Lucy Doyle

Coloratura 2022

Sharing my painting life and new work

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Introduction

I graduated from Art College in 1982, feeling more than a little adrift and very daunted by the huge task I had set myself but I was determined to continue as a full-time painter. I challenged myself to develop my work to another level of authenticity. I wanted to have a strong, expressive, colourful style; so that I could produce joyous paintings that fed the soul. This is my 40th year as a full-time painter so I am taking the opportunity to share with you what inspires and influences me. Over this long period I have built up a large body of work and for the last twenty years I have curated my output into a series of solo show catalogues. It takes a year or more to create the 20 to 30 paintings needed for a solo show. What keeps me painting is the need to always push my skill sets to their limits and treat each painting as an exploratory exercise, thus producing uniquely different and authentically original paintings each time.

Over my career as a painter I have explored many mediums. I was experimenting with egg tempera at college and continued using this medium for a few years before changing to acrylic on paper and board. It wasn’t until the 1990’s that I started to paint with oils and have continued to do so ever since. I developed my current style I of painting around the millennium which is using thick oil impasto and working almost exclusively with a palette knife. This technique helps me achieve the richly textured surface that is so important to me. I am a colourist, so my preoccupation and what quintessentially drives me to paint, is to enhance colour to its maximum effect and luminosity. I endeavour to use colour in an expressive way to create the moods and feelings for the particular composition I am working on.

My subject matter has always been the same, which is the place, people and pets that I live with. My aim is to create an imaginary world of colour and texture, working from life where I can but happily abstracting and manipulating space and distances to bring everything up to the frontal plane. This allows me to make the most of the decorative elements and patterning that I love to celebrate in my work. Within these constructed interiors I interweave my figures. My figures are conjured up from within and are symbolic female forms rather than portraits.

Front cover: Coloratura 122 x 152 cm Oil on canvas
Coloratura

At the beginning of a new collection of paintings I decide on a title, which has been developing in the back of my mind over many months. The title is just a loose construct, but allows me to experiment with colour moods and new subject matter, providing me with a renewed impetus and new challenges. This keeps my work fresh and vital.

I was very honoured in 2021 to have some of the images of past paintings used as part of the backdrop to Rodula Gaitanou’s production of Rossini’s Barber of Seville performed by Gothenburg Opera Company during September and October, 2021. As a result, I glimpsed through a window into the world of opera with all its colour and sound so I was inspired to call my latest collection of paintings Coloratura which means elaborate embellishment and ornamentation, usually referring to the Soprano voice.

The largest painting in this collection is the 122 x 152 cm Coloratura painting that imbues all that I was trying to achieve at the time.

Gothenburg Opera by kind permission of Lennard Sjoberg
Extract from sketchbook

Painting in progress

Coloratura working sketch
Coloratura in studio
Coloratura 122 x 152 cm oil on canvas
Influences

A vital part of the painting process is experiencing the work of other artists both past and present, something which continues to shape and influence my own paintings. In my lifetime, I have built up a whole gallery of these iconic images that continue to feed and colour my inner visual world. All these influences are subconsciously absorbed and processed, then slowly filter through, helping to inform and expand my own personal language of paint. I explore these ideas in my sketch books working up the composition. Then I bring the idea to my studio, working on a full-scale paper sketch, so that I can plan out the finer details ready to transpose onto canvas.

For example, it was Augustus Egg’s *The Travelling Companions* (below) that influenced my own painting *Day Return*. I just love its symmetry that creates this uniquely balanced composition. The two figures, echoing and mirror imaging the other, create a sense of movement like weighing scales on either side of the central line. The landscape, so strongly shaping the mood, creates an exciting sense of travel and expanse; directly opposing the intimacy and containment of the carriage scene.

