

MICHAEL CHAPLIN

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WATER-COLOUR  
ARTISTS

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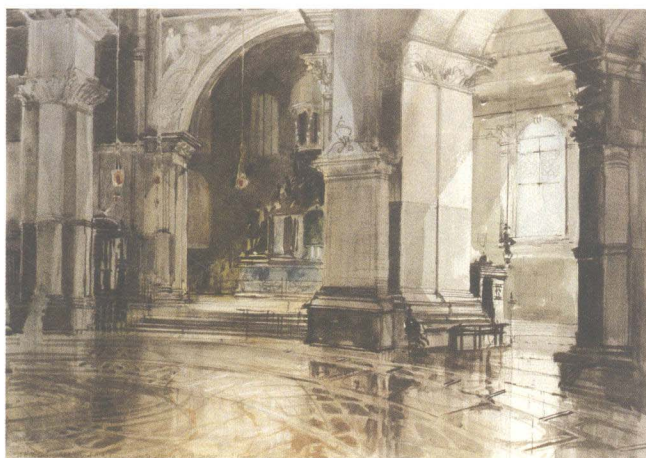
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# BIOGRAPHY

## 画家简历

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1943 年      | 生于英格兰的圣尼奥斯市<br>Born at St Neots, England  |
| 1961-1963 年 | 在沃特福德学习平面设计<br>Studied Graphic Design, Watford  |
| 1966-1967 年 | 在布赖顿艺术学院研究生班学习版画制作<br>Post Graduate printmaking, Brighton College of Art  |
| 1968 年      | 当选为皇家画家——版画家协会非正式会员，后来又担任该协会的副主席。<br>Elected as an Associate of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers and subsequently served as Vice President                                      |
| 1968-1988 年 | 业余时间，在许多艺术学校举行版画讲座，其中最重要的是在金斯顿艺术学院版画系担任版画课的辅导教师<br>Part time lecturing in printmaking at many art schools, notably as course tutor in printmaking department at Kingston College of Art |
| 1988 年      | 专心从事职业水彩画创作<br>Career concentrates on watercolour painting  |
| 1993 年      | 在伦敦当选为皇家水彩画协会的非正式会员<br>Elected Associate Royal Watercolour Society, London  |
| 1997 年      | 在伦敦当选为皇家水彩画协会的正式会员<br>Elected Full Member Royal Watercolour Society, London   |
| 1999 年      | 接受多家电视采访并为艺术杂志撰文<br>Television appearances and writing for arts publications  |

# 创作体验

CREATIVE EXPERIENCE

“一个人可以把一切关于艺术的问题解释得头头是道，但是对于那微乎其微而又举足轻重的关键点，他却无能为力。”

——乔治斯·布拉克

每一次愉快的旅行，总会有出人预料的收获，把人引向意想不到的胜境。做一名艺术家，就是经历这样一种旅行。那种兴奋和激动，经常是在对那“微乎其微而又举足轻重的关键点”——对于这关键点，就连大画家乔治斯·布拉克也无从解释——的惊鸿一瞥的一刹那油然而生的。也许这就是艺术和手工艺之间的分水岭？

亲爱的读者，能否让我带上几幅画，带你踏上一次旅行？途中，我会简要地把创作这些画的过程中的欢乐和挫折向你轻轻诉说。

不过，我还是别太匆忙，先三言两语地做个自我介绍吧。我生于第二次世界大战接近尾声之时，童年是在节衣缩食的简朴生活中度过的（像成千上万的同龄人一样），不过这种生活对健康倒也没害处。对于那时的生活，我还保留着零零星星的记忆。战争期间，我们住在祖母的房子里，房子正朝向赫赫有名的北方大路。这所房子也是我出生的地方。

对于一个还不谙世事的小毛孩儿来说，这条大路的名字恰恰暗示着旅行和激动。它是从大不列颠北部工业区——当时正是这一地区为英国提供了战争的物质保障——通向与欧洲遥遥相望的海港的主动脉。

每当夜幕降临，尤其是在为德国入侵法国备战时期，相互掩护的运货卡车昼夜不停地从祖母家门前驶过。我最早的记忆是被照亮的卧室窗户的影子，映在床对面的墙上，像一只螃蟹在不慌不忙地爬行。直到今天，我对光线和移动的影子，对戏剧性的气氛，对前面茫然的目的地所引起的那种兴奋和激动，仍然痴迷不已。冬日，低矮的阳光穿过古色古香的门窗斜照进来，营造出一种我无法言传（也不想言传）的奇妙的舞台效果。也许，那个在暗淡的光线中睁大双眼的孩子同现在的我一样，生来就对那些视觉性强的东西反应敏感，尽情享受那种柔和的异国情调。

