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Mauritian Overseas Gazette

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Trust

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Painting Paradise Mylene talks to Painter Lachlan Goudie



The Scottish people have a word for Scotland's overcast, wet, and dreary weather: "dreich." For a limited time in Edinburgh, you can forget about the slate grey sky and enjoy a ray of sunshine—Mauritian sunshine, to be exact—at the Scottish Gallery, where Glaswegian-born artist Lachlan Goudie's *Painting Paradise* exhibition features paintings of blue skies, sunlight, and the island's colourful splendour.

In addition to being an accomplished painter, Goudie is the author of *The Story of Scottish Art* and the presenter of a number of BBC documentaries. He has a demanding schedule, yet he has found a way to balance his work and personal life so that they

complement each other, creating synergy between the two.



Lachlan Goudie

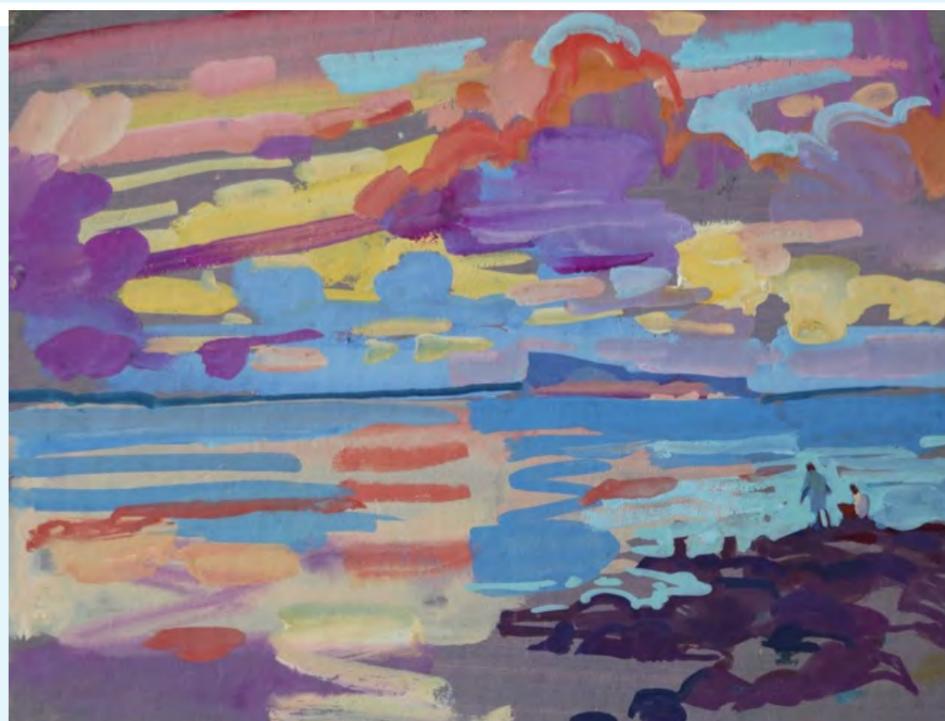
We really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us from your studio in London. Why Mauritius? That has to be the first question.

Four years ago, I went on a 10-day vacation to Mauritius and wanted to go back to paint the lush, tropical scenery. What a big change it was from, dreich.

I know that your father, Alexander Goudie (1933-2004), was a painter, considered to be one of Scotland's best portraitists.

Yes, I used to watch him paint when I was a child. Everything I know about painting I learned from him. I have an Anglo-French background. My mother is from Brittany, and we would frequently go there. My father would sketch and paint the surroundings, from the countryside to the harbourside.

I got my appreciation for Matisse and Gauguin from him. You could say that Paul Gauguin was in the back of my mind because, like him, painting took me to a tropical paradise. His artistic destination was Tahiti, and mine was Mauritius.



Cyclone Sunset

Ed. Note: Coin de Mire outline on the horizon

Painting Mauritius

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Jardin Exotique

The pandemic delayed your trip to Mauritius, but once there, you didn't waste any time.

