

In My Shoes

Tracey Robertson, director of Urbane Art Gallery, Edinburgh



My partner and I have always been into art. We don't come from a professional arts background, but we're collectors, so we opened the gallery from that point of view. Archie's originally from Kilmarnock and I'm from Berwick Upon Tweed, but we'd both lived and worked overseas before we came to Edinburgh. We'd been sailing around Mallorca during the island's art festival, and there were galleries of all shapes and size – new, established and pop-ups. It really inspired us, so we set up Urbane Art Gallery in January 2014 as something we could do together.

We wanted to base ourselves on a gallery that could stand its own against a smart gallery in London, New York or Paris. Edinburgh's an international city and it should be reflected in the art scene, so we're bringing in a whole range of work by artists that are building a strong reputation and portfolio of work. The majority of the artists that we have on board have seen their prices rise on average between 10 - 30% in the last year.

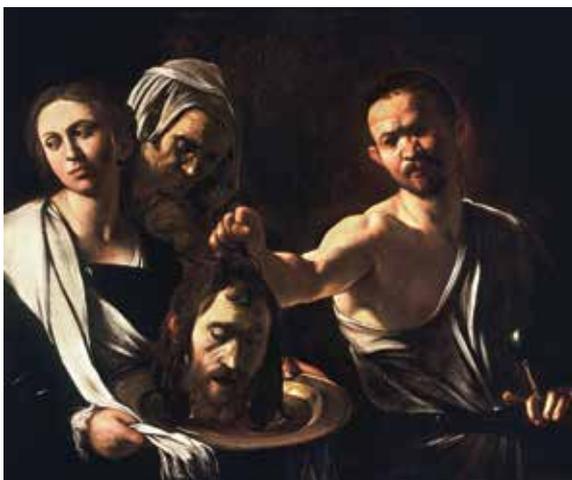
We've got a few established artists on the books. We've got work by Jolanda Spagnol, who represented Italy in the 54th Venice Biennale – the Olympics of the art world – and pieces that are a bit more tongue in cheek by Marta Czok. We want to offer something fresh, so you'll definitely come across artists you've never heard of before. We try to debut artists in the UK. French artist Frank Schroeder, who we debuted last year, now has a major exhibition in the US.

Art should be accessible. That's something that I feel very strongly about. We're in the process of applying for the Own Art scheme, where you can purchase art by paying it up over 10 months. Art shouldn't just be for those can afford to have it, it should be for everybody.

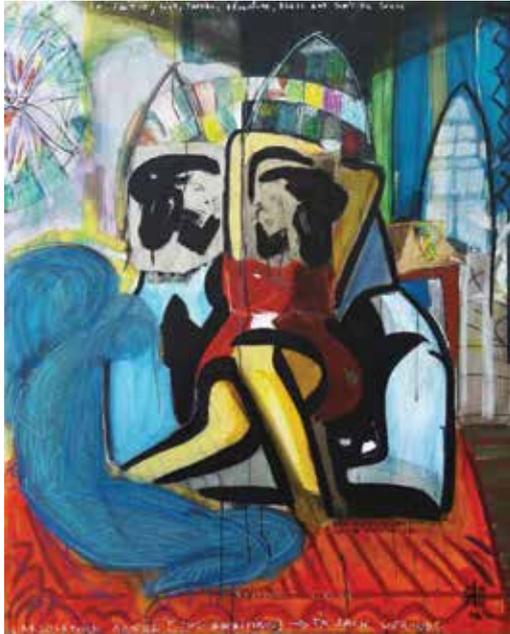
Galleries can be intimidating places, so to me being friendly and informative is so important. It costs nothing to be nice. Whether you're selling works at £40, £40,000 or £40 million, the service should be no different. We're not out of a recession yet, so you have to have some respect for the fact people choose to spend their money with you, whether they're buying a print or an original artwork.

Where we stand out from the rest is we predominantly specialise in international art. More than half of the artists we represent are based overseas. We're not showing landscapes and seascapes - we tend to favour work that's a bit edgy, so that's reflected in who we choose for the gallery, although we do also have some more conservative pieces. You've got to think about the homes they'll be

situated in. Edinburgh has that diversity of modern builds and tradition, so we try to marry that up with the pieces so we're thinking of the broader picture.



Caravaggio's 'Salome with the Head of John the Baptist.'



'Desolation Angel' (The Awaiting) by Frank Schroeder



'Inner Warmth' by Janne Parviainen

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Jolanda-Spagno Untitled



'Future-Suocere - Future Mother-In Laws' by Marta Czok

I have a signed limited edition of an Andy Warhol 'Mao', but my dream would be to have the original. Mondrian also really appeals to me at the moment, with the graphic lines and the yellow and red running through it. It's all work that's got a very contemporary feel to it.

The first piece of artwork I fell in love with really scared me, and I still think about it to this day. It was in the RSA, and it was Caravaggio's 'Salome with the Head of John the Baptist.' I was only about six at the time, but I can remember going towards it and the security man telling me not to touch it. I've always been terrible about really wanting to touch art when I'm not supposed to.

We just want to keep building momentum and get the artists we're representing recognised. We're in a great spot: the frontage of the gallery is fantastic and so are the views out to Calton Hill. We've got dark floors, white walls, and good lighting that reflects daylight, so there's no false representation. You're seeing all the work in its truest form.

INTERVIEW: CHERYL CAIRA

Urbane Art Gallery is on Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh. Go to www.urbaneart.co.uk for more info.



'Living In The Abstract Red' by Clare Andrews