

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Karen Wright, "In the studio: Hurvin Anderson, artist", *The Independent*, October 25, 2013

'I always come back to painting. It's a fascinating thing and a constant battle'

Hurvin Anderson's studio is in a former biscuit factory in Bermondsey, south London. After recently being in studios redolent of thinking, I find it refreshing to be in an arena of "just doing". Anderson's studio looks out towards a train track but has that rare London luxury – uninterrupted sky.

Anderson was born in 1965 in Birmingham to parents of Jamaican descent, and recently took his talent back to the city with a show at the Ikon Gallery that spanned his painting career.

As a student at the Royal College in the late 90s with other figurative painters including George Shaw and Gillian Carnegie, he explored the relevance of figuration in a world dominated by abstraction and the conceptual.

After studying, Anderson stayed in London with fellowships in Cheltenham and Trinidad. He concurs that going to the Caribbean was "finding a place where the ideas came from – a meeting place of sources", and this permeated his work for some time afterwards. He was only there for two months but describes the work he produced as "semi-autobiographical" – about history and place, and himself as an identifiable cultural type, a dreadlocked West Indian in contemporary Britain.

Trinidad has certainly found its way into the rooms in Birmingham – with luscious paintings saturated with the greens and blues of the sea. He admits that he came away with a "certain sense of colour", but says that he needs a distance from things. "I don't know if I could have made these in Trinidad."

Painting is a struggle, he admits; first there is an idea – a starting point, an image – but "putting that idea into action you realise how hard that is and it does not always go well". It is, he says, like "a conversation in a way; you put something down and it brings up something else."

Recently something new has come into Anderson's paintings. He says "the new works are like how Constable would have painted them". But it is not just the subject matter – which is more overtly European – but the colour and an even more fluid application. It is as if he has come to terms with the verdant greenness of his adopted world and in some ways is leaving the blueness of the Caribbean behind in a memory bank.

He is also exploring surface: "I have discovered the work is more like Frank Auerbach". Anderson often paints in series. "The first is clumsy, the second will have it and the third can be this as well as that." He has been exploring scale as well, with a group of small works on board. He says that the small paintings have replaced drawing for him.

Anderson says he questions why people make paintings, but when I ask if he does other things he replies "this is my practice, I paint – and I try to do other things but I always come back to

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painting... I find painting a fascinating thing and a constant battle. It's hard enough to be an artist."