

JOAN EARDLEY

Glasgow and Catterline: A comparative analysis of the artist's working practice informed by archival photographs held at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

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INTRODUCTION + METHODOLOGY

Joan Eardley lived in Glasgow for much of her life, and moved to Catterline in the North East of Scotland in 1961. Through qualitative comparison of archival photographs (taken by her friends, family and professional photographers) that show Eardley painting, sketching, at rest or preparing materials within each location it has been possible to identify changes to her working practice after her move to Catterline. Conclusions reached through the analysis of these observations have been supported by information on the artist's technique, use and choice of materials held within the databases of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. Further comparison of these conclusions against the characteristics visible in artworks held at the gallery has evidenced the visual impact of these changes and decisions within her oeuvre.

GLASGOW

Photograph 1 shows Eardley in her Glasgow studio standing in front of an easel, and surrounded by her sketches. On the bottom right hand side of this image there is a large pile of canvases in varying sizes, with their stretchers visible. Eardley's work table on the right hand side of the image is piled with materials. It is possible to see two palette knives tucked underneath her palette with their handles sticking out, which perhaps suggests that they were being used concurrently. There are large tins of paint sitting on a low table on the left hand side of the image. They have a large capacity, and look like tins of paint used in the home. All of the tins have their lids removed, suggesting that they were in use at the same time. There is, however, no part completed painting on the easel.

In photograph 2 Eardley is sitting in her studio holding a large collection of painting tools. Closer inspection shows that these tools include a long thin palette knife, a rag, a long handled paintbrush with a fine flat end, a large broad paintbrush and a middle sized round paintbrush. A painting on a medium sized canvas, that looks to be part completed, is on an easel behind Eardley. On the left hand side of the image it is possible to see two different collections of brushes. One looks to be held within an empty paint can, and contains large, wide bristle brushes, like those used to paint interiors. To the left of these in the photograph there is a collection of long handled brushes, with smaller tips.

CATTERLINE

Photograph 3 shows Eardley standing at an easel outside of her cottage in Catterline. There is a small painting on the easel, but only the verso is visible. It looks to be on hardboard. There is a painting on the back of the board, that looks to be part completed. Eardley has a broad palette knife laid out on her paint palette. No sketches

or preparatory drawings are around the artist, suggesting she is painting from life.

In photograph 4 Eardley is working on the beach. She has a small collection of painting materials and tools around her, including a small, possibly collapsible easel. Her motorcycle is next to her, suggesting that she used it to travel down to the beach with her materials. The presence of sand, dirt and debris in the painted surface of some of her artworks created in Catterline show her hands on involvement in their creation. Of the twelve Eardley paintings in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art permanent collection that were painted in Catterline nine were painted on hardboard.

ANALYSIS

In both locations the artist has followed the same preparatory and research process to inform her paintings. Images 5 and 8 are photographs taken by the artist. The subject matter seen in each photograph has then been interpreted by Eardley into a sketch, seen in images 6 and 9. Images 7 and 10 show the completed paintings held at the Scottish national Gallery of Modern Art, that were completed in Glasgow and Catterline respectively. In each location her preparatory photographs and drawings have been used in different ways. This was likely due to practicality. In Glasgow it seems that Eardley created her final paintings through reference to her sketches, and that the portraits of Glasgow children were not painted from life. When she is working on the Catterline beaches there is no photographic evidence of her having her sketches around her to guide what she is creating. This might suggest that the sketches done in Catterline were to explore composition, or were used to quickly record the changing landscape, that could not be captured as well on black and white film or with oil paint due to application time.

CONCLUSIONS

Images 1 and 4 show Eardley with her back to the camera. In photograph 1 Eardley's stance does not look natural. To the right of Eardley a canvas is visible. It looks to have been placed consciously within the frame, to enable it to be seen in the photograph past Eardley's work table. In photograph 4 a similar, deliberate composition seems to have been created to allow the view in front of the artist to be visible. The possibility that these photographs are curated compositions, instead of candid photographs of the artist at work changes the reliability of any information surmised from the photographs in relation to the artist's authentic working practice.

Analysis to this point has not revealed any specific information in relation to the brands or types of painting materials Eardley used. In both locations there is evidence of Eardley using large tins of paint, and further investigation into the characteristics of these tins and the small details of lettering visible on them may identify them.



1 Joan Eardley painting in her Glasgow studio (seen from behind.) Silver gelatine print, 21.5 x 20.0 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2017 2 Joan Eardley seated in her studio holding a stack of paint brushes. Silver gelatine print, 19.9 x 20.5 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2017 3 Joan Eardley standing in the garden at her easel, facing the camera, 1961. Silver gelatine print, 21.4 x 16.5 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive © Audrey Walker 4 Joan Eardley Painting the sea at Catterline. Silver gelatine print, 30.5 x 25.0 cm, c.1959. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive © Audrey Walker 5 Small group of children, little girl with paper under her chin. Silver gelatine print, 9.5 x 10.8 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2017 6 Head of a Boy (Andrew Macauley), with his Hand on his Cheek. Pastel on paper, 23.4 x 15.0 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2018 7 Boy's Head 'A Glasgow Boy'. Oil on board, 27.0 x 23.0 cm, 1950s. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2018 8 'No 1 Catterline at far left' rear view of cottages. Silver gelatine print, 10.3 x 14.1 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2017 9 Catterline Cottages. Pastel on paper, 11.2 x 17.1 cm. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2018 10 Catterline in Winter. Oil on hardboard, 120.7 x 130.8 cm, 1963. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art © Estate of Joan Eardley, All Rights reserved, DACS 2018



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