

This year's National Eisteddfod is being held in an abandoned steel works. To complement its visual art section, Mary Lloyd Jones has chosen 14 colourful canvases by local artist Roger Cecil. The paintings are large, measuring six by five feet.

Roger Cecil is a collier's son. He belonged to a generation of underprivileged children who received places at Newport College of Art. Trying for the Royal College, he was put off by its snobbery and returned home. Black humour is ingrained in his nature. His paintings are warm and primitive; many are abstracted bodies that can be read as landscapes.

Today his work decorates big corporate spaces. The person who created them is as far from that world as it's possible to get. His creativity thrives in the narrow, terraced house where he was born. Visiting Roger Cecil, I gaze at a painting, two feet long and broader than it is high. Its surface is a scumble of grey, black and maybe green. The only variation is a funnel-shaped plume of white. The source of the plume is almost invisible: a tiny steam engine which turns the abstract composition into an exquisite Valleys landscape, childlike, generous and grand.

He uses household emulsions, plaster fillers, glue and Zebo (TM), a blacking for wood-fired stoves. His paintings have thick, hard surfaces that he cuts, carves, scrapes and polishes. Some are finished like silk.

Indulging in 'spot the influences', I think of Alfred Wallis, Roger Hilton, Mirò, Rothko, Bacon and Japanese lacquer work. One painting, kept in a corner, has acquired a patina of mould. 'Don't tell anyone', he begs, clapping his hand to his mouth in mock horror.

Roger Cecil is a natural surrealist; he knows how to play. He would have a whale of a time in the Steel Works.