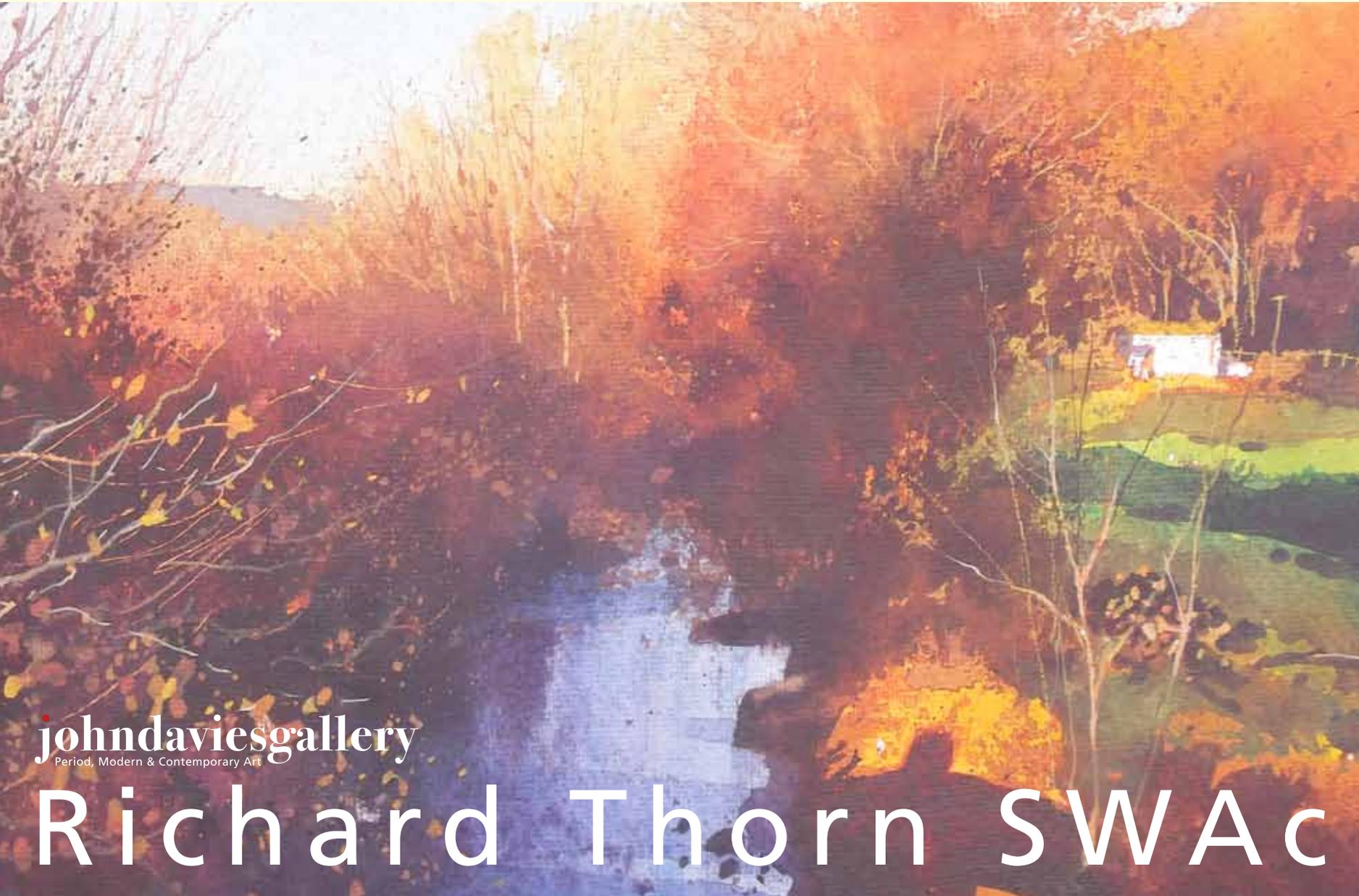


# A TALE OF TWO RIVERS

The Teign River and Valley



john davies gallery  
Period, Modern & Contemporary Art

Richard Thorn SWAc



**The Source**  
Acrylic and collage, 18 x 20 in

johndaviesgallery

**Richard Thorn**  
**A TALE OF TWO RIVERS**  
**The Teign River and Valley**

A Thirty Mile Journey  
from Source to Estuary

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# 'A TALE OF TWO RIVERS'

## A Foreword by Richard Thorn

Returning to Devon and the Teign Valley presented two important changes in my work; the location change, which presented new painting possibilities, and inspiration. But more importantly, a renewed visualization of nature which led to a review of painting technique and rendition.

