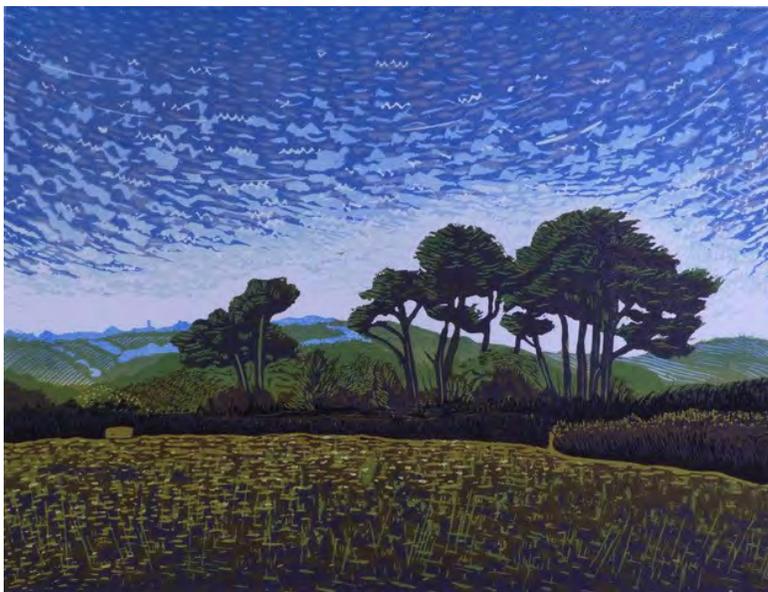


FEATURED ARTIST: PETER URSEM

I'm a painter, printmaker and writer and I arrived in the Tamar Valley some seven years ago. I live in a mine captain's house, Gresham House, between Calstock and Gunnislake and my spacious studio has a stunning view over the Tamar Valley, looking towards Morwel Rock and Morwelham Quay, with the hills of Dartmoor in the background. It's the most perfect location for an artist. I describe my work as a romantic exploration of the mystery, spirit and story of the landscape.

I grew up and studied in The Netherlands. I graduated in Literature Studies from the University of Utrecht, then studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Hague, whilst working as a freelance writer. In 1998 I moved from Holland to Dorset, combining my work as an artist first with a job as a picture framer, then with leading the arts team at Salisbury Hospital.

Working in Dorset I started building my profile as a printmaker, in particular of lino prints. Having always loved the honesty and expressiveness of simple black and white prints, taking up this form of relief printmaking was in some ways a logical consequence of moving country and starting anew without a studio or much money. Making a lino print requires only a small corner of a kitchen table, a cutter, some ink and a roller and of course printing paper. But once the lino bug gets you, it's hard to stop....



The woodcut 'Stour at Dawn' was chosen for one of the first covers of the Wessex arts magazine 'Evolver'.

I also started using poetry and words in my works, for example in the sizeable text prints of 'Intimate Space, Artist Face' (2005), relating the inspirations of eight artists living and working in Dorset. In 2006 my acquisition of a Victorian printing press led to a surge in my output of multi-coloured lino prints. Alongside the prints I started showing charcoal drawings and oil painting, completing a decade of artistic work with 'Dorset Footprint', a solo exhibition at Dorset County Museum.



Below left: **Trees at Cotehele**, lino print

Below right: **Sea at Quiberon**, lino print



In 2001 I received an Arts Council 'Year of the Artist' award for my project 'Reflections, a Book of Woodcuts of the River Stour', which told the story of this Dorset river from source to sea in 30 wood block prints. This series offered a perfect opportunity to experiment with different styles and approaches to relief printmaking, incorporating various ways of markmaking as well as working in more colours.

ASK THE ARTIST

What is the best work related thing you have done recently?

I'm currently trying my hand at greenwood carving, trying to find the perfect line, symmetry and character of wooden spoons.

What irritates you?

I don't understand how it's possible that so many wrong people seem to have a say in which way the world is turning.



What motivates and inspires you?

