

Julie Dumbarton

SHE STANDS BACK AND PUTS THE END OF THE PAINTBRUSH IN HER MOUTH. ANOTHER LAYER OF PAINT HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THE CANVAS AND JULIE REFLECTS ON HER PROGRESS. THE PAINTINGS TAKE TIME TO COME TOGETHER AND THIS IS WHY SHE WORKS ON SEVERAL ALL AT ONCE. THIS IS WHAT MAKES THEM ALL SPECIAL, BUT ALSO WHAT MAKES THE LAST STAGES SO DIFFICULT.



The 19th century building she occupies was once a bakery until the mid-80s when it fell into disrepair. It is now her studio and, although resembling a barn in many ways, she has given it an artistic makeover. The colours have transformed the high, rough, white painted walls into a beautiful space which somehow feels warmer, even in the depths of winter.

Julie's work is bright, colourful and it often likened to some of the Scottish colourists' work from the mid-20th century, although she doesn't claim any influence from them. She now lives in Scotland with her husband and two children, having given up city living. Since moving to Scotland eight years ago, she has dedicated herself to her two passions - her family and her art. A series of sell-out shows have convinced her that she is on the right path.

She creates her work in layers, masking off key areas. Some layers are then stripped back to reveal bold colouring underneath. The tearing of paint layers creates organic rough edges which give the paintings an impressionistic feel. The painting comes together with the final session bringing perspective to the seemingly abstract shapes and colours.

"Colour plays the main role in what I create. A high or low perspective of densely knotted vegetation, a frantic pattern of grained wood or choking greenery that is so visually claustrophobic it has to be rescued by some sense of the landscape it lies in. I see it as bolts of illumination."

The landscapes she paints are inspired by the Scottish coast and highlands. Viewed through her eyes, they are dreamlike and nostalgic, but, at the same time, contemporary pieces of artwork. The work is a reflection of her personality: bold, confident and full of creative abandon. Her artwork is so much about the feeling and emotion of the scene and this resonates with people not just in the UK but all over the world.

Success hasn't changed her though. Julie will always be the same vivacious character with the same values, regardless of her position and status. Her achievements are even more remarkable considering she has had to look after two young boys, Elliot and Chandler. Chandler's Autism has meant she has also had to become a full-time carer, until recently when he has been able to go to school.

She makes no apologies or excuses; the art is what matters and, even without knowing about the person behind it, her work stands up on its own. More than that, it endears and captivates people with its beauty. Knowing the woman behind the work makes it clear that her latest work is a triumph of optimism, determination and perseverance.

Her latest collection draws from favourite walks, memories, emotions and a touch of nostalgia. "This show has given me the chance to reflect on my time from when I was first living and working in Manchester to now. My landscapes were always beautiful places, but not ever really habitable, almost like viewing through a looking-glass at a perfect place, but you couldn't quite touch it. Now I live in those landscapes; there are cottages, boats, meadows and glades full of colour and excitement. You can touch places that seem hard to reach and go there and not be afraid of anything.

My family and my painting are the two most important things to me and equally have taught me never to dwell on the negatives but always the positives. I get to paint every day and go home to my family; life could never get any better than that and I really hope this series of paintings shows just how lucky I have been and continue to be."

The Julie Dumbarton exhibition runs 16 June -16 July at Mooch Gallery, The Triangle, Exchange Square, Manchester, M4 3TR. Telephone: +44 (0) 161 8192199. www.mooch-art.co.uk