Augustus Egg *The Travelling Companions* 1862
Day Return in studio
Day Return final working sketch
Aria in studio with working sketch
Aria 91 x 76 cm Oil on canvas
Spring Flower Arrangement 91 x 91 cm Oil on canvas
Autumn Kitchen  91 x 91 cm Oil on canvas
Ideas

The idea for Tapestry came from a collection of paintings I worked on in 2011 the main work was a 152 x 122 cm oil on canvas painting the subject matter was of a female figure working on a tapestry with a spring scene of flowering cherry trees through the window and a cat playing with the wool at her feet (below). I reworked this painting for several years and finally had to abandon the project and destroy the painting which I very seldom do. However, I was determined to try again with the subject matter which has intrigued me for so long and this time with lessons learnt it worked for me (image right).
Tapestry  122 x 91 cm Oil on canvas
Working from life in studio
July Heatwave  122 x 122 cm Oil on canvas
Sketch book study for *Daisy Chain*
Daisy Chain  71 x 71 cm Oil on canvas
Inspiration

As well as painting from my imagination I also love to paint from life and will set up a still life to paint from in my studio. I will paint *in situ* in the garden and as I live in rural Wicklow surrounded by fields and woodland I find that I am never short of inspiration. I incorporate flowers into most of my figurative and still life compositions so having daily access to whatever is growing around the house is all part of the process of painting for me. Over the years I have been tending and planting up new herbaceous borders just outside my studio which I use as a cutting garden. The flowers and plants that grow in my garden and the surrounding fields give me endless opportunities of painting from life. It is this that provides me the nuances and accidentals that I like to incorporate into my painting. So painting flowers is one of my passions in life and I am never without something from the garden to paint, even if in the depths of winter, if only a sprig of holly.

Centre:

*Hearth* 91 x 122 cm  Oil on canvas
Painting in the garden
Painting Daffodils

Daffodils are the first impressive and colourful flowers to emerge from my over-wintered garden. They shine out and boldly trumpet each spring, challenging me anew to capture their splendid peculiarity and uniqueness in paint. I never tire of this wonderful flower and have painted it annually for as long as I can remember.

This year they were at their best when the devastating news from Ukraine broke into our lives. So I painted this year’s Daffodils for an Art Charity Auction supporting Ukrainian refugees.
Ukraine Daffodils 61 x 46 cm Oil on canvas
Woodland Rhododendrons 91 x 76 cm  Oil on canvas
Pot Pourri  71 x 71 cm  Oil on canvas
Rhododendron falconera 122 x 91 cm  Oil on canvas
In the Garden  71 x 61 cm  Oil on canvas
October dahlias in studio
October dahlia  61 x 46 cm  Oil on canvas
June Flowers  71 x 61 cm  Oil on canvas
May Garden  71 x 61 cm  Oil on canvas
Small works

Each year during the summer I usually paint ten or so small flower studies or garden studies to coincide with the Doorway Gallery’s Christmas Show in Dublin.

It is such a pleasure for me to be part of a bigger group exhibition and to make my work more available and accessible. I love to honour all the flowers and colour that surround me in the summer in these little studies bringing all the colour and promise of that time of year when those long days of summer are about as far away as they can get. They are all 30 x 25 cm oil on canvas.

Little Coloratura 1

Little Coloratura 2
Floral Tea 40 x 40 oil on canvas

Meadow flowers 40 x 40 cm oil on canvas
Tiffany’s Dahlias 61 x 46 cm oil on panel
July Garden Flowers 91 x 76 cm oil on canvas
Solo exhibitions

