



IN THE STUDIO WITH

# KIRSTY LORENZ

WORDS: STEVE PILL PHOTOS: GILL MURRAY

**K**irsty is a full-time floral painter and art tutor. She graduated from London's Goldsmiths College in 1992, before going on to work as a hospital arts co-ordinator and arts education consultant. For the past 10 years, she has focused her time on painting flowers, as well as running regular workshops. In 2008, she moved into a studio on platform 2 of Ladybank railway station in Fife.

### What first brought you to Fife?

After living in Edinburgh for 17 years, I wanted a life closer to nature and the changing seasons. Some friends introduced me to the area and it's a real hidden gem, very lovely landscape and near to beautiful coastline.

### How did you find this space at the station?

Amazingly I found it during my first week. I'd asked around and put notes in newsagents' windows. Someone told me about unused rooms at the local railway station, so I went to meet the station master. As soon as I walked into the room, I knew I was meant to be there.

### What did you do to convert it into a working studio?

On a practical level, the space needed new windows, electrics, plumbing and heating, as well as a toilet and functioning sinks, various repairs, a massive clean and a redecoration. ScotRail runs an excellent scheme called *Adopt a Station* that encourages local communities to use disused railway buildings, this meant that although I had to raise the money to renovate the space, my rent is nominal. I raised funds from The Railway Heritage

Trust, Business Gateway and Fife Contemporary Arts and Crafts, as well as putting in some of my own money. In the end it took me a year from finding the space to getting into it.

### How did you divide up the space?

I have two large interconnecting rooms: the old station restaurant and a waiting room. The larger one I tend to use as a classroom for workshops and the other as my studio where I paint. I also have the old gents' toilet down the platform, which I use as my toilet and storage.

### Is the station still in use?

Yes, the station is still functioning – there are over 60 trains a day stopping here, even though it's quite a sleepy place. The occasional high-speed train flashes through without stopping and makes my brushes rattle but on the whole I don't really notice the trains any more.



IN THE STUDIO



### What do students and clients make of the studio?

They love it. It's a very creative and fun space to be in, and it really suits my work. Not only that, but they can get the train when they come!

### When it comes to your works, do you collect specimens from the area surrounding the studio?

I paint flowers from everywhere, close by and further afield. Fife is wonderful for wild flowers. The local woods are literally like a florist's in May, full of wood sorrel and forget-me-nots. My most recent body of work, *Flowering on the Edge of the World*, was inspired by a field trip to the Outer Hebrides to visit the Machair – the crofted land between moor and sea, which is abundant in wild flowers.

### What types of flower make better subjects?

I couldn't choose! Different flowers invite a different interpretation so sometimes I paint isolated flower heads, sometimes very large or small, sometimes in chains or formations adding symbolic meaning, some within compositions set within the flower's environment.

### How does a new work typically begin?

New work begins by taking photos and making sketches. Though I am a painter, photography is an important part of my work. I photograph flower images to work from – oil paintings in particular takes weeks and months to create, so working from life isn't possible.

### Are there particular materials that you swear by?

When I'm teaching, I use Lascaux's Sirius Primary range because it's excellent for colour mixing and the consistency is lovely – my students love it. I'm really enjoying acrylic inks at the moment too, great with a bamboo dipping pen to free up my drawing.

### Do you keep regular hours in the studio?

Yes, I work around school hours. I like to do half an hour of yoga or take a half hour walk in the countryside before I start work in the studio. I find that really helps me to settle down and focus on my work, and make the most of the time I have got.

### When you are teaching a course, do you have particular techniques you like to focus upon?

My workshops usually combine a flower theme with particular materials. My next course in January is *Orchids in Inks and Washes*, in which we will look at different artists' approaches to representing these strange and beautiful flowers and then focus on creating work with Indian and acrylic inks.

[www.kirstylorenz.com](http://www.kirstylorenz.com)