

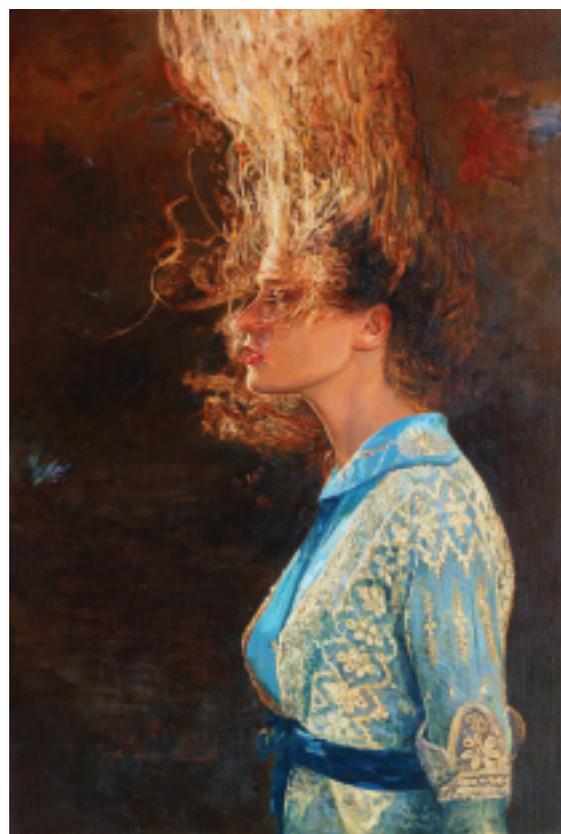


## MELVYN WARREN-SMITH A LIFE'S WORK

Melvyn Warren-Smith's portfolio is truly eclectic. Over the years he has built up an impressive canon of work encompassing portraiture, still-life, landscape and nature, and sport, particularly horses, which he has now decided to share with a wider audience.

**B**orn in 1948, Melvyn Warren-Smith trained in Fine Art at Kingston, Epsom and the Guildford & Farnham School of Art. He won a David Murray Landscape Scholarship from The Royal Academy in 1965 and began working professionally, as an illustrator, in 1974 on commissions to create book covers for writers including Catherine Cookson, Maeve Binchy, Lena Kennedy, Emma Blair and Edwina Currie.

In addition to this work, he carries out private commissions, specialising in portraiture, and he has recently completed several commissions for companies that require art which represents their corporate identity. As a result of his one-man shows, Melvyn has many of his works in collections throughout the world.



The driving force behind his latest exhibition is the belief that now is the right time to let the public see his wide and diverse portfolio. Melvyn says, "I have been fortunate to live in beautiful surroundings in the Warwickshire countryside for many years. I first arrived in Warwickshire in the 1970s and have taken great inspiration from the wonders of nature that surround me.

I derive much joy from the opportunity to paint beauty in both human form and in nature. Birds coming home to roost, fields with beautiful sunsets, the features of a human face and the human body are all inspirations to me."

He continues, "My work takes many forms and has benefited from diverse influences. I was a student at the

time of the 1960s pop revolution and I have seen many trends and fashions over the years since. I have learnt much about light and shade and I believe my work now has a maturity which reflects my artistic experiences.”

Melvyn describes four of his favourite works featured here:

## Sophia

“She was a student at the time of the painting. Talking to her, I felt she was up for a challenge. My inspiration was the Antony Gormley Event Horizon Exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London.

I painted her as a black iconic figure. When she came to my studio, I asked her if she would like me to take photographs of her, including one of her naked. Neither of us had done this type of thing before and we were both a bit nervous. I put the red felt material over canvas on the easel and started to shoot from the balcony, so as not to be in her space. Everything is left to the imagination. This is the intrigue of the painting – no-one knows her personality or sees her facial features. The tattoo is discreet and she’s wearing my scarf. I have found that women love the picture.”

## Darren

“I first met him when he was working on the driveway to my studio barn. He was a huge guy, visually intimidating.



Months went by with him working outside. To me, he looked like a Roman gladiator or even a character from the recent TV series Rome.

I asked if I could take his photograph. He didn’t understand why anyone should want to photograph him, but agreed. I decided to expand his head right into the canvas. The effect the picture has had on the people who know Darren has been amazing. They all said I had got him down to a tee. He is truly a gentle giant. To me, his left eye represents his soft, child-like side. The right shows his worldliness, manliness and protection of himself. I rang him to ask permission to use his image in the article and he simply said, “That’s fine, Melvyn.” I think he is still astounded that anyone would want to paint him.”

## Jane

“I had just finished a shoot for a main book cover. Jane was one of my models and was standing in my studio. The idea came to me that it would be exciting to see what would happen if her hair were blowing in the wind. In a moment of pure intuition, I grabbed a piece of card and pushed her hair upwards. It flew up into the heavens and I achieved this amazing effect – flying tentacles of hair diffused her face. It was real, but surreal.”

## Sunset in Leamington Hastings

“I had to check out when the sun was setting and ensure that I was ready to paint. I drew out the structure in advance; the canvas was stained a dark mahogany/honey colour allowing me to achieve the intensity of light which you cannot achieve on a white ground. I then painted very quickly over a twenty minute period to capture the incredible colours and essence of what was happening. The lack of detail allows the viewer to experience their own emotion. I call it direct painting or direct observation. To achieve it, you need huge preparation.”

Melvyn continues, “The exhibition will be a special time in my life. My enthusiasm for art is greater than ever and I am genuinely excited by the opportunity to display my work to a wider audience.”

Fashions change and styles of art, too, experience periods of acceptance and rejection. Melvyn’s work embraces many themes and styles. His belief is that good art never goes out of fashion. He is now comfortable that his art experiences and body of works need to be seen in their entirety by more people.

This is indeed a special time for him.

*Melvyn Warren-Smith – A Life’s Work runs 2 - 4 May 2009, 12 noon- 6pm, at Leamington Hastings, Warwickshire.*  
[www.melvyn-warren-smith.com](http://www.melvyn-warren-smith.com)

opposite page top left: Sophia

opposite page right: Jane

bottom: Darren

below: Sunset in Leamington Hastings