

— AN ABUNDANCE OF —  
*Inspiration*  
DAISY SIMS HILDITCH  
BY SARA BECK



SUMMER MORNING CLOUDSCAPE, BRANCASTER BEACH - 40 X 40 - OIL ON PANEL





GOLDEN EVENING CONTRE JOUR, STEAMBOAT ON LAKE THUN - OIL ON PANEL

**D**aisy Sims Hilditch cannot help but see potential subjects everywhere she goes. “It could be an intimate corner of a room where a dash of sunlight on a wall makes an interesting pattern, or a larger scene of a mountain cafe,” she says. “I get inspired by light and everyday life, so my subject choices are endless. I love looking at arrangements of shapes and colour.” In her mind, the experience of painting a particular scene seems very much like telling a story as novel events unfold along the way. Daisy shares her technique of continually editing art pieces while painting, as nature is never static and presents her with ever changing conditions to acclimate to and obstacles to overcome. “Usually, the whole way through I am excited and in a state of flow,” she says. “I love being connected to nature, and for me every scene is unique, so every painting reveals different challenges. It is up to me to adapt to each situation.” Because of this, she changes her method from painting to painting rather than being committed to a predetermined structure or order. “I suppose the most important thing for me is to feel inspired,” she reflects, adding that only when this requirement is met can she indeed be in harmony with her art. Travel is also a major source of inspiration for Hilditch, and finds it to be energizing to visit unfamiliar places. “I recently visited America for the first time and stayed with a friend in Maine,” she reminisces. “I remember the feeling of seeing and painting somewhere new. It was just so fantastic, and I wanted to paint every single day. I came back with a big body of work, and the paintings definitely showed my love of the new landscape, the lovely people that I met, and my whole experience of visiting. It all came out in those paintings.”

Daisy Hilditch studied art in Florence, where she focused heavily on drawing, proportion, and working from the live model, all with the goal of expanding her technical skill set. “I suppose when I was twenty, I did not quite appreciate the importance of drawing casts, as I just wanted to be outside or painting in my own way, having had a portrait of my grandpa exhibited in the Saatchi Gallery at eighteen with no formal training. I was also selling my landscapes in a Cornish gallery, and I did not want to paint in the same way as everyone else at the atelier. So, there was always a big part of me that battled against that in my early twenties,” she discloses. During her time in Florence, she learned the importance of painting from life as opposed to photographs. Charles Cecil, her instructor, taught the Boston School ideology: a way of seeing that allows the artist to render light and color as the eye takes in information rather than in a piecemeal fashion, emphasizing the hierarchy of focus and light. “The eye can only focus on one thing at a time, so the painting has to be created with this in mind, choosing a focal point and painting areas further away from the focal point softer and in relation to it. Harder edges and stronger contrasts in tone will draw attention,” she explains.

Of all the changing conditions Hilditch encounters while painting from life, light remains at the forefront as a subject that both fascinates and drives this artist. “Light is at the core of my practice,” she says, “and capturing the beauty of nature in different lighting conditions is endlessly inspiring to me. Nature is never the same at any given time of day, and the changing





