

# A COMMON BEAUTY



ANN MARTIN



# A COMMON BEAUTY

We never tire of good stories about life. I have always tried to learn those stories directly from people or from nature, feeling the world thrum with life around me. Being an artist is the result of thousands of hours spent in open-minded looking at, and reflecting about, what is going on.

I was born in the American Midwest. A plain speaking culture supports my way of seeing: hard working, making do. It is a view that requires a blank sheet and a tool to mark it.

I yearn to understand life. I want to know where I am, what surrounds me and what is within me. To stay within the present and learn what is there, I try to disengage with whatever I had expected. There are times when I am unable for the task and give up because my prejudices are too strong. When I am able to let circumstances be my guide, I and my art become something new. Simple things are amazing and in turn lead me to discover a more elegant and beautiful reality than the one I had supposed.

To understand how things are is to realize that I am deeply embedded in other people's lives. Alone I am not enough. To survive and to sense the breadth of human possibility, I need my society. Reciprocally, I want to give something from me to others: this is the engine of my art.

Small groups within the larger society give me the opportunity to do this. Their environment becomes my studio, the edges of my

paper act as their stage. I become part of the location, learning the life while watching for repetitions and surprises.

Although relationships between people dominate the scene, the paintings are filled with details that pervade the locale: defiant cigarettes, casual litter, decorative glitz and partial glimpses of the exterior world. For people locked into routine, small things become important. My objective is to entice the viewer through common experience into those lives.

It is important to me that the individual be lifted up from the group, be personalized and truly loved. This has been the focus of my work and I take great pride when I have succeeded. I leave it to you to sense if I have carried my commitment into the larger world.

**Ann Martin**  
2015



SUNDAY BRUNCH detail



A restaurant with its gentle bursts of pleasurable sounds reminds me of a delicious bouillon bubbling on a low heat, cooking unrelated ingredients into something sustaining and satisfying. It seems magical.

I remember being allowed to order whatever I wanted as a child and the abracadabra feeling when a butterscotch sundae beyond my wildest expectations was set before me in a stemmed fluted glass: three scoops of rich vanilla ice cream melting under the weight and warmth of a golden toffee, robed in chantilly cream crowned by a glacé cherry of brilliant red. Sixty years later I still anticipate being amazed and so, happily keep trying to relive the event. Being cared for by unseen hands was a privilege once unimaginable for most of us, served up only at a rich man's table. Our culture of convenience has taught us to expect continuously.

We are tamed by eating out: by the enjoyment of tastes, aromas, textures and the visual aesthetics of the food and by the social behaviours we learn which allow people around us to experience those same pleasures. Culturally, there is no better way to embrace both the sensual and social side of being human.



SUNDAY BRUNCH  
Dungarvan, Co. Waterford 2015  
Watercolour and Graphite  
75 x 89 cm







