

portrait of an Artist



Jennifer Harper meets one of Edinburgh's most exciting figurative artists, *Stephanie Rew*, to find out her inspirations, passions and plans for the future.



* *Stephanie's* work sells for between £600 and £5,000. She is exhibiting in the Caledonian Exhibition at Contemporary Fine Art Eton from 28 February for two weeks, and at the Glasgow Art Fair (Art Exposure Gallery Stand) from 27 to 30 March.

* She also sells her work through Art Exposure Gallery in Glasgow; the Edinburgh Gallery; Oisín Gallery in Dublin; and Tracey McNee Fine Arts, London.

Women elegantly dressed in vibrant kimonos adorned with lavish embroidery, others lying nude draped with satin sheets, and some breathlessly clothed in bustle dresses. This is the colourful and exotic world created by artist *Stephanie Rew*.

Edinburgh-based *Stephanie's* strength lies in being able to capture the female form in all her glorious guises, whether clothed or not, with sideward glances catching passing thoughts and emotions. A graduate of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee, her work hangs in collections throughout the UK, including in The Royal Bank of Scotland's headquarters in Edinburgh.

Drawing and painting have been fundamental factors in *Stephanie's* life from a very young age.

"I knew that was my talent even at primary school," she admits. "At secondary school I just couldn't wait to go on to art college. My passion has always been art."

It was while at art college that *Stephanie* – who lives in the capital with her husband Tom and young son Cameron – honed the craft of painting with oils, something she has used to perfect her style. It was also while studying that she spent time observing rehearsals for the Dundee Repertory Dance Company, fine tuning the path towards figurative painting and drawing on the seamless performance and poise exhibited by the human body in dance.

"Dance has been inspirational to me for a long time," admits *Stephanie*. "I am interested in how the body can work at its optimum. In the dance classes I would do about 60 drawings in 10 minutes. It was

very challenging but inspiring. I have also always loved painting the nude. It is timeless and a very strong symbol. You can show all strengths of emotion, plus it is a challenge as it is very difficult to get right."

She adds: "A lot of my portraits don't have a full portrait, just to add mystery and drama. If the face is hidden the painting becomes personal as it could be any woman."

Of course, the work of a figurative artist hangs on being able to build relationships with models who appreciate and understand their work. With this in mind, *Stephanie* is fortunate to have two friends who regularly sit for her.

Stephanie's most recent move towards costume painting – everything from the corset and bustle to the kimono – is another element that strikes a chord with the viewer. The elegance and serenity captured is complimented by her lightness of hand to show delicate fabrics draped across the figures.

"For a long time my paintings were very monochrome, so painting the corsets, bustles and kimonos led me to colour. It was a breath of fresh air," she confides. "I love putting drama and theatre into my work and often borrow costumes from the Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh in order to draw them. Painting kimonos is another way to challenge myself as they are all hand crafted and unique with a lot of detail."

Stephanie is consistently pushing her own boundaries, and next plans to incorporate Venetian masks into her work, another example of her constant determination to stretch and challenge her skills. The results of this conviction are visually arresting.