

10 MINUTES WITH

Anthony WHISHAW

The Royal Academician shares his love of Spanish culture, Antony Gormley and his father's drawings. Interview: RACHAEL FUNNELL



WHEN DID YOU START DRAWING?

When I was living in Brazil as a small child. They were mostly doodles inspired by my father's playful scribbles. While at prep school in Cornwall during the war I distinctly remember creating a spool of drawings which suggested a figure moving through the landscape.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST CONSIDER ART AS A CAREER?

I began to draw more seriously after I suffered a fractured skull aged 16. I was helped both by my inspirational art teacher, Harvey Adams, and a correspondence course through which I was given regular feedback on basic drawing skills.

YOUR EXHIBITION IS CALLED WITH SPAIN IN MIND. WHEN DID YOU FIRST VISIT SPAIN?

In 1951. I went by train with six friends to Barcelona and Ibiza. I had my sketchbook with me and was inspired by the villages, beaches and harbours. I found the landscape to be very different to anything I'd experienced, though aspects of the culture felt familiar in some ways to living in Brazil.

HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK THERE?

In 1955, I left the Royal College of Art with scholarships that enabled me to buy a Lambretta and drive to Madrid and later on to the south



“My most valuable artist's tool? My right hand!”

particular painting, *Las Meninas*, by Diego Velázquez [below]. These works seemed so unexpected and different to anything I had encountered.

ANTHONY WHISHAW, BLUE ROAD NORTHWARDS (1/07) THE ARTIST
DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ, LAS MENINAS © MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO
PHOTOS: REECE STRAW/ROZ WOODWARD/STEVE PILL/UNSPASH

of Spain where I lived for around a year. Later my wife joined me, and we lived and worked there together.

HOW DID TRAVEL INFLUENCE YOUR WORK?

Riding for thousands of miles through the countryside and cities, and learning to speak the language enabled me to connect with the Spanish people, landscape and culture: the bullfighting, the expansive landscapes, the flamenco... These experiences have filtered into my work in one way or another for the rest of my life.

WHICH ARTISTS INSPIRE YOU?

When I was living in Madrid, I would regularly visit the Museo del Prado where I would marvel at works by Picasso, Zurbarán, Goya and a



DO YOU WORK FROM LIFE OR MEMORY?

In the early days, I might sketch before working on a larger canvas but most of the time I work in my studio, conjuring ideas from my own memory.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE A PAINTING?

My works on paper are more spontaneous and playful, and may take a year or two to finish. The longest I have worked on a single painting is 60 years!

WHAT IS YOUR MOST VALUABLE ARTIST'S TOOL?

My right hand!

WHAT WAS THE LAST GREAT EXHIBITION YOU SAW?

I visited the Antony Gormley exhibition at the Royal Academy, which I found very interesting; it was both an experience and visually unexpected. Anthony's new exhibition, *With Spain in Mind*, runs from 14 February to 5 July at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. www.anthonywhishaw.com

