

# ART SCENE

*You never know what you might find or who you might meet if you take to the streets of south west London. Local art guru Ashley Eldridge-Ford uncovers secret studios and award-winning artists, creating everything from pet portraits to colour-popping sculpture...*

With the East End hogging the creative limelight, who would have guessed that the South West has quite so much to offer artistically? With artists squirreled away in back gardens, front rooms and unassuming studio clusters, there is every incentive to explore your own neighbourhood. Dedication to neighbourhood watch is more exciting when you could be living next door to the next David Hockney.

But if curtain twitching seems uncouth, how about visiting one of the numerous artists' studios hosting regular exhibitions? I decided to investigate further and started my whistle-stop tour at Studio Voltaire, situated down a quiet road off Clapham High Street. Well known among the art crowd, it is HQ to over 40 artists and I was here to meet two of them. Eluding definition, Amy Stephens describes herself as creating objects rather than sculptures. Using metals, pinewood and flock, and with a penchant for stag antlers, Stephens admits that a part of the creation process is out of her control and dependent on her environment. With regular exhibitions, I wonder whether her drive is partly due to the freezing temperature of her studio!

Further down the corridor, in a space infused with the scent of oil paints, is Isobel Peachey, winner of the 2009 BP Travel Award at the National Portrait Gallery. Using pastels and oils to capture the gentle individual essence of her sitters, Peachey's portraits result in a timelessness and quietude that readily explain her numerous private commissions.

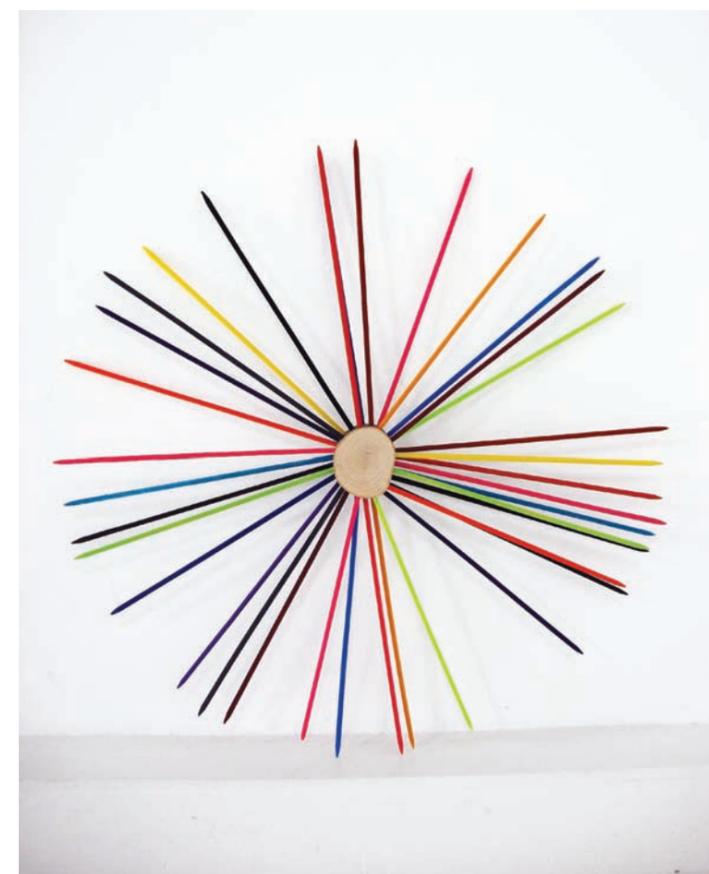
The plethora of artists working in South West London is indicated by the quantity of participants in the Borough-wide Open Studio events. These give the public private exhibitions whilst house-nosing. You could visit someone such as the 2009 Jerwood Drawing ▶



Reflections and ripples on local ponds are re-worked with *bright, colourful exuberance...*



Opposite page, Richard White 'Golden Lake' 2008, oil on linen. This page clockwise from top left, Isobel Peachey 'Jocelyn' oil on canvas; Rupert Dixon 'An Interior of Istanbul'; Amy Stephens 'Prism Straightener' 2009, wood and mixed media; Kaori Tatebayashi 'Blouse 006', ceramic, photo by Norman Hollands.





Above, Timothy Sutton 'Wilma' oil on canvas

Below, Alex Manolatos 'Estate' oil on canvas



Prize finalist, Richard White, who works from a neat, light-filled studio in his Tooting garden. The bright, colourful exuberance of his work is in almost total contrast with the way he works. With 90% of his inspiration taken from daily dog walks in nearby parks, White seeks suburban wooded areas, and more recently, reflections and ripples on local ponds and the River Thames. His black and white photographs capture contrast and shape then back in his studio colour is carefully worked onto the canvas to create bold, graphic interpretations.

Another home-based artist is Alex Manolatos who trained as an architect before turning to painting; his home beautifully blends these two passions. Manolatos builds his colour-pencil sketches of surrounding Battersea into three-dimensional *maquettes* from which he paints large-scale abstracted collages of the passage of life around him. From the nearby housing estate to the riverfront walk, he collects snippets of the neighborhood that absorb you within them.

And from houses we meander into the palaces, villas and yali's of Istanbul that inspire the architecturally sumptuous work of interiors painter, Rupert Dixon.

His paintings lusciously convey the grandeur of these buildings. Light falls like molten metal across the painted ceilings and floors into the silent, forgotten spaces of the past. It's surprising to know that Dixon works from the funky Wimbledon Art Studio, a world away from his hallowed Baroque rooms...

Breaking out of the studio is important and not all artists promote the arts solely through the artistic activities within them. Timothy Sutton is the force behind Lambeth Open and the Urban Art Festival. When he has time to paint, he does so off Streatham Hill, in the unexpectedly large ASC Studios. Within two small studio spaces, Sutton paints cheerfully animated portraits of people and pets.

And finally, from animation to immobility, in the 401½ Studios in Clapham, Kaori Tatebayashi works with the natural hues of her materials, designing items of

'clothing' that are gently moulded, sculptural and fragile. They are less prêt-a-porter than prêt-a-casser however, as they are painstakingly made entirely from ceramic. Kaori also creates delicate tableware and taking a tea set home after a visit to her studio is surely a wonderful end to an art-full day.

With many more fascinating and talented local artists to discover, who needs to hassle across to Hoxton when you can browse for art on your own doorstep? ■

## Manolatos paints large-scale *abstracted* collages of the *passage of life* around him...

### AMY STEPHENS

Prices range from  
£380 - £4,500  
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