

EXECUTIVELIFESTYLE

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SCOTTISH LIFE FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS



INSIDE ART REVIEW

A comprehensive look
at the art scene in Scotland

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to die for

pam carter - artist



Pam with the latest addition to the family – springer spaniel Totiman, who has joined Diesel the weimaraner, Yoshi the shar-pei and Vodka the dalmation.

though, having participated in shows including the Royal Scottish Society (RSA) the Royal Glasgow Institute (RGI) Visual Arts Scotland (VAS) and the Paisley Art Institute (PAI), as well as about a half dozen solo shows every year.

East African born Pam moved with her family to Glasgow when she was thirteen and now considers Scotland to be her home, although her early years in Africa are a great source of inspiration to her. Her Scottish father and Austrian mother were very encouraging of their daughter's talent, but were understandably a little apprehensive about the long term issues around her decision to go to art school. For Pam, though, the issue was more to do with whether being led into a teaching career post art school would affect her ambition to be a painter, having been warned about the difficulties of balancing a career as an artist and a teacher. Hard work and determination have made all the difference, though, and Pam's desire to have at least one solo show a year has been more than borne out.

Pam's Glasgow School of Art background has stood her in good stead. "There was great emphasis on still life and life painting and that made for a very good training for draughtsmanship, and I did meet a lot of people who were very influential. But for me, once I stepped out of art school I found the freedom to paint the landscape. I think that was always where my heart lay,

and my early influences came from people like Joan Eardley, Nicolas de Stael, Maurice de Vlaminck and Duncan Shanks – one of my lecturers. In the early days most of my work was executed in guache or watercolour and from life, as I had no studio space, so there were distinct differences between what I produced then and now. But lots of things were different then - in those days teaching barely paid for the mortgage and a tube of guache paint was a real luxury. If I made a sale, the proceeds were converted to materials."

It is arguable that today's art students are better prepared for the adjustment to life after their undergraduate course. It is far more common now, though by no means universal, to find young art students well versed in the business know-how that successful freelance workers need, as well as having a greater number of opportunities to promote themselves. Graduates from previous decades, however, often feel that they were ill prepared for careers as artists, making the journey towards any kind of success a long one. Pam Carter does feel that aspect of the education system was slightly lacking, but never let that hold her back. "Unlike today, art students in the 70s just didn't have the same promotion, opportunities or exposure to take their career forward. And we were never really taught professional practice. There is a group of us from the 70s, people like John Lowrie Morrison, George Burrell, Sylvia Allen and myself, that just plodded on regardless, and that really shows how hard work can pay off – eventually!"

As with most artists, Pam has had to take on a variety of summer jobs to keep her in paint and canvas. Few artists, though, can say that their first commission came from such an unlikely source. "I took a job selling encyclopaedias one summer for some extra cash, and that was actually how my first commission came about. I was in Lanark, selling door to door, and I got talking to this one guy. He didn't want the encyclopaedias, but he did ask me to paint a 4' x 4' abstraction of the Murray Hill tenements, for the handsome sum of £30. I of course said I'd love to, but delivering the painting was a problem – having strapped it on to the roof of my mini it blew off and ended up mangled in the middle of the dual carriageway. Luckily, though, he saw the funny side, and together we refitted it and hung it on his wall. He got back in touch with me recently, actually, and I helped reframe his painting with a sturdy professional frame! It was good to see it again, actually, a real blast from the past."



Fans of Pam's more recent work would probably barely recognise the tone of that first commission. The colours were typical Glasgow School of Art of that period – subtle greys and understated, and a million miles away from the vibrant contrasts and bold colours of today's paintings. The degree of colour and heightened contrasts came from the two years Pam spent in the Seychelles, doing voluntary missionary work. There, she found scenery alive with colour, lush vegetation and striking coastlines. From this point, Pam became what might best be described as an atmospheric painter, taking inspiration from the colours, light and surroundings and transferring it all onto the canvas, creating paintings that burst with life and energy, and capture the mood of the scene. Not necessarily a replica of that scene, Pam's paintings are more to do with conveying emotion and the essence of a place.

