

**FROM REALISM TO ABSTRACTION:
THE ART OF JB TAYLOR**
Adriana A. Davies

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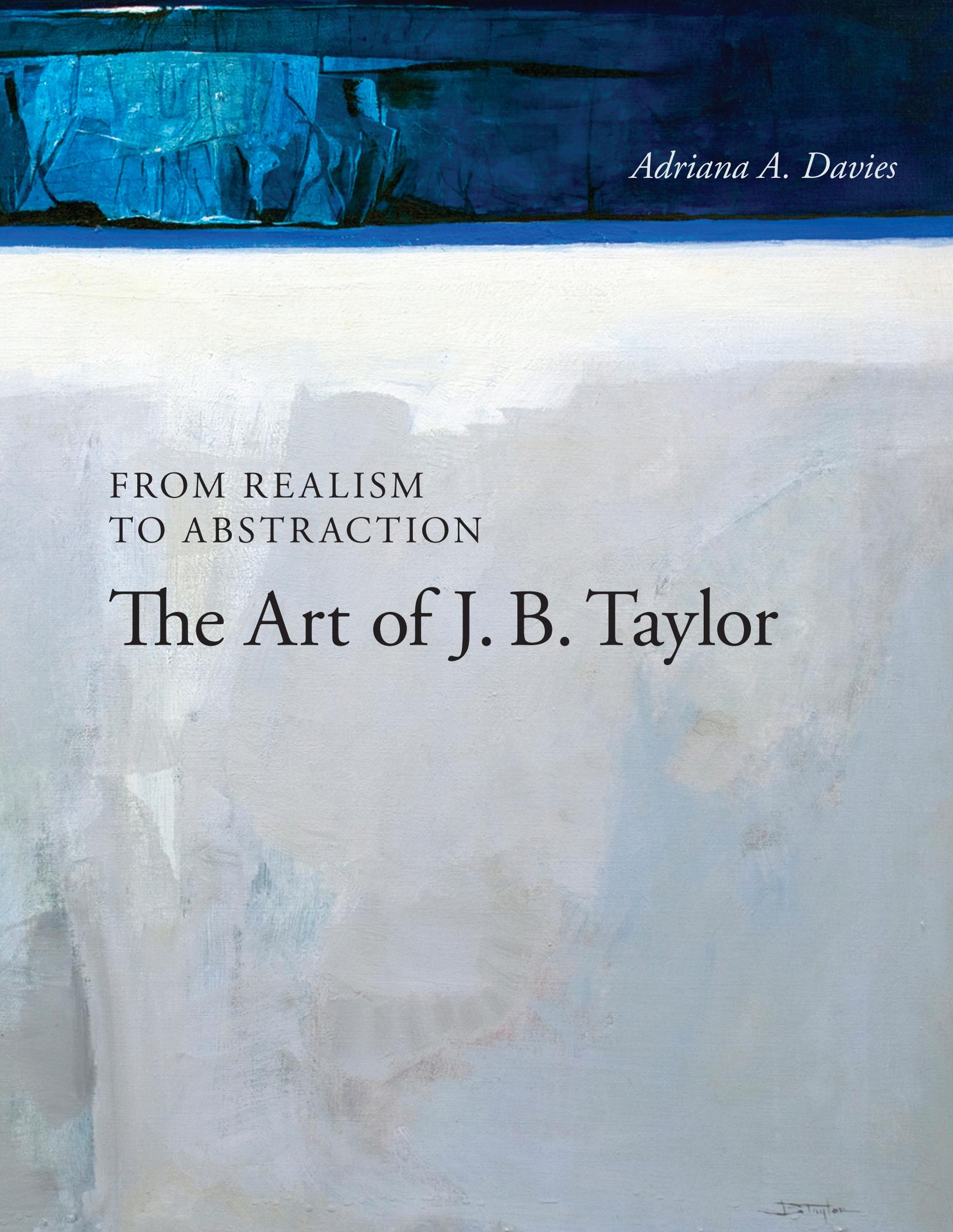
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The background of the cover is a painting. The top portion shows a dark, blue sky with some lighter blue, wispy clouds. Below the sky is a white, textured foreground that looks like snow or a very light-colored ground. The overall style is somewhat abstract and atmospheric.

Adriana A. Davies

FROM REALISM
TO ABSTRACTION

The Art of J. B. Taylor

J. B. Taylor

From Realism to Abstraction

ART IN PROFILE

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FROM REALISM
TO ABSTRACTION

The Art of J. B. Taylor



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Cover Art: J. B. Taylor, *Columbia #II*, 1968, acrylic on canvas, 76.2 x 91.4 cm, Private collection.
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*To my sons, Alexander and William Davies,
my daughters-in-law, Catherine and Sabrina,
and my grandsons, Oliver and Ciaran*

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This book would not have happened without Michale Lang, former Executive Director of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff. The first exhibit that she curated at the Whyte had a broad perspective – “Group of Seven to Takao Tanabe.” It was at this time that she discovered J. B. Taylor. At the exhibit opening in 2008, we discussed the possibility of an exhibition, and I indicated my interest in curating it. I had become aware of Taylor’s work, in 2005, when I advised Christopher Taylor to create a website showcasing his father’s work. This book evolved from the Curatorial Manual prepared for the “J. B. Taylor and the Idea of Mountains” exhibition for the Whyte. As I immersed myself in the research, I became captivated and entranced by Taylor’s work and couldn’t stop myself from finding out more and more.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of J. B. Taylor’s sons Philip and Christopher, as well as Taylor’s former colleagues and friends at the University of Alberta. A particular, though posthumous, thanks to his wife Audrey is also necessary. She carefully preserved his papers and photographs and created a marvellous scrapbook relating to his career and achievements. The scrapbook was an invaluable resource as it includes clippings of newspaper and magazine articles, catalogues of exhibits as well as other things related to his artistic output. Her lead was followed by son Christopher, who created an amazing website that includes a searchable database of Jack’s works, including photographic images (<http://www.jbtaylor.ca/>). During his life, Jack had begun to have slides made of his works. Christopher continued this process so that most works in the online catalogue are accompanied by images as well as ownership information. Christopher made all family papers available to me as well as his knowledge of his father’s work. He also generously aided me in searching the online catalogue to select works for the exhibit and the book.

The artist's studio still exists in the family's Edmonton home as he left it, including paints and other materials. His collection of art historical works that he used for teaching at the university is also there. With Christopher's assistance, I was able to view all of this material. In addition, Jack's extended family contributed biographical information.

I was fortunate to meet people who knew Jack extremely well. I had the pleasure of interviewing sons Philip and Christopher, and Taylor colleagues and friends including Allison Forbes, David Cantine, Robert Sinclair, Norman Yates, and Charlie Stelck.

Through both primary and secondary research, I have enjoyed enormously the discovery of Taylor's work. Over forty years after his death, it is appropriate to re-examine his work critically. At a time when Western Canadian artists were asserting their talent and also providing a visual identity for the West, Taylor was critically and commercially successful. His paintings, in particular his mountain landscapes, were a reflection of the West but also signalled a break with the representational art of the past as he moved into abstraction.

Adriana A. Davies, CM, PhD
Edmonton, Alberta
February, 2013