我记的当时祖母有一幅画。那幅画很小，镶在一个椭圆形的相框里，挂得不高不矮，正好让我那么大的孩子看得一清二楚。那是一幅很简单的画，画的是俯瞰一座被郁郁葱葱的绿树围绕的小岛的景色。对我来说，这是我所能想象出的最奇异的地方。画面上没有人物，也无从感知是一天中的哪个时刻，或哪个世纪。对一个孩子来说，短短的的一个钟头可能意味着他的终生。透过相框，凝视着这幅画，我感到了它所存在的时空。那个时候，我并没有认识到，由于某一艺术家的参与，才会有这幅使我遁入想象的世界的画。当然，从那时起，这幅画一直保存在我的心灵中。有生以来第一次，但绝对不是最后一次，我对于绘画的魔力，有了惊鸿一瞥。所以我们说，孩子们实际上精通艺术，他们从来不胡乱质疑或自以为是。在信手画来时，也没有义务恪守过去的传统或将来的潮流。他们只是陶醉在此时此刻创造的快乐之中——这是一种愉快的绘画方式。

对任何的艺术来说，既要保持思想的新鲜、自然、有洞察力，同时又讲究技术性细节，自始至终是一个进退两难的困境。我觉得，这就是为什么水彩画对我来说是一种理想的颜料。我下笔很快，一旦思想定

形，极少更改一笔一划。通常我都尽量一气呵成。行笔如流水，笔触清淡，使自己充满创作水彩画所特有的兴奋感和直接的快感。我喜欢透明的颜色所具有的那种简单明晰的风格。要是画家由于心意不决或造诣欠缺，而不得不对局部画面做修改，那么这种韵味会轻易被破坏掉。

这引我直接谈到我的绘画生涯。我凭直觉作画，画得还不错，但我必须在水彩画上下苦功。对我来说，绘画（这里既包括色彩也包括色调研究）是开启理解主题的钥匙。它还使我得以理解自己的秉性，探索不同的颜料。我觉得，当这三大要素——主题、对颜料的感觉、我的秉性——之间达到一种平衡时，我的画就成功了。绘画和观察没有捷径可走。由于年轻人的自高自大，在我们第一次学着画裸体画时，我暗暗嘲笑导师要人物摆两天姿势的建议。我自以为这是在荒唐地浪费时间，直到我在画纸上哆哆嗦嗦地画下第一笔，我才意识到毕生的精力也远远不够。

20世纪60年代的英国，艺术院校仍然通过绘画常规和画技娴熟的老师来引导学生掌握绘画的基本技巧和素材，对于这种训练我一直感激不尽。绘画如一日三餐，创作、透视和技巧绘画则是添加的零食。对于色彩的丰富性的入门性简介则好像充当了糖果。我津津有味地品尝着美食，从来没有肠胃不适之感，令我激动不已。从学校到伦敦只需30分钟。伦敦的画廊里，古典风格、抽象表现主义或印象主义定期举行的丰盛的大餐，导致了鲁莽的嗜食过度。学生生活结束了，它的后遗症却继续存在。

当时，很多我的同龄人离开学校后，便在英国广播公司工作(BBC)。我踏入成人社会后第一次工作经历，也是在BBC，但却不是我的同学们所在的BBC。英国香蕉公司(BBC)雇佣我作劳力和水果包装工人。在那三个月里，我一边干活，一边躲避那些浑身发亮、一身绿袍、在树丛中蹦来蹦去的青蛙和带毒的蜘蛛，它们倒是在牙买加温暖舒适的树根里过得逍遥自在。碰上我这么一个擅长绘画却偏偏更喜欢把它们临时搭置起来的窝拆个一塌糊涂的人，一定好生纳闷。后来，由于我教跟我一块干活的包装工如何用粉红和蓝色的包装纸来装点圣诞树，妨碍了工作，因而被解雇，我的这份工作也就到此为止。

教学一直是我生活中很重要的一部分（即使只是为了逃避终生作香蕉包装工这样一种生活）。英国的艺术学校体系有一大优点，即：学生们通过向具有形形色色的艺术技巧和观点的客座职业艺术家而从中受到教育。在七八十年代，我就定期访问很多学院，教授版画课。