These changes included a fresh look at colour and colour relationships, tonality and more considered paint strokes. It could be seen that this progression is the result of the natural process that occurs by mere dint of painting everyday: I think moreover, that it was precipitated by the desire to render and depict light, atmosphere and texture in a more refined way – a result of the complexity and diversity of the scenery at hand.

I titled the exhibition 'A Tale of Two Rivers' because the Teign river has two sources - The North and South Teign – both rising on Dartmoor.

My new 'love affair' with the river began in March 2014 after moving to the area. The river was swollen from the winter rains which made for some dynamic scenes of rushing water and flooded meadows. My interest soon encompassed the valley, with its farms, lanes and villages, eventually taking me further afield to the source and its estuary at Teignmouth.

Apart from the beautiful scenery of the river and valley itself, I wanted to include some images that depict the working life on the farms and in the villages that exist along its banks and meadows. These 'workaday' images complete the portrait of the Teign river.



**Yonder Hills**  
Watercolour inks, 17 x 30 in

# The River Teign and Richard Thorn

## A Short Introduction by John Davies

“ ...rich  
with dyke and ditch  
And hedge for thrush to live in  
And the hollow  
For the buzzing bee  
And a bank for the wasp to hive in. ”

John Keats (1795–1821)

There are probably no words more fitting than those written by Keats describing the River Teign. Additionally, I can confidently say that there are few artists more fitting than Richard Thorn to depict the contrasting scenes encountered on a working ramble from source to estuary of one of Devon’s best known rivers.

A lifelong Devonian, Richard Thorn is an immensely able, talented and well established watercolourist who also works with acrylic and mixed media. All the paintings in this collection of scenes following the course of the River Teign are works on paper, in either classic watercolour pigments or acrylic (using water as the vehicle) sometimes with the addition of pastel or ink.

From the perspective of an art dealer, who has a good appreciation of the history of British watercolour, landscape artists working from the late 18th Century through the 19th and 20th Centuries and into the first fifteen years of the present century, I have no hesitation in saying that Richard Thorn makes a worthy case for inclusion in this illustrious tradition. His observation is full and vital, his draughtsmanship and understanding of the lie of the land is first rate, and his handling of light and reflection is inspired.



**October Fire**  
Watercolour inks, 14 x 20 in



**As far as the Eye can see**  
Watercolour, 10 x 18 in

# INTERVIEW

## A conversation between Richard Thorn and John Davies

*JD:* When I started dealing in buying paintings in the late 1960's, my first love was English watercolours. I remember that I had a book at school on British art featuring portrait painting as well as landscape painting in oil and watercolour. I remember in particular works illustrated by Turner, Cotman and De Wint. Also, from my earliest of years, there was a family interest in watercolour. I had an uncle who had a great admiration for David Cox, and we had some in the family home in the 1950's, two of which I am now very happy to have in my own home. Thus I suppose it was natural for me to buy watercolours first, and buying oil paintings followed. I feel that your work belongs so much to the evolution of this tradition, particularly 19th Century artists such as Wimperis, Thorne Waite and Claude Hayes. Also 20th Century artists such as Bernard Evans, George Rushton and even John Nash. And illustrators such as Brian Cook of Batsford fame.

I know that previously you have cited the Impressionists as influences, but I wonder what perspective you may have on the British watercolour tradition through museum type art galleries and books?

*RT:* My influences were mainly the American exponents of watercolour: Andrew Wyeth, Winslow Homer, Philip Jameson etc...I liked the way they expanded the medium and, for my purposes, were contemporary in their approach. But a later excursion to the British Masters educated me as to where it all began. There are too many artists to mention in this brief interview, so I will have to cite my favourites: J W M Turner, John Sell Cotman, John Singer Sargent, Jack Merriott, Sir William Russell-Flint...to name but a few.

*JD:* Well, I feel that this amalgam of British and American influences works well; that said, it is very evident that you have your own strong characteristics. And further, I was interested to read that this project, a scenic route of the Teign from its source, has challenged you to take a fresh look and progress your technique. It is good to hear that your approach is not static.

Talking from a working, geographical perspective in mapping out the route of the river, to enable me to lay out the catalogue progressively from source to estuary, we identified in which tranche of the river each composition falls; is this actually how you approached the project though, starting at the source and working down river, or did you make lots of different visits in a random manner to cover the evolution of the route?

*RT:* Yes, the changes and improvements in my technique were both natural and determined efforts to 'hone' my painting - introducing new colours and media to achieve the results I was looking for. This of course, is an ongoing journey but, in the case of the Teign project, was precipitated by my return to Devon and the Teign Valley. One might say I 'turned over a new leaf'.



