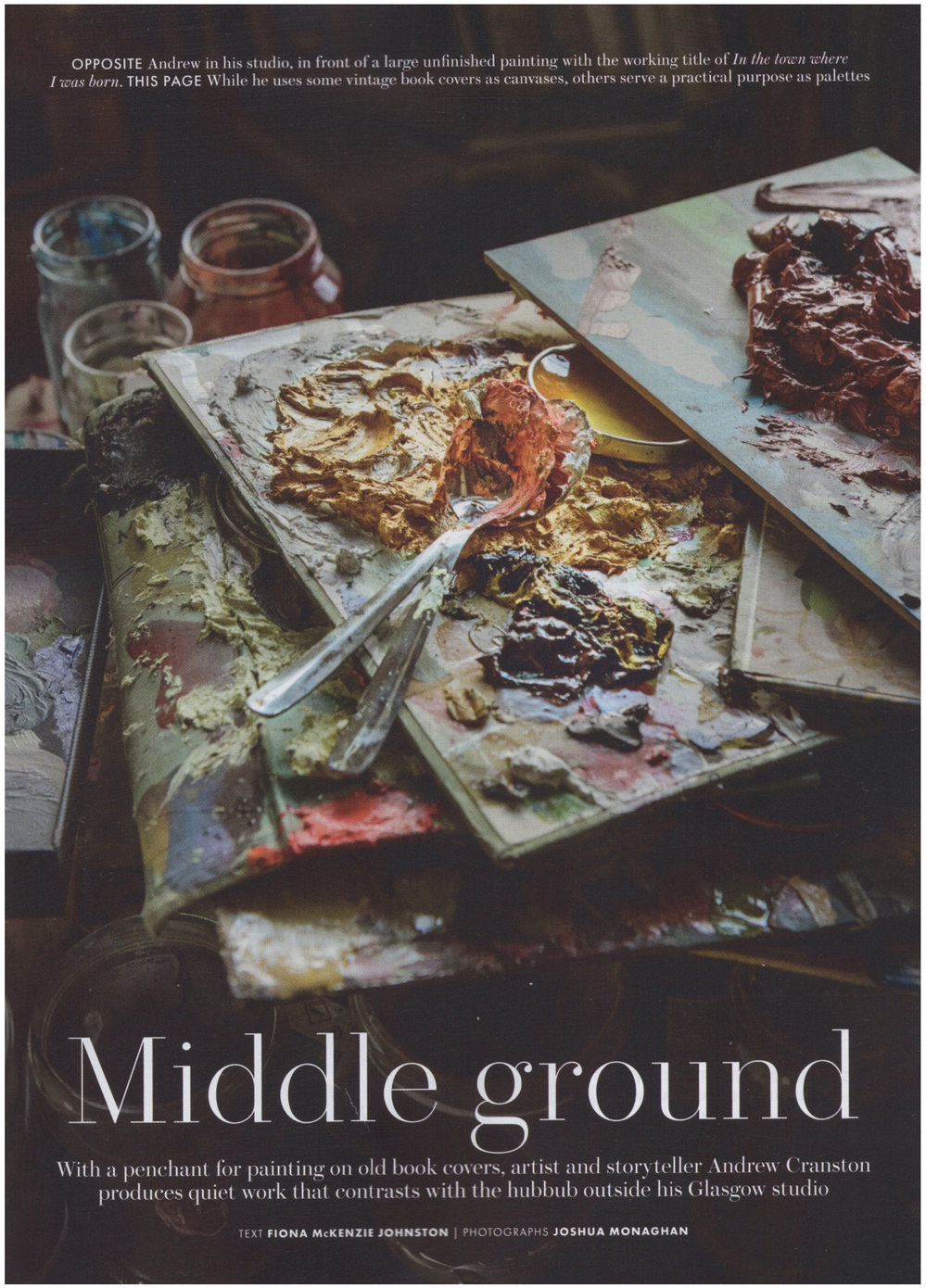


OPPOSITE Andrew in his studio, in front of a large unfinished painting with the working title of *In the town where I was born*. THIS PAGE While he uses some vintage book covers as canvases, others serve a practical purpose as palettes

# Middle ground

With a penchant for painting on old book covers, artist and storyteller Andrew Cranston produces quiet work that contrasts with the hubbub outside his Glasgow studio