我对绘画的热爱使我重新对蚀刻画迸发出兴趣，我是在艺术学校时才首次发现有这么一门艺术的。蚀刻画特别要求绘画技巧。无数个日日夜夜，我用针穿过蜡制的防蚀层再刻到铜板上，这些训练我更清晰地理解点、线和色调区域之间关系的能力——这是一种严格按规矩办事的从事艺术的方法，对于经常不得不下笔迅捷而又眼光敏锐的水彩画家来说，真是一种理想的训练。

后来我又跟水果打交道了。不过，这次我提升为卡车司机和送货工人。我从早上5点开始在布赖顿（南部的一个海滨小镇，以拥有大都市般的人口和精美的建筑风格而闻名）的水果市场干活，挣的薪水使我顺利通过了关于版画的一门研究生课程。我的伙伴、不久成为我妻子的盖伊当时正在大学里拿教学学位，我跟随她来到了布赖顿。当时是60年代后

期。美国正在进行越南战争。年轻人所代表的文化占统治地位，令国家艺术学校的体系进入一个变化时期。靠服用幻觉剂而创作的艺术和通俗艺术已经涌现。我对这一切感到很不舒服，但仍竭力保护着自己发现的新技巧。一位开明的版画制作者介绍我加入伦敦的皇家画家——版画家学会。递交了一份代表作选辑后，我于1968年被正式地（而且对一个相对说来还相当年轻的人来说，这颇令人惊讶）选为非正式会员。我第一次得以有机会在伦敦与一群艺术家——那时在我眼里他们还是遥不可及的英雄——并列展出我的作品。从此，这些男男女女的艺术家的职业上的同代人，并且更重要的是，成为我的朋友——直到今天他们当中很多人还是如此。后来，我成为学会的副会长。

1967年冬天一个大雪纷飞的日子，我和盖伊结婚了。那时我们都（又一次）结束了一段训练，于是回内地找工作。盖伊成了一名成功的艺术教师（直到今天仍然如此），我则在梅德斯通艺术学院找到了一份工作。

在七八十年代，版画艺术在艺术市场上越来越受欢迎。由伦敦的出版商出版的蚀刻画热销全世界。我作为蚀刻画家的名气也在稳步上升——成功地在伦敦举办了一次个人画展之后，《每日电讯报》的艺术评论家称我是“当今英国最有才华的版画家之一”。然而，这种成功本身也带来了问题。我开始在出版社里花费大量时间，印刷自己的作品，处理由此而来的单调乏味、千篇一律的日常事务，结果我创作的新作品比我精力旺盛的时候少了。我一直酷爱水彩画，90年代初期（随着版画市场的普遍衰落），对我来说似乎是集中精力作画的最佳时机。1993年，我被选为伦敦皇家水彩画协会的会员。创建于1804年的这一享有盛誉的协会，是英国水彩画之家。它保护和尊崇水彩画的传统，同时还鼓励崭露头角的、令人鼓舞的年轻画家。我们现在满怀信心地踏入一个新千年，意识到水彩已经被人们承认是一种富有表现力的颜料，与其他所有主要的绘画技巧一样享有平等的地位。然而，以前对它的评价并不总是如此。

在18和19世纪，人们认为，水彩是一种仅仅适合于初级素描和地形测绘研究的颜料。它轻巧、便于携带、干得快，许多贵族阶层的人在他们的“豪华的欧洲之旅”中，会雇用一位水彩“制图员”（注意：不是水彩画家）一路陪同，充当他们旅行用的照相机。直到拿破仑战争在整个欧洲大陆爆发，从而中断了这种欧洲之旅之后，英国的艺术家才开始研究他们自己的乡村，作为汲取灵感的源泉；并且此时他们才充分意识到水彩作为一种颜料的潜力：即水彩是一种似乎能够完全符合国民性情的颜料。为了我的创作，我的妻子盖伊、我自己以及我们的两个孩子尼克和布里奥尼经常到欧洲城市观光，那些早期的观光者和画家常常使我深思。

尤其是威尼斯这一城市，一直是我灵感的源泉（就像对其他很多人一样）。光线与色彩时而微妙，时而炫目，无时无刻不带给我上面所谈到的那些惊喜。

1999年对我是一个崭新的起点。国内一家主要的电视公司找到我，邀请我在一个旨在鼓励业余画家的节目中担任专职艺术评论员。整个夏天，我们跑遍整个英国，以“水彩画的挑战”为主题，会见了各种能力层次的画家，并在某些最受欢迎的地区作画。这一节目取得了巨大成功。2000年整个秋季，新的系列将在每日的节目中播出。

同时，我得引导大家来欣赏我在本文开头提到的那些画，希望大家喜欢。

**"One can explain everything about art except the bit that matters"**

——Georges Braque

All good journeys spring surprises and lead to unexpected places. Being an

artist is such a journey. Often the excitement is contained in little glimpses of that 'bit of art' which the painter Georges Braque couldn't explain – a dividing line between art and craft perhaps?

