

He drinks everything with his eyes and lays down his impressions as he feels them

Words by Marion Jackson

So far, Ian Fraser may be predominantly known for his fresh and child-like renditions of 'Herbie' the beautifully expressive black cat. His simple, naive approach to this subject leaves on the canvas a joyous offering to adorn any modern home. But Herbie is just one of the many feathers to Ian's cap. You can safely say, there is plenty more where that came from!

Experimental by nature, Ian tries to follow the Japanese concept of 'Kaizen' or continuous improvement, and not afraid to take chances with his style, Ian's approach to his craft is one where he is always learning, always pushing what he knows and always growing. So in 2007, he found himself in New York in the respected hands of artist Kenneth McIndoe from the Art Students League, eager and ready to add to his knowledge.

"I'm evangelical about art; I'm thoroughly devoted." With that said, he lists his love of art like a 'Wish You Were Here' travelogue. Quite the jet-setter, he recounts his exposure to the arts across the globe at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and countless galleries and museums across Europe and the Far East. It is no surprise to learn that Ian once worked for British Airways and British Caledonian. It is more appropriate to ask where has he NOT been?

"Travel feeds my art; it's a necessary stimulus. The colours, the people, the food... I look with a different eye. These are my motivation moments and the more I travel, the more ideas come." [He breaks off into what one could only describe as a euphoric episode, extolling the virtues of other artists and the immense skill by which they paint.]

Italy is of particular inspiration. Ian and his wife Sheila are currently overseeing the conversion of their 12th century villa in Tuscany. Complete with domed ceilings and stone walls, the Medieval cellars (cantinas) are having their own renaissance. He laughs as he tells how he found an old disintegrated cupboard in the cellar. Seeing the potential use, he was able to salvage several boards which he set upon with brush and paint. Voila (or however the Italians would say it)!

This same enthusiasm is reflected in all the lively, colourful pieces he produces.

Gushing with excitement he admits, "At times it can be a bit of a frenzy when I paint. I'm like a little boy again and it's an on-going battle not to cover the room in paint." Recalling a demonstration evening at Kilmood near Saintfield he says, "I remember years ago taking an old sock to the canvas, slapping the paint on in an exaggerated, larger-than-life way...It was a performance that I thoroughly enjoyed though I'm sure there were a few raised eye-brows from the traditionalists!"

Looking back, Ian shares how he wanted to go to Art College, but instead went to Queen's. Having taken the academic route, rather than his passion, caused real anguish for a young Ian, but in some way this path afforded him the connections and preparations necessary to become the painter he is today. His turning point came like an outburst, an outpouring of frustration and we have been enjoying his work ever since.

Ian brushes off the romantic notion associated with artists, "It is blooming hard work; the grafting and pushing the boundaries." He lists the emotions of presenting his work for sale, "I brought

around five paintings to the Kerlin Gallery on the Ormeau Road and the very first 'Herbie' sold before the exhibition even opened!" His fear and self-doubt were replaced by confidence and delight proving the old adage 'nothing ventured nothing gained.'

Today Ian continues to draw strength and vision from his surroundings; they fuel his gift. The colours he chooses, the marks and scratches he makes on canvas express the joy with which he sees. He drinks everything with his eyes and lays down his impressions as he feels them.

He pleases himself first and hopes that somebody else will like it. Motivated and ambitious, Ian Fraser's work is bright and vivid, capturing the soul of his subject. Contemporary and modern, his colourful palette fits perfectly with today's current homes and interiors.

Ian's work has previously appeared in The Michael Maguire Gallery in Provincetown Massachusetts, USA, The Maltby Gallery in Winchester, and The Galleria Bongiovanni in Bologna, Italy. His work is currently available at The Eakin Gallery, Belfast, Lagan Gallery, Lisburn, Castle Gallery, Lisburn, Manor Gallery, Banbridge, Dunluce Gallery, Bushmills and The Yard, Holywood. A full listing of Ian Fraser's work can be found at www.ianfraser.biz.