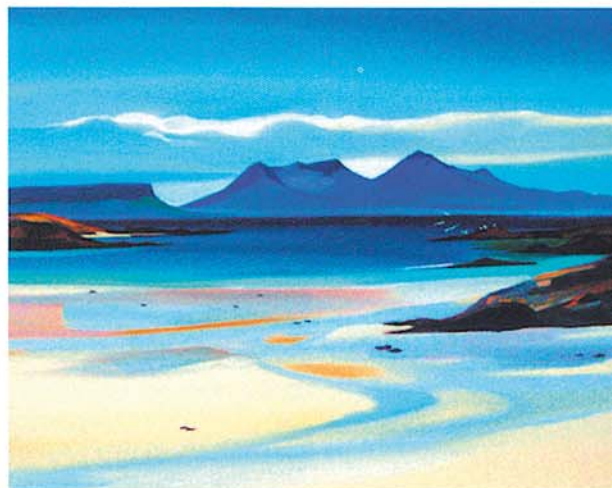
Once she had returned Scotland, trips to the Isles and the wonderful light that Scotland offers became her inspiration. Initially taking a variety of part time jobs lecturing in various colleges, Pam then secured a full time post lecturing at Falkirk College. "I loved teaching and I have always felt a bit torn as to which path I should follow. Teaching brought great rewards – keeping abreast of the changes in the art world, developments in technology and being surrounded by creativity. And as the courses became more professional, so did I. There is a clear element of professionalism required to become a successful artist, and that goes along with discipline, commitment and passion."

Professionalism and passion aside, Pam considers that there were really two distinct points, two breakthroughs that lifted her career. "One was in 1983 when I had my first almost sell out show at the Lillie Art Gallery and then in 1990 when I decided 'let's see what you're made of Pam', and really set my attention to painting. I built a studio in my attic, although the hatchway limited sizes to under 32", and I ventured into oils."

The paintings Pam produces now tend to be land and seascapes from the Scottish scenery she loves so much. Favourite locations are Skye, Lewis, Harris, and the Uists, as well as, more recently, Tiree and Coll. The painting process always really begins out on location, where Pam takes many photographs from different angles, at different times of day and in different weather conditions. However, she does prefer to do the actual painting indoors, having found through experience that her style and use of colour is better accomplished in the studio. Her studio is small but full of energy, with a collection of canvases in various stages of the process on display, which allows a fascinating insight into the development of a finished piece. At the earliest stages, canvases can be seen to have a grey undercolour. Pam recycles old colours from her palette, and the result is a creamy base colour she uses on all of her canvases, though she often uses more than one undercolour to build up the texture and vibrancy of the end product. She then goes on to give the painting its initial form by drawing in initial ideas of the composition and blocking in the scene with a broad brush, before

returning to the drawing to make any corrections she decides on. This process may go on for some time, and other paintings may take Pam's attention in the meantime. The whole process is one that Pam has developed throughout her career, and has benefited from trial and error as well as training and intuition. Once she reaches the final stages her aim is to enhance the lighting and colour, and add any final touches that give the piece its true character.

Pam Carter is enjoying a comfortable level of success, producing about 250 pieces a year, and is currently busier than ever. "Art as a business involves much more organisation than I ever realised. Apart from the management of preparing work, having it framed, taking framed paintings to galleries, there is also the self promotion in the form of brochures, invitations, adverts, liaison with clients, mailing lists, website and studio visits, not to mention keeping accounts and administration up to date. This year I have finally decided that I have had to let go of the love of teaching and I've given up lecturing.



Even with my faithful assistant, Elaine Scott, that has recently joined the business, it consumes all of our time."

Art has always been Pam's life. She talks about how her focus on art meant sacrificing her social life at times, and she is a little wistful on this subject. You get the impression that she has always struggled with time, and could fill a day several times over with all the projects she has on the go. But ultimately she has no regrets about her chosen career and her devotion to it "I've always enjoyed the fact that I'm doing what I love, and I still love it the way I always have."

"This year I am hoping that time will permit me to develop my work in ways that I have always wanted to and to paint 'that painting' that is deep in my soul and still eludes me."

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