May I take you on a journey with some of my paintings and briefly explain some of the joys and some of the difficulties involved in creating them?

Firstly though, a little about myself. I was born towards the end of World War II and my early childhood was spent (along with millions other young children of that generation) in a period of 'healthy' austerity. Fragments of memory persist. We lived during the war years with my grandmother in her house, facing the Great North Road. The house where I was born.

The very name of the road suggested journeys and excitement to a young child. It was the main arterial road from the industrial North of Britain feeding the war effort towards the sea ports facing Europe.

At nights and particularly during the preparation for the invasion of France lorries in convoy were constantly passing the house and my earliest memory is of the lighted shape of my bedroom window constantly moving crablike and unhurriedly across the wall opposite my bed. I still have this preoccupation with light and moving shadows, of dramatic tone and excitement of unknown destinations. The theatricality of a low winter light falling slantwise across classical facades moves me in a way which I can't (and don't want to) explain. Perhaps that child in the dark with open eyes is much the same as the man I am now, born to react to things visual and to enjoy a gentle exoticism.

My grandmother had one painting that I remember. Small, in an oval frame it hung just above easy viewing height for a small child. It was a simple picture looking down to an island shore densely fringed with trees. It was for me the most exotic place imaginable. It contained no people, there was no sense of any particular time of day or era. To a child an hour can be a lifetime. I could look past the frame into the picture and feel time and space. I did not at the time consider that an artist must have been involved in providing me with this escape into imagination. Surely the painting had always hung in my mind's eye. For the first time in my life but definitely not the last I felt the 'bit' of the magic of painting. It's why children are so good at art. They don't question or presume, they have no duty owed to past or future whilst painting. They enjoy the moment of creation – a joyful way to paint.

It is the constant dilemma for any artist to keep an idea fresh, spontaneous and perceptive whilst at the same time having to get involved with technicalities. I think it is why watercolour painting is the ideal medium for me. I paint fast and rarely change any marks once I have committed myself. I usually try to complete a painting in one sitting. Working fast and with a light touch provides me with that excitement and immediacy so typical of watercolour painting. I love the luminous quality of transparent colour, so easily lost if one has to rework areas of the painting through indecision or lack of information.

Which leads us directly to drawing. I draw well and instinctively but I have to work quite hard at colour. Drawing (and here I include colour and tonal studies) for me is a key which unlocks understanding about subject matter. It also allows me to understand my temperament and to explore different media. I feel that my paintings are successful when there is balance between these three things—subject matter, a feeling for the medium and temperament. There are no short cuts to drawing and observation. The arrogance of youth led me to ridicule in my mind my tutor's suggestion of a two day pose for our first introduction to nude life drawing. I thought this a ridiculously extravagant amount of time until I touched the paper with my first tentative marks and realized that a lifetime is not enough.

Art schools in Britain during the 1960s still had the common sense and

the skilled teachers to introduce their students to basic techniques and materials, a training for which I have always been grateful. In a way it was a continuation of the healthy diet I mentioned previously. Drawing was the daily meal with side snacks of composition, perspective and technical drawing. And for sweet an introduction to the richness of colour. I feasted and was never sick. I felt excited. London was 30 minutes away and the regular banquets of the Antique or Abstract Expressionism or impressionism in the galleries led to a heady surfeit. Student life came to an end and the hangover took its place.

Many of my contemporaries left college for employment with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). My first experience of the grown up world of work was also with the BBC but not in the company of my student colleagues. The British Banana Company employed me as a labourer and fruit packer. Three months were spent avoiding the bright green tree frogs and poisonous spiders which travelled in the warm comfort of wrapped stems from Jamaica. They were obviously confused to be confronted with someone who drew quite well but who instead seemed more intent on dismembering their temporary home. The job lasted until I was dismissed for perverting the course of production by teaching fellow packers how to make Christmas decoration from the pink and blue tissue wrapping paper.