TEXT **FIONA McKENZIE JOHNSTON** | PHOTOGRAPHS **JOSHUA MONAGHAN**

Though Andrew Cranston's paintings are rooted in the contemporary world, they maintain a serenity that belies our present day pace of life. 'Quietness is the quality I'm looking for,' he says. Despite this, the artist lives and works in Glasgow, a city renowned for its vibrant energy, and his studio is part of a complex that also hosts bands, sending a muffled sound up through the floor. 'It's not picturesque,' he confesses, explaining he has been based here for 12 years. 'The traces of previous work trigger motive and habit, and, before you know it, 10 hours have passed. Quietness can be to do with being absorbed in something.'

Andrew's practice involves addressing several paintings simultaneously, building up and reworking layers of distemper, oil paint and varnish. A wall of shelves holds over 70 of his smaller works 'that just rumble on', he says. 'It really comes from not being sure how to finish things. You have to live with the image and test it over time.' His preference for 'the in-between things – things that are not dramatic' affords him a scope that ranges from landscape to the domestic and from 'quite decorative' to 'more pared-down, minimalist'. He says the latter can be tricky, 'It's hard to make an expanse of white interesting – painting patterned wallpaper can feel easier.'

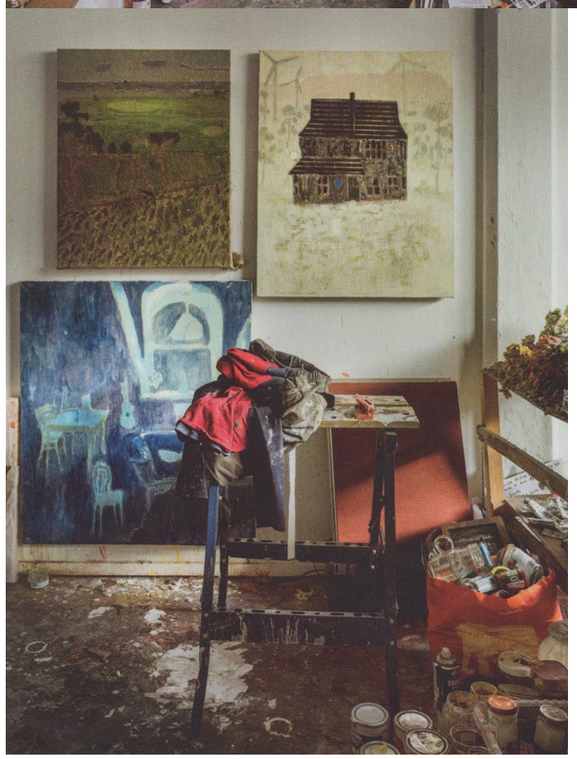
Atmospheric vignettes of gardens or a table set for tea are imbued with a sense of what he calls 'creative misremembering'. The idea of storytelling is reinforced by his propensity to use vintage book covers – chosen for their colour and texture – as a canvas. His sources are broad: 'I had a tutor when I was at Manchester Metropolitan University who said that, whatever I was doing, I should ask myself if there was a painting in it. Every part of our experience is a possibility.' The only challenge, he adds, is 'filtering things out; we probably see more images in a day than Winifred Nicholson saw in a year'.

*His paintings maintain a serenity that belies our present day pace of life*

The mention of that artist is pertinent. Though there are 100 years between some of their pictures, they have been paired in an exhibition in Bath co-curated by Andrew's gallerist, Richard Ingleby, and the designer Jonathan Anderson, who is creative director at Christian Dior. Andrew describes his admiration for 'the sense of economy' that he sees in her work, the limited range of colour in her intimate still lifes and family scenes, and their discreet beauty. He says that he perceives similar attributes in other painters – Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, Gwen John – and he notes the powerful profundity that can come with quietness □

*'Dreams of the Everyday: Paintings by Winifred Nicholson & Andrew Cranston' is at The Holburne Museum, Bath, until January 11. holburne.org | inglebygallery.com*





**TOP** Andrew in front of shelves displaying some of his book-cover artworks in progress. **BOTTOM** On one of the studio walls are (clockwise from top left) *Afternoon of a faun*, *House of the famous poet* (second version), 2025, and *Untitled* (a work in progress)