**BUS STOP**  
Cork City 2006  
Graphite 18 x 15 cm



**RESTAURANT**  
Cork City 2010  
Graphite 30 x 20 cm



**PROMENADE**  
Cobh, County Cork 2015  
India Ink 16 x 20 cm



**UNDERGARDEN**  
Kilcoe  
County Corkd 2003  
Watercolour 76 x 57 cm





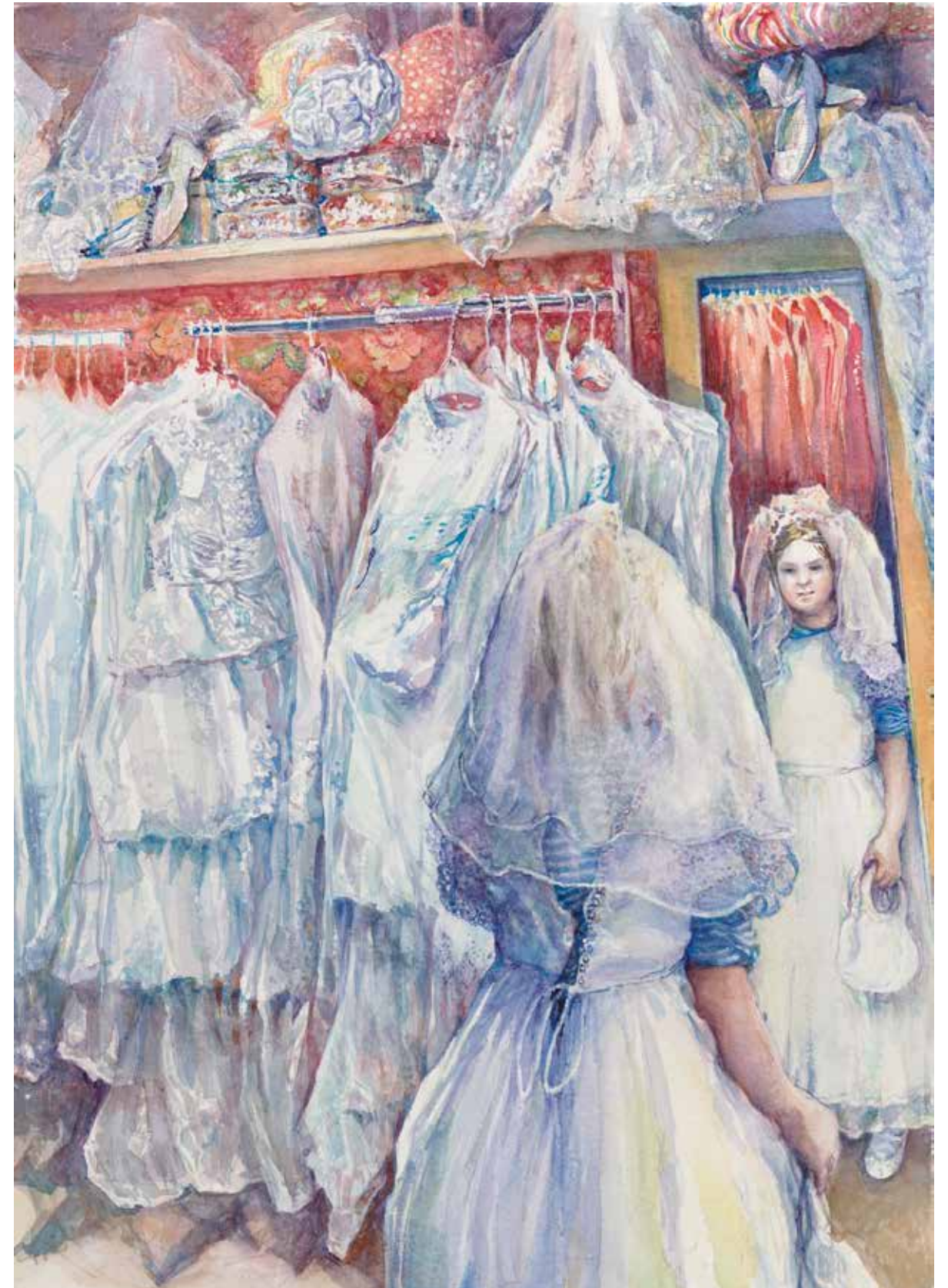
TRAVELLER'S CHILD  
Bantry, Co. Cork 2008  
Graphite 22 x 20 cm



GIRL WITH A FIDDLE  
Skeagh, Co. Cork 2010  
Graphite 30 x 24 cm



SCHOOLCHILD  
Durrus, Co. Cork 2012  
Graphite 28 x 24 cm



METAMORPHOSIS  
Dungarvan  
Co. Waterford 2015  
Watercolour 56 x 38 cm



These boys were part of a traveller community which had briefly camped at the end of my lane. The early season was freezing in the shade and burning in the sun. A small walled field near an abandoned graveyard had been chosen as temporary pasture for their horses. The grey had been hobbled because of its colour and magnificent tail, and groomed into a visual confection of braids and swirls. It had not appreciated the domination.

I couldn't help thinking about our acquiring culture. There is an undeniable pride in possession, especially if what you control is enviable. Messing with it is part of proving ownership. We all experience the urge to do it; teenagers mess with their hair and bodies and I mess with a perfectly good piece of white paper. It seems impossible to live without trying to control. Fear of impermanence attends everything in life. It commands that you stop time, beat death and feel powerful.



ACQUISITION  
Kilcoe, Co. Cork 2003  
Watercolour 76 x 103 cm





Undulating tobacco smoke from my father's pipe wove stories in the air. Smoking meant leisure for him and an approachable father for me, so I placed him in the left of the painting where he could be at his ease forever. Some people work gruelling hours to earn a few moments of respite, some people take it as a natural reward for living and meander into it. Either way, having nothing to do on a mellow day is a feeling everyone should be able to have.

