

Living

YORKSHIRE

FEBRUARY 2019

YORK, NORTH AND EAST YORKSHIRE

COMPLIMENTARY

STARRY NIGHT

Dark Skies Festival across Yorkshire national parks

AVERIL BLUNDELL'S DESIGN SECRETS

For luxury and style



REVEALED
Grantley Hall
latest

LOVED SCENES

Fab prints of York & coast

PLAN A BREAK THIS YEAR

Holiday homes in Dales & Moors

YORK CHEF SPILLS THE BEANS

A PRINT LINO CUT ABOVE

York landmarks and the Yorkshire landscape are the inspirations behind the work of printmaker Michelle Hughes, discovers Maxine Gordon

Michelle Hughes didn't have to travel far to make a study for her linocut print of Holgate Windmill – she can see the soaring white sail of the working flour mill from her home in the west side of York.

Whether sitting in the upstairs office of her 1930s semi or from her garden studio, the striking 18th century structure is easy to spot.

Her black and white print of the windmill – which began milling flour once more in 2012 – is one of her most popular prints. She was commissioned by the mill to make it for use on a tote bag. But she also sells the image as a limited edition print.

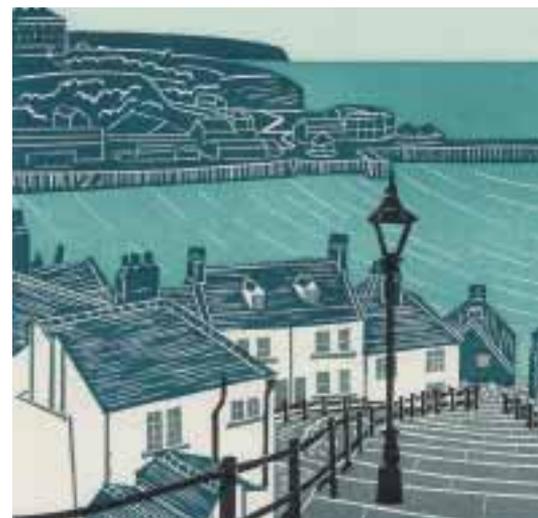
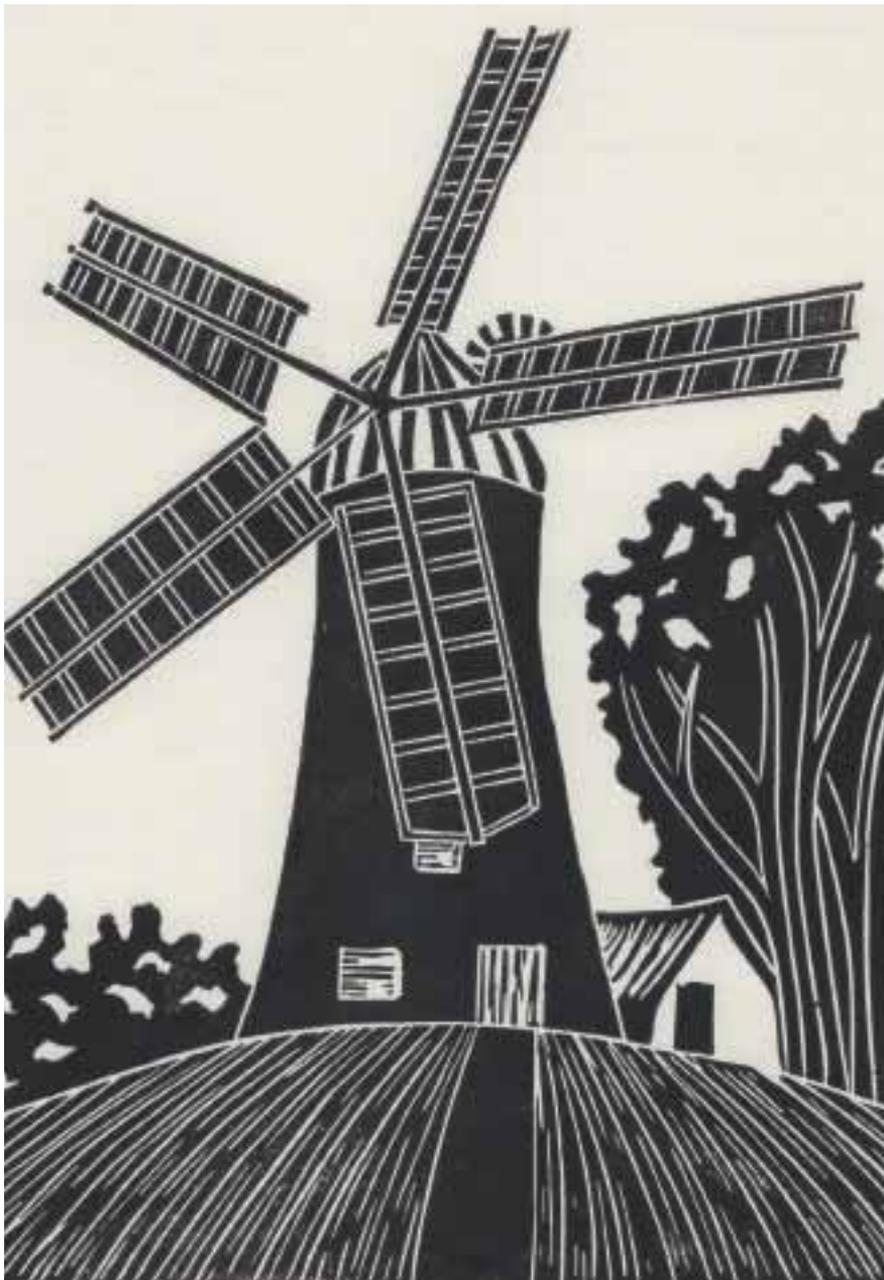
It was inspired – like so many of Michelle's prints – by a photograph. Most of the time, Michelle takes the photographs herself when she is out walking or cycling in the Moors, Wolds and Dales or along the Yorkshire coast.

