

# MELVYN WARREN-SMITH AND KERRY PHIPPEN

BY SARAH EDMONDS

Image by James Kriszyk

ACCORDING TO ARTIST MELVYN WARREN-SMITH, THE RATIO OF SINGLE WOMEN TO MEN IN STROUD IS 3 - 1, "STROUD HAS A REAL SEXUAL ENERGY - YOU WALK AROUND AND THERE ARE ALL THESE LOVELY WOMEN. THEY KEEP ASKING ME TO FIND THEM BOYFRIENDS!"

Melvyn, a new and very welcome addition to the Stroud Arts Scene, has only lived here for a year having moved here from Warwickshire. He enthuses about the breath-taking landscapes, the sense of artistic community and of course 'the women.'

He's engaging and flamboyant - our very own Grayson Perry. He trained in Fine Art and won a David Murray Landscape Scholarship from The Royal Academy in 1965 before working as a professional illustrator creating book covers for Catherine Cookson and Edwina Currie among others. He's ready to show his latest work to a new audience and has teamed up with one of Stroud's most admired artists, Kerry Phippen, to bring us a 'Winter Exhibition' from 9th - 17th December.

Kerry is charming and warm with a soft Scottish lilt, quick to laugh and talk about her own artistic endeavour, "it's a compulsion." With a first class degree and Masters in Fine Art, she has spent a lifetime honing her signature style which includes an array of beasts - foxes, bears, wolves, horses - and an imaginary world of mountains and woodland, inspired by a childhood in Perthshire. There is frequent reference to a little girl, "probably me." She paints both detailed animal studies and flowing, delicate, inky watercolours.

The pair met on Kerry's birthday and immediately hit it off, quickly agreeing to exhibit together, "We thought 'why not' - collaborating with another artist is energising. We have a lot of fun together, but when it comes to our work we are both very focused."

We spend a morning in her Slad studio, flicking through pages of her Moleskine sketchbooks, "I've got hundreds," and talking about a whole range of subjects.

## Winter Exhibition

**K:** I'm still enjoying working on pieces for the exhibition. I'm excited to be teaming up with

Melvyn. A lot of my work has a Wintery theme - snowy scenes, foxes, wolves. There will be lots of pieces to buy, all different sizes and prices.

**M:** I've got a huge backlog of work, so I'm ready! I paint every day, my work is prolific so I've got plenty to exhibit. We haven't quite worked out how we are going to curate the exhibition yet though!

## Why Art?

**K:** It's like plugging in, recharging. It's something I have to do every single day. If I don't paint for a while, I can really feel my mood drops. We went painting in 'The Heavens' the other day in the open air - I really enjoyed the process, but when I got home I ripped my painting up.

**M:** I'm pleased that you did that in a way. Not every piece can be perfect. Bacon threw paint over his canvases out of frustration and it led to some of his best works. You can't underestimate the value of practise. After periods of stress, an accident, a minor stroke... I'm still here painting. People often think Art = Bad = no money. Luckily for me, my father didn't think that way and encouraged me to go to Art College.

## Stroud's Artistic Community

**M:** Stroud is an unpretentious place, there's such a diversity of people here. I love living in the heart of the town, totally different to my last house, a converted barn in the middle of a field. The other week I sold a painting out of the window!

**K:** I moved here from Bath twenty years ago. I was drawn to the landscape and I absolutely love where I live. I also teach drawing at Pegasus Art, another hub for artists in Stroud. It's the best art supplier around and my wages go straight back into buying materials!

**M:** I think Stroud should become what Hay on Wye is to literature - the UK hub for artistic endeavour. It's a unique place and we should celebrate the artistic energy here.

## Paint

**M:** I use oils - they're versatile, you can rub it away, move it around. I think we should just call it all 'paint' and not pigeon hole anyone to one single medium. Most people new to

painting choose watercolour which is one of the most difficult techniques to master.

**K:** I am continually drawn back to ink. You can never quite control the outcome and I like that magical unpredictability. I've been experimenting with pastels just recently, its drawing and building up colour - I love breaking down the colour into lines.

## Inspiration

**K:** Stumbling across a taxidermy bear in a local pub sparked off two years of work.

**M:** I watched The Revenant recently - it has all your perfect landscapes Kerry...

**K:** It's all there in that epic film - American Indians, tepees, snowy landscapes, forests. Over-identification or not being identified enough and our relationship with animals fascinates me. Temporary structures interest me.

**M:** Inspiration comes from everywhere - I paint nudes, portraits, landscapes, wildlife... my grandchildren. I've painted illustrations for over forty years, now I'm moving on from that. I love painting outdoors, especially the incredible scenes around Stroud.

## Advice

**M:** Fight for your art. You have to be really committed to painting every day. Once I cut loose from my agent, things started to get exciting.

**K:** Just get out your materials and draw anything! Carry a sketchbook with you. Seek out inspiration - it won't come to you.

Melvyn and Kerry's Winter Exhibition takes place at the Subscription Rooms from Friday 9th December (private view) until Sat 17th December. Visit [melvyn-warren-smith.com](http://melvyn-warren-smith.com) and [kerryhippenart.com](http://kerryhippenart.com) for further info.

Sarah Edmonds is an Italian graduate from University College London, where she also studied History of Art and a short course at Slade School of Fine Art. She's been a tour guide in Tuscany and now works in marketing for Pegasus Art in Thrupp - supplier of Fine Art materials. @SarahWordBird