Teaching has always been an important part of my life (even if only as a way of avoiding a lifetime as a banana packer). It is a strength of the British art school system that students are taught by visiting professional artists of a variety of skills and persuasions and during the 1970s and 80s I regularly visited many colleges to teach printmaking.

My love of drawing led me back to etching, first discovered at art school. It is a technique particularly demanding of drawing skills. Hours spend needling through a wax ground onto a copper plate trained my eye to see relationships between points, lines and areas of tone very clearly—a very disciplined approach to art which was an ideal training for the watercolourist who often has to work both fast and perceptively at the same time.

Fruit again! But this time promoted to lorry driver and delivery man. Working in the fruit market in Brighton (a south coast town noted for its cosmopolitan population and fine architecture) from 5 o'clock in the morning paid for my passage through a post-graduate course in printmaking. Gay my partner and soon to be wife was undertaking a teaching degree at the University and I had followed her to Brighton. It was the late 60s. America was in Vietnam. Youth culture ruled. And the art school system country-wide was entering a period of change. Psychedelic and pop art were to the fore. I felt quite uncomfortable with but protective of my new found skills. An enlightened head of Printmaking introduced me to the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers in London and on submitting a portfolio I was duly (and surprisingly for one relatively youthful) elected as an Associate in 1968. It was my first opportunity to exhibit in London amongst artists who until that point had been distant heroes. These men and women became my professional contemporaries and more importantly my friends – many of them to this day. I later became Vice President of the Society.

Gay and I had married in the snow in the winter of 1967 and now both having finished (once again) our training we moved inland to find work, Gay as the successful art teacher which she still is and I to a job at Maidstone College of Art.

The 1970s and 80s saw a rise in the popularity of printmaking in the art market. Editions of etchings were selling well worldwide through London publishers and I steadily gained a reputation as an etcher – "one of the most gifted printmakers at work in Britain today" to quote the art critic of the Daily Telegraph following a successful one – man London exhibition. However, this success contained its own problems. I was spending a large amount of time at the press carrying out the monotonous and routine business of printing my own editions and consequently producing less new work than

was healthy. I had always loved watercolour and the early 1990s (with a general falling off of the print market) seemed the right time for me to concentrate on the medium. In 1993 I was elected a Member of the Royal Watercolour Society in London. This prestigious society founded in 1804 is the home of British watercolour painting. It protects and honours a tradition whilst encouraging new and exciting young painters. We confidently enter the new millennium knowing that watercolour painting is recognized as an expressive medium on a par with the all the other major painting techniques. This was not always so.

The 18th and 19th century view was of a medium only suited to initial sketches or topographical studies. It was light, portable, dried fast and many members of the aristocracy on their "Grand Tour" of Europe would employ a watercolour draughtsman (note not watercolour painter) to accompany them to be their "camera" for the trip. It was not until the Napoleonic Wars throughout the continent brought this travelling to a halt that British artists started to explore their own countryside as a source of inspiration and realized the full potential of the medium as one which seems to entirely suit the national temperament. My wife Gay and I and our two children Nick and Briony often travel to European cities for me to work and I often give a thought to those earlier travellers and painters.

Venice particularly has been a source of inspiration to me (as for many others). The light and colour are subtle and strident by turn and there are always the surprises which I first talked about.

1999 saw a new departure for me when I was approached by one of the major television companies to be the professional art expert in a programme aimed at encouraging amateur painters. We toured Britain throughout the summer with "Watercolour Challenge" meeting with painters of all ability levels and painting in some of the country's best loved areas. The programme was hugely successful and the new series will be broadcast daily throughout the Autumn of 2000.

Meanwhile I must introduce you to the paintings which I mentioned at the beginning. I hope you enjoy them.





意大利的阿尔匹斯山 / Italian Alps

460 × 600mm 1996



考底尼奥的酒厂——西班牙 / Cordonieu Distillery - Spain

510 × 660mm 1996



鱼市场——威尼斯 / Fish Market - Venice

460 × 660mm 1996



渡口——威尼斯 / Traghetto - Venice  
460 × 600mm 1996



餐 厅/Dining Room  
480 × 660mm 1997



圣母玛利亚教堂巡礼——威尼斯（内景）/Santa Maria della Salute - Venice (interior)

480 × 660mm 1997



清晨——威尼斯 / Early Morning - Venice  
460 × 600mm 1997



下沉的池塘 / Sunken Pond

460 × 600mm 1997