It's this love of nature and the great outdoors that Michelle seeks to capture in her compact 16cm by 16cm designs (which are 32sqcm when framed for sale).

Her collection includes prints of the Hole of Horcum, the steps at Whitby Abbey, views across Robin Hood's Bay and a harbour scene at Staithes, as well as general scenes in the Yorkshire countryside. There are prints of Clifford's Tower and the Angel on the Green café in Bishophthorpe Road too, but no York Minster. "Too many straight lines," says Michelle, scrunching her nose in disapproval. "I love the Yorkshire Dales, Wolds and the Moors. I love a landmark or a wide-open space," she says. If you look at her images, she adds, you will often find a path that leads the eye through the picture.

It's that sense of direction she is looking for when she is out and about – and when she finds it, she will stop and take a photograph. It's fine when she is out by herself but can be a nuisance for friends. "I have to keep asking them to stop while I get out my camera."





Back at home, the creative process is an intensive one. Her office walls are covered in photographs, as well as interiors pages from magazines. Michelle studies these to predict colour trends – which in turn influence the shades she uses in her prints. After all, she wants people to buy them – this is her livelihood rather than a hobby.

Her commercial canniness stems from a previous career in fashion and homeware design, where she did everything from designing graphic T-shirts for high street stores to Winnie the Pooh strollers for Disney and homewares for George at Asda. At the beginning of her career, she worked for catalogues such as Freemans and would hand paint designs, mixing her own colours to get the required shade.

She still does that today for her linocut prints, hand mixing the oil-based paints until she gets the exact colour she needs. She keeps a record of each hue in a notebook, along with a “recipe” of how to make it. Most prints are limited editions with a finite run of 60, where after the linocut should be destroyed. Michelle prints five at a time – reprinting when they sell out. She used to print by hand, using a wooden spoon to burnish the ink and design on



to card, but now uses a hand-wound press which is quicker and less arduous on her body.

Michelle sells her prints in a few galleries, but mostly at Open Studios events she runs at her home and through her online shop (michellehughesdesign.com). She also runs workshops teaching people the basics of linocut printing.

And her favourite print? Probably the Hole of Horcum, she says. This is a made using three

separate linocuts, each adding a different layer to the image and an extra colour. It stands out from the others on account of the use of a deep plummy-purple to signify the heather on the Moors. It also represents happy memories for Michelle, from walking there with friends.

“I love the wide-open space – and the pub at Levisham, which is nice for sandwiches.”

And if she is lucky, she might catch sight and sound of a steam train crossing the Moors. “If I catch glimpse of a steam train going through, it makes me feel like a big kid.” Such is her partiality for a steam train or two that she is working on some designs for future prints.

They are part of a long list of new ideas she wants to commit to a linocut. Throughout 2019, she will be heading out on foot and on bike, with friends and by herself, looking for the perfect scene to capture at Flamborough, Filey, Bempton Cliffs and Sandsend, to name but a few. She will be making tracks too along the Cleveland Way and the Wolds Way and returning to Millington Pastures too, looking for inspiration.

Sounds like she is going to be busy.