

Alistair Crawford
Landscape Capriccios
the landscape of the mind

From the very start, as a boy at school, I have been interested in drawing places, both landscape and architecture, the *Spirit of Place*. This interest has also taken me on several travels to foreign lands. But I noticed, early on, that no matter how far you travel you can only ever find yourself; 'out there,' more often than not, is really 'in here.' I did, however, try to portray the essence of places, in that 'Italy' does not look like 'Wales', although this concept is rare in the history or art (Whistler is the exception). In 2000 I returned to oil painting which I had abandoned in 1964 at the end of my second year at art school when I opted to specialise in textile design, drawing and printmaking. In 2000 I also let go (momentarily) of my long standing love affair with paper (drawings, paintings, prints, photographs). It had also registered sharply when Kyffin Williams said that you should only paint what you know, really know, not foreign fields, foreign subjects. On my return to oil painting I concentrated on a return, after an absence of a few years, to a depiction of the Welsh landscape. I ended up painting what exists outside my back and front doors at Brynawel, thus the *Windy Hill* and *Horizon* series. I always feel that it is my role to allow a picture to become what it wants to be. I noticed that some did not want to fit into the specified Welsh motif I was demanding but I fought them into submission. Then I noticed that what was happening in my brain was demanding more attention. While it was always the case that, in order to distil the *essence* of a place, my picture could well end up a *capriccio*, a composite, as with Richard Wilson. Some of my 'Wales' were now looking remarkably like my early 'Scotland.' Thus, post 2000, this current journey in the landscape, that is, *my landscape*, has become a much more emotional affair, where feeling, mood, mystery, is dictating much more than the need to be accurate about the details of 'place'. 'Landscape' has become a *metaphor*, for living; you may be looking at a specific place, or you may not, it is no longer important. Landscape, after all, is a human construct. Since I had spent so many of my years denying my homeland, my Spartan, wind swept, north-east of Scotland, after I fell in love with the sensuous Mediterranean south on that first visit to Italy in 1970, it certainly surprised me to have this recent visit from Casper David Friedrich and the gothic north. Isn't life very strange?