter remained the coastline and the sea, but his compositions became more simplified, echoing the wide horizons and emptiness of the fens
1994	Returned to East Sussex, renewed his interest in the coastline and the making of relief constructions, utilising objects found along the tide line
1989-2017	Regular solo exhibitions with Jonathan Clark Fine Art
1995-present	Purser has remained in East Sussex/Kent where his painting has continued exploring the relationship between the land and the sea
2010-present	Regular exhibitor with Jenna Burlingham Gallery



Frontispiece: Keith Purser at home in Kent
Page 35: The artist's studio

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