**Sleepy Wood**  
Mixed media, 17 x 25 in



**An English Lane**  
Watercolor, 12 x 13 in



**Half-Light Hill**  
Mixed media, 11 x 11 in

Typically, I work in a random fashion, going from place to place to seek out scenes, returning at various times in the year to see the changes that the seasons bring. I tended to work close to home as there was so much to paint, then, going further afield into the lanes and the valley hills. It soon became apparent that a 'project' was unfolding.

*JD:* Also I imagine that walking the course of a river like the Teign must be next to impossible in a continuous manner. It strikes me that many rivers in Devon, as well as in Wales or the Lake District would be difficult follow. With craggy banks and intensely wooded areas close to the water itself, I can see that one either has the choice of being very close to the flow or up out of the valley viewing more open countryside with the river out of sight. Charting the course of say the Thames or other rivers that flow through more level plains would mean one would have the opportunity of keeping the river in view more of the time. Talking of Wales, it is something of a surprise to learn that the name Teign is related to the Welsh word *taen* (sprinkling, or simply stream) and first appears in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 739, appearing as Teng. The Teign appears to have many tributaries but only flows through two towns, Newton Abbot and Teignmouth, at which point it has flowed about thirty miles. It is also interesting to learn that the source, and therefore that location on Dartmoor is just over one thousand seven hundred feet above sea level. I must say I find Wikipedia quite useful, although I know that not all contributions can be relied upon.

Are you likely to return and explore it further, or move on to other similar projects?

*RT:* As with the Dart, the River Teign is inaccessible in parts, but there are many walks and bridges where one can view the river - enough to offer many painting opportunities. It's odd that the name has a Welsh connection, but it does allude to the river's 'history', which is something that attracts me to rivers per se. There is a timelessness to a river which lures me into its mystery. I like to think this quality goes into my paintings. As long as I'm living near to the river, I'll be going back again and again to eke out more scenes to paint.

*JD:* Good to hear. As you know I laid the catalogue out in a linear fashion, namely starting with The Source illustrated on the inside front cover and ending with "Where it all begins - or ends" on page 32. But there could have been an alternative way of laying it out, the other being the contrasting seasons. Indeed it appears that we do have every season depicted though these paintings – such as Autumn on pages 5, 7 and 15 for example, Winter on pages 14, 15, the back cover and elsewhere, Spring on pages 9 and 28 and probably elsewhere, with full Summer on pages 25, 26, 29 and 30. Can you remember if you completed the cycle through the four seasons of one year, or was the project more spread than that?

*RT:* I arrived in the valley in February last year and began painting. I finished the project with two final paintings this February. 'A year in the life of the Teign Valley'. For me, it will represent a 'diary' to see the exhibition set out through the course of the year.

*JD:* I will bear this in mind when laying out the show, but I feel we are likely to hang linearly from source to estuary. Let's see.

*RT:* I tend to be the worst judge of my own work and have little concept of its 'standing' in the contemporary art world, so it's very gratifying to hear your thoughts in this respect. Thank you for regarding my work in such esteem within the British tradition of watercolour painting.