You're right. I used to get up at 7 a.m. I was staying on the edge of a beach in the northeast of the island, so I could watch the fishermen go out each morning before I started to sketch. Later, around 9 a.m., I'd find a good spot to paint. I was never alone; passers-by and the locals were intrigued and would stop and watch. Then at lunchtime I would start to paint with gouache, which is an opaque type of watercolour. After lunch, I would relocate to a place where I could draw the natural flora and fauna. In the evening, there was a resplendent sunset to capture.

Despite all that, you still found time to teach

Yes, at an art school called Artscape in Calodyne, Grand Gaube. They regularly invite an artist to teach the students, and they asked me. *Was Mauritius a paradise?*

As an artist, I would say yes. It is idyllic. The natural beauty of the myriad of colours and the profusion of palm trees swaying in the breeze produce an unforgettable impression of being on a tropical island. The lush vegetation, the rich fauna, and the coastal scenery make it an exotic paradise, yes, but it's not without problems. There is a big disparity of wealth. Having said that, I want to show how beautiful the island was so that other people can feel what I felt and maybe be inspired by it. I'd like the viewer to experience the sight and the smell, to discover paradise, to be moved, and to be able to dream.

I love the painting "Cyclone sunset," because the hues are calm yet turbulent. Do you have a favourite picture?

I have to say, "Jardin exotique." Behind the different shades of pinky-rose hues and green, gold, and blue, you can just make out the terrace of a colonial house. For me, this is a good picture to portray the luxurious sense of beauty on the island.

Your father painted the late queen, but you had an artistic part to play at her lying-in-state.

Yes, indeed. Back in September, I was asked to be one of six artists to document the Queen's lying-in-state at Westminster Hall in London.

On the Scottish front, I know you have been vocal about the lack of progress to restore The Mackintosh Building at The Glasgow School of Art.

It's sad. The west wing of the building housed the Mackintosh Library. It was built around a framework of wooden beams influenced by traditional Japanese architecture. On May 23, 2014, there was a fire in this wing. While the building was undergoing restoration, there was another fire, which is now under investigation. My father studied there and was also a tutor there for many years.

Is art important?

It may not be a matter of life or death, but it is important for the mental and cultural health of society as a whole.

A final word about Mauritius.

I was blessed to have been able to go to Mauritius, and everything went smoothly. I had a wonderful time. I hired a car and drove it every day without incident. On the day I was leaving and had to get to the airport urgently, I got a flat tyre! Can you believe it? A man saw I was in a predicament and came to help me. This shows how spontaneously kind the people of Mauritius are. Unforgettable.

Also visit <www.lachlangoudie.com>

Is there a Santa Claus?

Mylene writes from Japan: : "One of my students wrote a book which is listed in the National Diet Library Classification (NDLC) in Japan, a great achievement, as she writes as a hobby.

Last couple of weeks her book has made it on Kindle, so I've written a short book review, as shown below.

In 1897, eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wanted to know if Santa Claus was real. Her dad assured her that the New York Sun never lies, so she wrote and asked this question.

Francis Pharcellus Church answered her letter, and his unsigned editorial has been printed many times. It has been translated into different languages and has appeared in books, movies, posters, and even on stamps.

This is the inspiration behind this little gem of a book, "Do you believe in Santa Claus?" The author writes under the pen name, Kurumimo-

chi. Even though her first language is not English but Japanese, she wrote this "learning text" book as a hobby and just for fun. So, the fact that the book is listed in the National Diet Library Classification (NDLC) in Japan is a great achievement.

Kurumimochi helps the reader get through the letter by explaining in Japanese how to understand the most significant points in a way that is easy-to-understand.

Some phrases, terminology, and grammar have more detailed explanations, but Kurumimochi's clear and concise style conveys the letter's message of hope, happiness, and optimism. We get a sense of the true spirit of Christmas, and some of us may begin to believe in Santa (again).

This is an excellent, well-written, and well-thought-out book.

Recently, the book has become available on Amazon Kindle, which is like giving Kurumimochi an early Christmas present.

Mylene, Japan