Unfortunately, smoking and having no profitable destination on a work day are culturally taboo. The County Council enacting its zealous new anti-smoking laws, tried to have the eighty year old Afton sign removed from the front of the pub and reason prevailed. The smokers are obediently happy to sit outside. In fact, those benches are the best seats in the house. It is a marvel to me that Ireland turned it's back on blue collar habits overnight. Change should be slow, while you sort the pros and cons, dream a little, roll your own and feel the hand of the sun upon your breast.



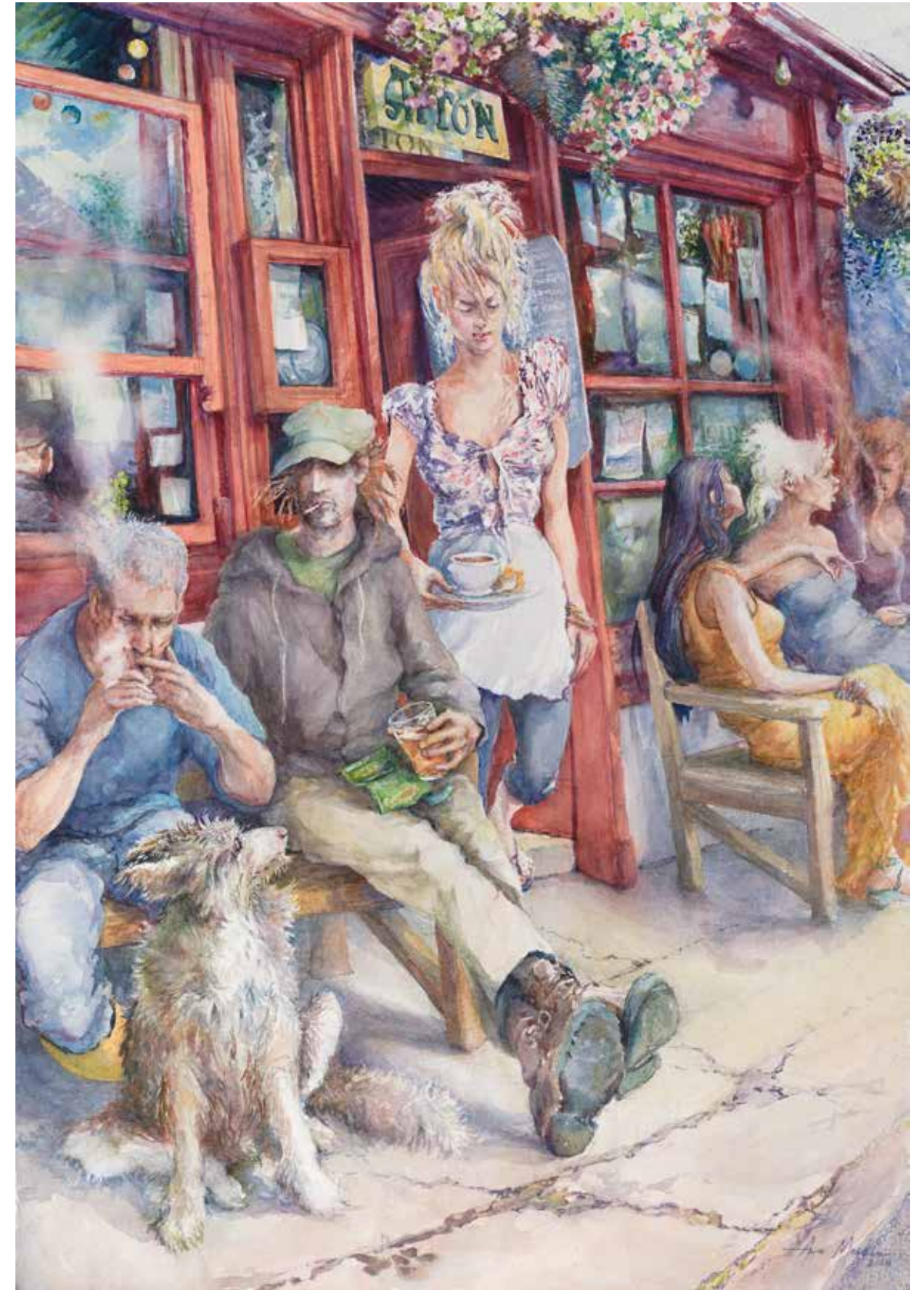
**CASEY**  
Schull, County Cork 2013  
Graphite 20 x 29 cm