**O' Gentle May**  
Watercolour, 18 x 22 in



**A Tale of Two Rivers**  
Mixed media, 19 x 22 in



**O'er Vale and Hill**  
Watercolour, 14 x 17 in



**Late Summer in the Valley**  
Watercolour, 8 x 18 in



**Over the Valley to the Tors**  
Watercolour, 13 x 23 in



**Light and Distance**  
Watercolour, 9 x 12 in



**On the Banks (Teign River)**  
Mixed media, 24 x 22 in



**Afternoon in Red & Blue**  
Mixed media, 13 x 16 in



**In the Crimson Light of Afternoon**  
Mixed media, 11 x 13 in



**Winter River**  
Mixed media, 21 x 23 in



**Slow Afternoon**  
Watercolour, 15 x 18 in



**Tangle and Calm**  
Watercolour inks, 15 x 16 in



**A Cock Crowed the Morning**  
Mixed media, 18 x 28 in



**River Shadows**  
Mixed media, 23 x 21 in



**Through the Trees**  
Mixed media, 13 x 15 in



**January Floods**  
Watercolour, 14 x 18 in



**Mercury Waters**  
Mixed media, 20 x 21 in



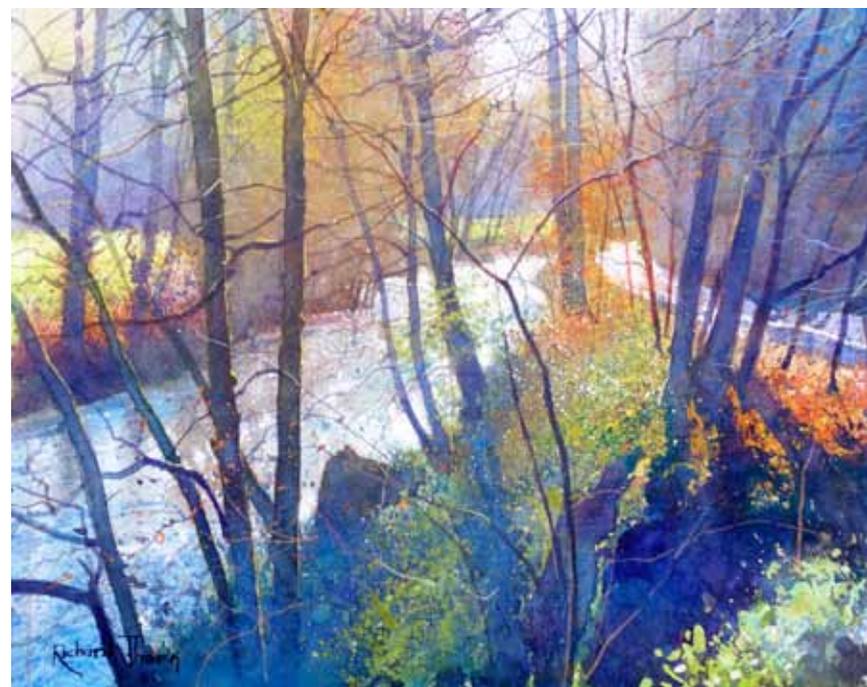
**After the Floods**  
Mixed media, 14 x 26 in



**Turner's River**  
Watercolour, 17 x 21 in



**Coursing through the Valley**  
Mixed media, 19 x 21 in



**The Morning Light**  
Mixed media, 13 x 17 in



**The River Road**  
Mixed media, 19 x 23 in



**Gold and Shadow**  
Mixed media, 13 x 23 in



**Happy Sunflowers**  
Watercolour inks, 14 x 22 in



**Last Year's Patch**  
Watercolour inks, 18 x 27 in



**The Chicken Run**  
Mixed media, 13 x 21 in



**Gateway to Summer**  
Watercolour inks, 22 x 24 in



**Along the Ridge Road**  
Mixed media, 17 x 19 in



**Eggs and Jam**  
Mixed media, 16 x 19 in



**Meadowspring**  
Mixed media, 18 x 29 in



**The Haze of a Summer Meadow**  
Watercolour, 10 x 23 in



**Noon in the Valley**  
Watercolour, 20 x 27 in



**In the Lower Meadow**  
Watercolour, 18 x 27 in



**Low tide in the Estuary**  
Mixed media, 15 x 25 in



**The Ness**  
Watercolour, 13 x 16 in



**"Where it all begins - or ends"**  
Watercolour, 15 x 21 in

# RICHARD THORN



- 1952 Born Torquay, Devon
- 1957 Started to painting during a hospital stay, aged 5  
Continued to draw and paint throughout his childhood  
Frequent family visits to Dartmoor and the Devon coast encouraged the pursuit  
On leaving school attended Newton Abbot School of Art  
Early influences centred around the French Impressionists, especially Cézanne, Monet, Pissarro & Gauguin
- 1971 Started Rock/blues/jazz career  
Still plays in a Bossanova jazz quartet called "Ragged Fish"
- 1985 Returned to painting to establish a professional career working in watercolour  
Added influences include Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper and Andrew Wyeth
- 1986 Princess Michael of Kent took a liking to one of Richard's paintings exhibited at the Torbay Arts Society, with which she was presented  
  
Began selling work to collectors and galleries
- 1992 First one man show in Godalming  
  
Many subsequent mixed and solo exhibitions at nearby locations including Fowey River Gallery, Fowey; Triton Gallery, Torquay; Sharon Davies Gallery, Totnes; Rosemoor Gallery, North.Devon, and further field with the Bourne Gallery, Reigate; Panter & Hall, London  
The Portuguese Embassy, London.
- 2008 Included in a book of contemporary Devon artists published by Hallsgrrove
- 2009 Solo exhibition at John Davies Gallery, Moreton-in-Marsh
- 2010 Solo exhibition at Torre Abbey, Torquay  
Solo exhibition at John Davies Gallery, Moreton-in-Marsh  
Solo exhibition Alexander Gallery
- 2011 Group exhibition Davidson Fine Art Gallery, Totnes
- 2013 Salthouse Gallery, St Ives, Cornwall  
John Davies Gallery, Moreton-in-Marsh  
Richard Hagen, Broadway
- 2015 John Davies Gallery, Moreton-in-Marsh  
Dame Hanna Trust, Devon

*Back cover : Snow Valley*  
Watercolour, 13 x 16 in

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