LATE SUMMER EVENING, VIEW FROM GLASTONBURY TOR - 61X61 - OIL ON PANEL

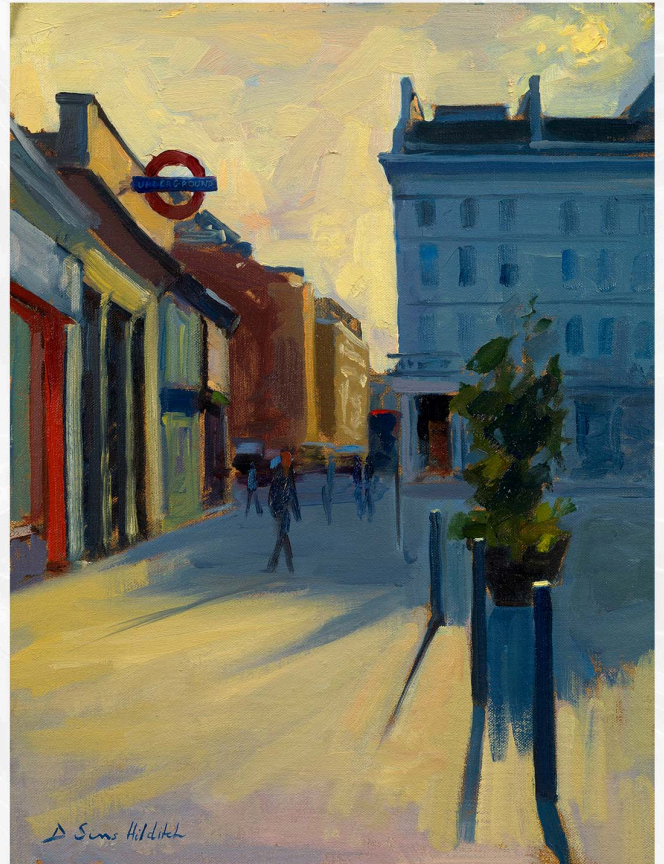
seasons reveal the landscape in a whole new way." Accurately depicting these nuanced lighting conditions can be difficult, but there are many tried and true techniques she can rely on to guide her while she works. "Each subject reveals ways in which I am able to capture the light and feeling of the place. Sometimes I lean more into color, playing with different colors against each other to create a painting which sings and represents not only the light but the emotion that I had when capturing it," she notes. Hilditch's emphasis on this point is expressed before addressing the importance of values. Daisy explains how she often decides to key the painting with the darkest

and lightest elements at the beginning, then work in between, resulting in what she refers to as her "tonal truth." In other instances, she chooses to key the sky and craft everything else in relation to it. "I tend to let the subject speak to me," she says. "I am comparing every tone to the whole, and I am considering things like atmospheric perspective. Using different brushwork for distance and foreground also helps to create a sense of light and space." She offers the example of noticing the sky's subtle color differences and how it affects the landscape as a whole, in addition, it is





FRESH SNOW AND THE YELLOW HOUSE IN SILS-MARIA  
- 40X50 - OIL ON PANEL



SUMMER EVENING CONTRE-JOUR, LONG SHADOWS, SOUTH  
KENSINGTON STATION - 41X30.5 - OIL ON PANEL



PEONIES AT ROSSETTI - 40X50 - OIL ON PANEL



SILVER ON THE BREAKFAST TABLE, PALAZZO ON THE GRAND CANAL  
AT SAN STAE - 50X60 - OIL ON PANEL



important for her to relay the entire image accurately, a feature she would not be able to do if only looking at pieces of it in isolation.

Hilditch grew up in the English countryside, and her family loved the outdoors. She spent almost all her time outside when she was not in school, whether it was going for walks with her siblings or sea sailing, an experience that instilled a love of water in her from a young age. "We used to go out on the boats in all weather, and I learned to love stormy seas on Cornwall as well as the glistening light on the water," she recalls. "I love adventure, and therefore plein air painting and the challenges it presents. I love going out with my kit not knowing what to expect and finding subjects along the coastline or on mountaintops presenting different lighting conditions fills me with excitement." In addition to being outdoorsy, her family was also artistic, with both her parents being designers and her great-great grandfather having been a

Royal Academician with paintings in the Tate Britain. "I grew up seeing his paintings at my Granny's house," she remembers. "He was a fantastic landscape and pastoral scene painter. He trained at the Royal Academy, and it has been interesting for me to see the plein air landscapes that he did whilst he lived in Wales and France with his large family." Hilditch has visited her relatives in Wales who own many of his drawings and paintings, including some of the studies he completed for his larger Royal Academy paintings. She expresses that despite the Academy pieces' impressive grandeur, she felt more drawn to his studies of horses, cows, his children, and the local scenery. "I can see where I get my love for painting skies from. He was very good at clouds, and my Granny always comments that we have a similar way of capturing them. It seems that I have inherited his love for nature and capturing the landscape," she says.