**INSIDE HACKETT'S**  
Schull, County Cork 2008  
Graphite 29 x 21 cm



**THE BENCH**  
Schull, County Cork 2014  
Graphite 29 x 21 cm

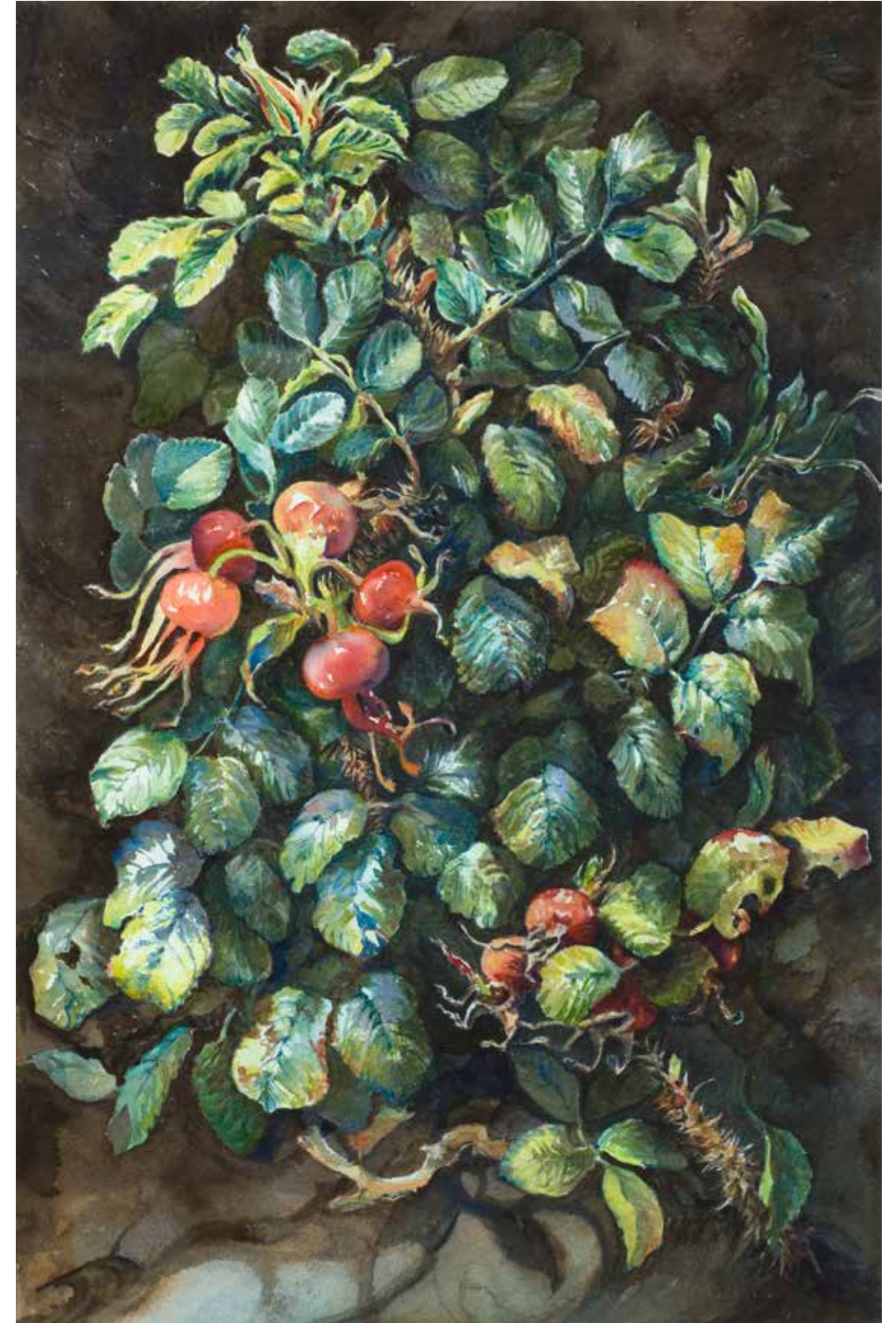


**FLOW GENTLY, SWEET AFTON**  
Schull, County Cork 2015  
Watercolour 57 x 76 cm





RAILWAY COTTAGE  
Skibbereen  
County Cork 2004  
Watercolour 56 x 38 cm

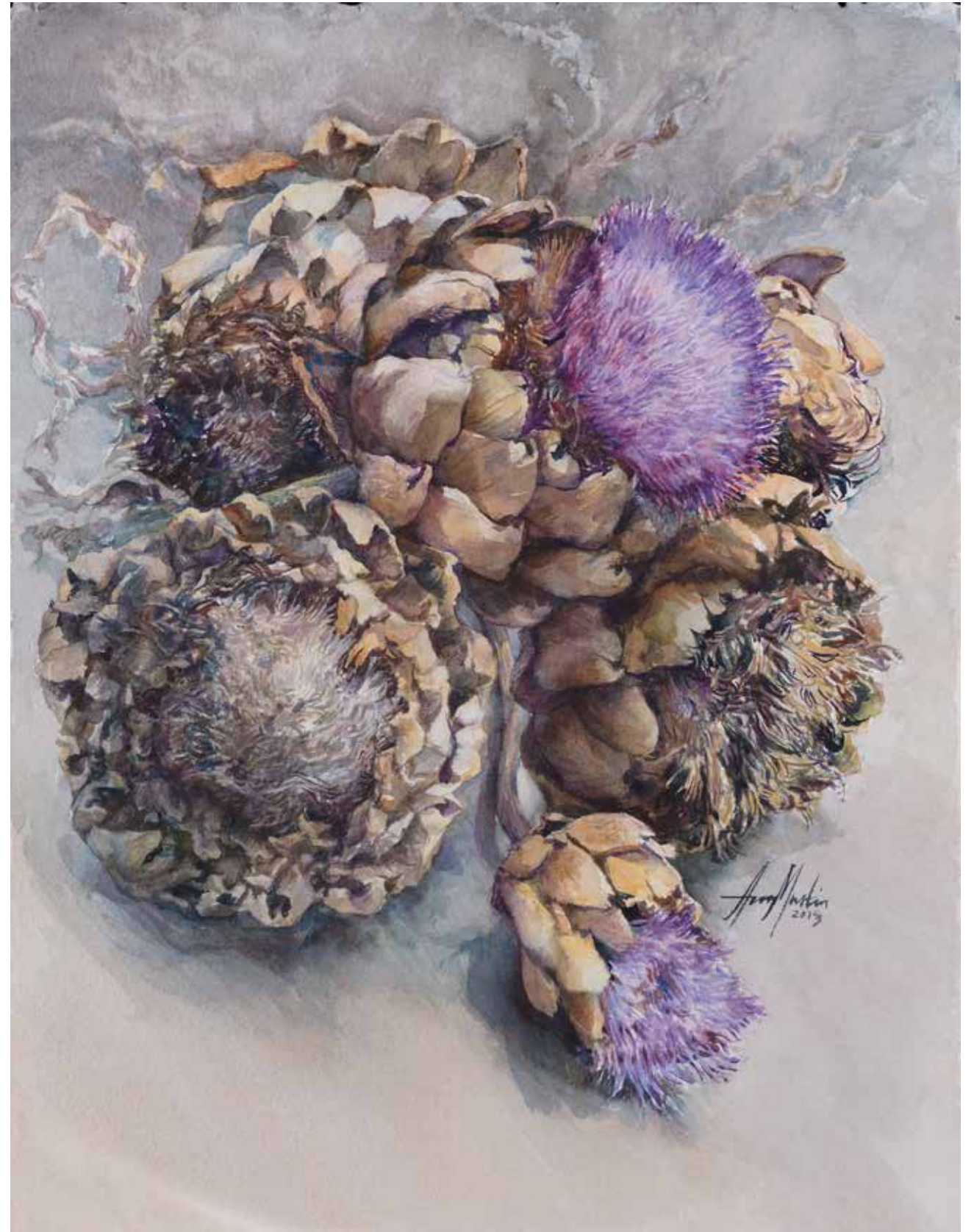


ROSE HIPS  
Kilcoe  
County Cork 2007  
Watercolour 56 x 37 cm





GARDEN FIGS  
Kilcoe, County Cork 2014  
Watercolour 37 x 48 cm



AUTUMN  
ARTICHOKE  
Kilcoe  
County Cork  
2014  
Watercolour  
52 x 38 cm





**BY HAND**  
Kilcoe, County Cork 2015  
Watercolour 76 x 56 cm



**WINTER MORNING**  
Dungarvan, County Waterford 2015  
India ink 39 x 53 cm

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REENASCREENA CROSS  
Reenascreena, County Cork 2015  
Graphite 20 x 17 cm

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