

## OPTICAL MIXING

By Ian Welland

My grandmother once told me that red sky at night was shepherd's delight; but red sky in the morning was shepherd's warning.

I have seen the sun all my life in works of art. My uncle, George Langridge, was a fine painter who tried to emulate what I simply call the "Constable" skies. Sadly, as he got older, his patience flowed away like the Antarctic ice shelf. His canvas moods became Turner-esque. I can still see his storm clouds brewing behind a remote cottage with just the farmhand and his dog hoping to make sanctuary before the pending deluge. And as he painted, so he listened to Vaughan Williams' menacing sixth symphony adding to the drama.

I also recall one of his snow scenes, not festive with carol singers holding lanterns or a Robin perched on a gatepost; no, my uncle's scenes were dangerously drifting with the last of the hibernating wildlife scurrying away from a huntsman finding safety under a tree. That tree in Buckinghamshire is no longer there – the M25 replaced it with a stone circle around our bruised capital.

I have admired the skies and scale of the trees in *The Avenue at Middelharnis*, painted by the impoverished Dutch landscape painter Hobbema. And, the mosaic patchworks of his contemporary Jacob Van Ruisdael where sky and land are scored but restored. Hobbema's trees would absorb the moisture and vent their oxygen; now, ditches have replaced the tree lines and fill up every winter and the car park on the site of the former homestead is flooded frequently.

In Ruisdael's work, towering windmills in service by gallons of natural water afforded to the Netherlandish shores, are no more. Replaced by decaying engineering leaving burnt out turbines that have delivered a ton of emissions into both atmosphere and water, so erosion has resulted.

Vermeer was the only painter of his day to foretell the arrival of a darkening veil in his *View of Delft*. I believe his sky about to lose its sunlight, is a message to humankind that if you seek to control, nature will always have its way come what may. The natural riches of the land, so qualified by Ruisdael, have been ignored by governments and economists alike in favour of greed. And so it goes on.

We shall now return to my uncle's homage to Turner. As Turner's train thunders through a smoking coal kettle fog across a viaduct just outside Maidenhead in *Rain, Steam and Speed*, do you see the rabbit on the run and the last farmer? You could be forgiven for not knowing that directly below, another artist Edward John Gregory is messing about on the river at Boulter's Lock totally oblivious to the devil's foretelling. At the same time, Turner's *Fighting Temeraire* smokes its way to the breakers yard up Thames in East London. Turner is showing the Sun's light stripped of its reverence in preference to man's ignorance.

Our Planet is dying.