Daisy Sims Hilditch's grandmother, whose mother



DECEMBER AFTERNOON LIGHT, BASILICA DI SAN PIETRO - 25X30 - OIL ON PANEL





GOLDEN SUMMER EVENING AT BURNHAM OVERLY STAITHE - 60X70 - OIL ON LINEN



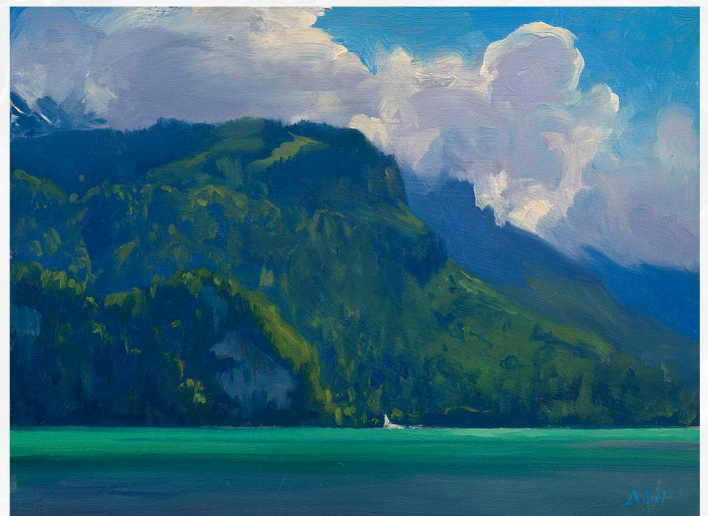
SKIING HOME, SALASTRAINS - 30X40 - OIL ON PANEL



TWILIGHT AT ISELTWALD, LAKE BRIENZ - 30X50 - OIL ON LINEN



THE WYLDE VALLEY, SPRING - 20X25 - OIL ON LINEN



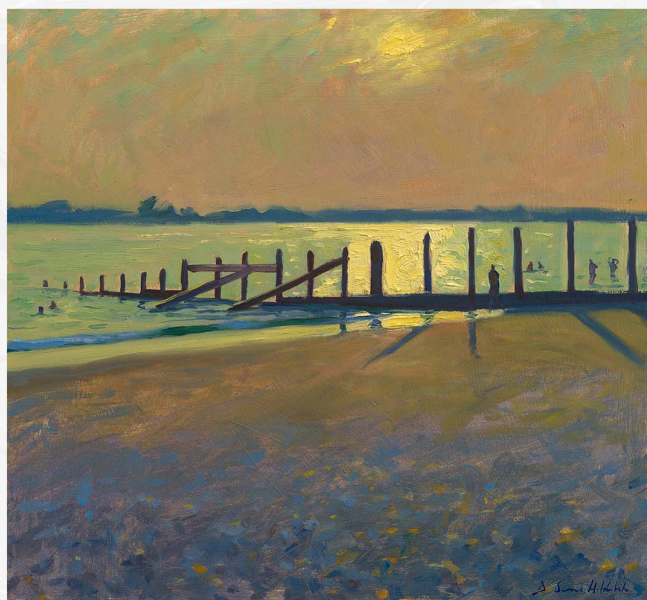
LIGHT STRIP, LAKE BRIENZ - 23X30.5 - OIL ON PANEL



was also an artist, was one of her earliest supporters. When Daisy would stay at her home, her grandmother would always bring out the paints or take her to galleries and museums. "I was very fortunate to be exposed to art from an early age," she says, "which certainly made me want to pursue this career." Now, she views her painting practice as so intertwined with her daily life that she hardly regards the two as separate. "I paint wherever I go, and when I am not painting, I am usually thinking about it!" she remarks. She notes that she recognizes the importance of taking breaks yet usually finds it difficult to go more than a day or two without creating art. In fact, it is often a challenge for her to decide when to put the brushes down; but intuitively Daisy realizes when the painting is complete — when that moment has arrived to sufficiently communicate the emotions to the subject that first drew her in — that is a sign to stop. "It is when I have captured the essence, I suppose. I tend to prefer not to overwork paintings, and I like to see the freshness of strokes. Light changes quickly, so the paintbrushes have to move quickly, and I do like seeing vitality and energy in the mark making, which is usually the result of working against the clock as light changes," she explains. This also applies to her portraiture. Hilditch aims to represent complex human emotions in a way that stays true to her subject. "I feel that painting landscapes informs my portraiture, because I have become more sensitive to color," she says. "I do feel that as long as you paint what you love, as long as you are happy painting, then there will be someone who loves what you do. It seems that if I love the process of painting, then others find joy in it, too. For me, this is the basis of all paintings, whatever the subject matter."



VINEYARDS ABOVE LAC LEMMAN, MORNING LIGHT  
- 30X40 - OIL ON PANEL



ON THE ROAD TO GHOST RANCH - OIL ON LINEN - 16X20



WILD FLOWERS AND FARM TRACK TOWARDS THE WELLHORN,  
MORNING SUMMER LIGHT - 60X70 - OIL ON LINEN