

A woman with blonde hair in a braid, wearing a white shirt, is looking out a window. The window shows a painting of a landscape with green trees and a white fence. The woman is smiling slightly. The background is a plain wall with some spots.

Capturing the 'likeness' of things

Whenever she needs a dash of inspiration for her work artist Jill Barthorpe only needs to look out of the window to take in the stunning Lincolnshire countryside surrounding her home, as she tells KATE CHAPMAN.

AS A painter specialising in landscape and still life, Jill is privileged to live within such beautiful surroundings and says it these vistas she regularly turns to when creating her own works of art.

Jill, who paints in oil, describes her artistic style as figurative – explaining that although it is abstract she maintains enough realism to make it recognisable.

During the past twenty years Jill has exhibited extensively in the UK and America including four solo exhibitions in London. Her paintings have been selected several times for Critics’ Choice exhibitions and have been sold through Christie’s of London contemporary art sales.

Her work also features in several important corporate collections.

“I get up as soon as it’s light and walk my dogs in the countryside then paint all day until either the light goes or I’m too tired.

“I love East Anglia with its huge skies and open countryside – it’s proper farming country,” says Jill, who lives in Sewstern, near Grantham.

“I always try to work with things in front of me. I go out with a sketchbook or a canvas and I stand around in fields painting and when that’s not possible I work from photos.

“I take lots of notes too, make lots of drawings and I have a good visual memory which all helps to build a picture.”

Jill, who grew up over the county border in Nottinghamshire, developed her passion for painting and drawing when she was a child. Encouraged to pursue her love of art by her parents she completed an art course at Trent Polytechnic and then gained a place at the Slade School of Art in London.

“I was always drawing and painting as a child, and always did art at school, I’ve just always been focussed on it,” recalls Jill.

“I was always very lucky, my parents always supported me. My father said to me once ‘you are a very lucky person – you know what you want to do, most people never find that out’, so they’ve supported me wholeheartedly.

“The money was never really a consideration, there were always jobs I could do to earn money, to keep painting, that was my only motivation.”

After finishing her four-year course Jill won a scholarship which took her to south west France where she spent three happy years painting the glorious French landscape.

She then moved back to London and lived in her one-room studio where she continued to paint.

She favours oil over other mediums because they are malleable and can be moved around and for their intensity of colour.



1: Artist Jill Barthorpe who specialises in landscape art
2: Jill’s studio
3: Gunby Track East

“While I was in London I did lots of part-time jobs like waitressing and stuff to make ends meet, so I could still paint. It was classic living on a shoestring, doing any jobs I could so I could spend most of my time painting,” smiles Jill.

Around the same time as meeting her husband, she completed a secretarial course and took on various office roles while continuing to paint.

The couple then returned to the Lincolnshire flat lands which Jill loved so much, and she initially split her time between the city and the countryside, before reverting





her focus to her artwork. Another move followed to the outskirts of Grantham a few years later so Jill could be closer to her parents.

“When you work in one place for a long time, you really get to know the landscape. I do a lot of work around here, go walking with my dog and you watch things all the time – like the trees, the hedges and the fields – through the seasons and focus on the details and then you build up a picture of the landscape and how it behaves.

“It’s fabulous around here; it’s good honest countryside, good farming landscape and you can always see a long way because it’s so open.

“It’s earthy too and we are just on the Leicestershire border, which is nice, as going the other way you get some of the rolling hills.

“For me the excitement of painting is trying to capture the ‘likeness’ of things without slavish description.

“Paradoxically I find the most interesting way to carve out this reality is to use objects of an ephemeral nature: trees, clouds, flowers; their constant movement and the passage of the light during the day forces me to make decisions about their essential character and to attempt to draw that, rather than rely on an impression based on the moment.

“Similarly, my approach to colour is to distil the essence and define the point of change rather than model the surface.”

As well as working on her own pieces, Jill also takes commissions and is currently preparing for a forthcoming exhibition due to take place in Kent, next May.

Her work is also for sale in several galleries around the country in Derbyshire and Suffolk and she also sells pieces through the British Art Portfolio online.

“My work is very figurative. You can see what things are, but I try and take away as much as I can, so that it still shows what it is. It’s just about creating a reality – an alternative reality so when you look at a



landscape for example you can feel the space within it. And can understand the space and what it is. I try and keep it as abstract as I can but maintain enough reality that it holds together.

“Being an artist is a wonderful job and I’m so lucky to be inspired by the landscape around me every day.” ■

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To find out more about Jill’s work visit www.jillbarthorpe.co.uk

Photographs: Courtesy of Jill Barthorpe

4: Towards Belvoir
5: Late apples
6: Silver cup

