



MASTERCLASS

Glastonbury tales

Peter Brown recounts how he coped with the mud and the crowds as he painted on the spot during last year's Glastonbury Festival

In June 2016 I was given a ticket to Glastonbury Festival so that I could paint there. I set off from Bath at 9am on the Wednesday with a van full of teenage lads and arrived after a three-and-a-half-hour grid-locked journey. The lads immediately and understandably headed off.

I found a pitch by a tree in Big Ground, overlooking the Pyramid stage. I thought it was a bit squashed but two hours later after sorting the lads for cash, I realised I had no understanding of what squashed was – they'll put a tent anywhere!

They say it was the muddiest year on

record. With mud it is just a question of time before you learn to accept it, you realise you cannot walk around it, that walking quickly or lightly makes no difference so you simply succumb to its existence and join everyone else slopping and squelching through it, splatting all those around you as they

◀ Day1, Wednesday June 22, 2016
Sun on Glastonbury Mud, towards Leftfield, oil on board, 12×10in (30.5×25.5cm).

Five hours after arriving I had started my first painting. I worked as the sun came and went, sparkling on the sloppy mud. Some lads were really keen to pose and I got one of them squatting, looking at his phone – his two mates standing nearby. They were so pleased and any nerves I had of painting in this new environment were gone. The problem with crowds is that you instinctively try to paint every figure, which is impossible, so I try to look at the mass in the distance and ask myself: 'What does it look like?' Very often I answer it with a single mid-tone and some speckles of colour



do you. As someone who looks out the window at stair rods of rain and says 'good weather for painting' I was a pig in the proverbial.

Painting essentials

The van was parked a mile or two away so I carried as much as I could on a flying fox (a four-wheeled trolley that you pull) that a friend lent me. It was brilliant and I don't know how I would have managed without it. My materials consisted of 2mm primed and grounded boards, from 6×12in to 12×16in and 8×24in; a full box easel, oil paints and Roberson's glaze medium for quick drying.

I painted from 2pm on the Wednesday to midday on the Saturday. My subject was really mud. I made myself walk what I thought was the entire site first to get an idea of what was there. It is vast and amazing – the bars, the stages, the stalls, the sculptures...it was awesome.

▲ Day 2, Thursday June 23, 2016, 8.30am to 2.30pm

Big Puddle towards Pyramid Stage, oil on board, 12×16in (30.5×40.5cm).

I woke at 7am after a fantastic sleep, walked to the van for the phone charger and found a spot by 8.30am beside some bins with a view of a whopping puddle – the sort you can't resist wading through for fun and photos!

'You're painting my flood – this is my market,' said a remarkably unstressed woman who seemed to be juggling a thousand balls on her phone. The conversation somehow moved to Cuba, which I said I'd love to paint. 'I have a house there,' she said before her phone called her away to her next problem, and before I could broker a deal to use it for painting!

▼ Day 3, Friday June 24, 7– 9.15pm
Evening, The Park, oil on board, 8×24in (20.5×61cm).

When the sun was out it sparkled on the plastic corrugated roofing of the round shelter below and lit up the ribbon tower in coloured flashes. A young lady asked if she could watch; I painted and chatted to her for an hour or so. She was then replaced by a group of three or four who watched intently for the second hour before I schlepped back to the tent.

Ollie (my eldest son) phoned and I met him, Theo and Ben at the Avalon café where they were watching the end of an act. We wandered, I bought Ollie a Mexican wrap, he smoked a roll-up (which I decided to let go), we found a bar, had a beer, danced a bit and I returned to my tent at 1am



MASTERCLASS



▲ *Fixing the Coat*, oil on board, 10×8in (30.5×20.5cm).

I set up for my last painting beside the Yeo Valley stall and witnessed the morning crowds build for the last time from my easel. I had decided to spend the rest of the festival with my daughter. Painting is fantastic but the time with Hattie was far more valuable. We had an amazing time



Peter Brown

is a member of the New English Art Club, the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, the Pastel Society and Bath Society of Artists and has won many awards. He is represented by Messums, London, www.messums.com. For details of Pete's books and DVDs, see his website: www.peterbrownneac.com

Peter Brown will be hosting a The Artist painting holiday in Havana, Cuba, in February/March 2018. Look out for details in forthcoming issues.

▼ Friday, June 24, 12–2pm

Flowers in her Hair after James, Other Stage, oil on board, 6×12in (15×30.5cm).

I set up by a poster that the Glasto Press had just put up, rallying the Glastonbury crowd after the referendum result. I began painting, inspired by the flags and crowd, enjoying the music. The sun came out and I could not resist putting in a girl in with flowers in her hair, who could have come straight from the 1960s. Her boyfriend turned up and onlookers tried to goad him into buying it for her. Working quickly, whether deliberately or instinctively, I tend to leave a fair amount of ground showing as it answers a lot of questions in terms of colour and tone. Here the decimated grass above the shadow is simply left as ground. I used it as a starting point