There are so many landscapes, people, ideas, songs, books and words that inspire me! I particularly like it when I hear or see something that I can use in writing or painting, and I love it when themes appear and start slotting into each other, as if it's not me putting them together, but new meanings shaping me.

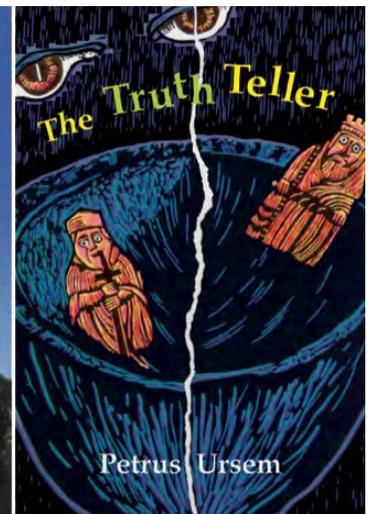
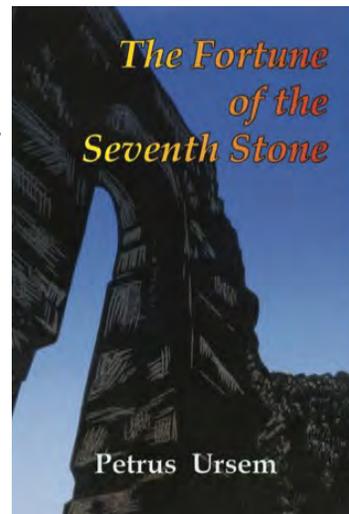
What's your favourite book or film?

George Eliot, 'Middlemarch' and Ingmar Bergman, 'Fanny and Alexander'.

Left: **Devon Hill**, charcoal drawing

Below: Peter's published children's books

The Tamar Valley offered me a wealth of new inspiration, not only for my artwork, but also to take up my long kept desire to write children's books. 'The Fortune of the Seventh Stone' is a true treasure adventure in the old sense. Thirteen year old Steven becomes heir to a miner's fortune, but to find its secret location he first has to solve a series of cryptic riddles. In the sequel, 'The Truth Teller' (published in July this year), Steven's adventure takes an expected turn as he fights to uncover the sinister truth behind the miner's mysterious possession. Both books were extremely well received by young and older readers. The first part was shortlisted for the Cornish Holyer-an-Gof awards and is now reprinted as paperback.



In 2017 I showed more than 100 of my drawings, paintings and prints in a big exhibition at Plymouth College of Art, entitled 'As the River Flows...'

Where's your favourite place?

The churchyard of St Andrew's Church, Calstock, a huge inspiration for 'The Fortune of the Seventh Stone', with beautiful trees and real atmosphere.

Who would you most like to meet from history?

Vincent van Gogh

Who do you most admire?

Tom Waits.

This show represented three years of works inspired by the wonderful Tamar Valley landscape. In each of these three years I provided five-day student placements in my studio to second year students of PCA, introducing them to printing techniques as well as to different aspects of arts project management, from the initial idea to writing funding applications or press releases.

I enjoy teaching workshops and classes in drawing, printmaking and sketchbook making. With my partner, composer and singer Helen Porter, I run a summer workshop programme with a variety of courses at Gresham House Studios, which includes treating course participants to lunches and meals from our home grown vegetables.

The nightmare of the current political chaos made me decide to take on British citizenship. Despite the Brexit madness I love my life in England. Over the years I have made so many wonderful friends. I continue to be amazed by the beauty and inspiration of this part of the world, and still can't help running for my camera to take another photograph of yet another stunning sunrise over Dartmoor. It's an enormous privilege to live and work here in the Tamar Valley as an artist and writer.

For more information on my art, books and workshop visit;
www.peterursem.co.uk (art) www.petrus-ursem.co.uk (writing)
www.greshamhousestudios.co.uk (workshops)

On Sunday 2 December, from 10am to 5pm, Peter Ursem and Helen Porter will have a **Christmas Fair at Gresham House Studios** with many home made products, art, cards and books. All are welcome.