**Coloratura**, The Doorway Gallery, Dublin, Oct 2022  
**Seasons**, The Doorway Gallery, Dublin, May 2021  
**Viridian**, The Doorway Gallery, Dublin, April 2020  
**Blue Moon**, The Doorway Gallery, Dublin, May 2019  
**Feast** Doorway Gallery, Dublin, May 2017  
**Recent Paintings**, The Doorway Gallery, Dublin, May 2015  
**Scheherazade**, Doorway Gallery, Dublin November, 2013  
**Tapestry**, Doorway Galley, Dublin; Greenlane Gallery, Dingle.  
**Persephone**, The Bad Art Gallery, Dublin, April, 2010  
**Pastoral**, Dalkey Gallery/Bad Art Gallery, Dublin, May/July, 2009  
**Life drawings**, Dalkey Arts Gallery, Dublin, November, 2008  
**Chinoiserie**, The Bad Art Gallery, Dublin, September 2008  
**Secret Garden**, Dalkey Arts Gallery, Dublin, October 2007  
**Alizarin**, The Bad Art Gallery, Dublin, November 2006  
**Recent paintings**, Adams, St.Stephan’s Green, Dublin, October, 2005  
**Recent works**, Dalkey Arts Gallery, Dublin, October 2004  
**Interiors**, Dalkey Arts Gallery, Dublin, March 2003  
**Recent Paintings**, Guinness Gallery, Dublin, April 1998  
**Set in Sunlight**, Guinness Gallery, Dublin, February 1997  
**Solo Show**, Wexford Arts Centre, March,1996  
**Recent paintings**, Garter lane Arts Centre, Waterford, March 1987  
**Degree show**, Sheffield, June 1982

International Exhibitions

Battersea Affordable Art Fair, London, October 2019  
Fresh Art Fair, Cheltenham, Ascot, 2018,2019  
Edinburgh Art Fair, November 2008  
Affordable Art Fair, London October 2008  
**XIXeme Salon des Arts Plastiques de la Rochelle**, May 2005  
Affordable Art Fair, London October, 2005  
Selected to represent Ireland at the Florence Biennale, 2005  
**19th Salon de la Rochelle**, May, 2005  
**L’Imaginaire Irlandais**, Chateaudun, France, October, 2004  
**L’Imaginaire Irlandais**, Chateaudun, France, March-April, 1996  
**First International Biennial of Female Art**, Stockholm, December 1994-March 1995
Two-Three person exhibitions

Still life Bridge Gallery, Dublin, February 2001 (with Aiden Gaffney)
Bridge Gallery Group Show, February 1999
Blackcombe Gallery, Cork, March 1998 (with John Younge and Robert Ryan)
Solomon Gallery, Dublin, November 1986 (with Elizabeth Cope)

Open group exhibitions

National Portrait Award Exhibition, Dublin, 1999
Iontas (10th National Small Works Exhibition) Sligo Art Gallery, July 1999, Limerick City
Gallery of Art; August 1999; Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast, Sept 1999
Iontas (6th National Small Works Exhibition) Sligo Art Gallery, July 1995; RHA Gallery,
National Portrait Award Exhibition, Dublin. 1985 (Awarded Winsor and Newton Prize)

Group Exhibitions (invited)

Gallery 1608, Bushmills 2016 present
Heriot Gallery, Edinburgh 2020 present
ING Discerning Eye Exhibition, Mall Galleries, London, Nov 2018
The Russell Gallery, London 2011-2012
Doorway Gallery, Dublin, 2010-present
Tramyard Gallery, Dalkey, 2010-2011
Greenlane Gallery, Dingle, 2007-2011
The Narrow Space, Clonmel, Co.Tipperary, 2005-2008
The Bad Art Gallery, Dublin. 2005-2010
The Frederick Gallery, Dublin 2004
Kilcock Art Gallery, Kilcock 2004
Dyehouse Gallery, Waterford, 2003-2004
Wexford Opera Festival Fringe Art Exhibition, Oct 2003,2004
Dalkey Arts, Dublin, 1998-2009
Bridge Gallery, Dublin, 1998-2004
Wellspring Gallery, Tralee, 1998
Guinness Gallery, Dublin, 1997-1999
Four green fields and a postcard home, Royal Dublin Society, Dublin, August, 1996
Eigse’96 Pembroke Gallery, Carlow May-June, 1996
Woodland Gallery Gorey, 1995, 1996
Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Dec, 1994
Hangman Gallery, Bray, 1994, 1995
Tom Caldwell Gallery, Belfast, 1994
Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford July-August, 1994
Quatercentenary Art Exhibition, Trinity College, Dublin, April,
Autumn Garden  76 x 61 cm  Oil on canvas
Cutting garden