

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Here's a trivia question that will fox even the greatest pub quiz team: what's the connection between Wombourne and the TV series *Kingdom* starring Stephen Fry? The answer is Brian Steventon and his exquisite paintings of the East Anglian coast.

"Out of the blue I had a telephone call from a Norfolk art gallery that was showing some of my paintings" explained Brian. "They wanted to know whether it was alright for the producers of the TV series to purchase some of my work to hang in the office and house used by Fry's character Peter Kingdom. Naturally I said yes straightaway."

"It was a great thrill to see my work on the television" continued Brian. "Especially as the last shot of the final episode shows Stephen Fry with two of my pictures either side of him."

Certainly the producer that chose to

feature Brian's pictures had a good eye for a bargain—they are becoming very collectable and are increasing in value. Indeed there are now avid collectors of Steventon originals in America and Europe.

Bilston-born Brian has been exhibiting his work in galleries for around ten years. "When you first start out it is very difficult to get galleries to take your work but as you become better known the more opportunities present themselves" he explained. "I now have my work displayed in about ten different galleries around the country."

The majority of those showing his work are in East Anglia, mainly because a large proportion of his paintings depict scenes from that part of the country. "I have family connections with the area and so frequently visit both Norfolk and Suffolk. I take a lot of my inspiration from the countryside and coastline there" continued Brian.

Although Brian's favourite medium is acrylic paints he also uses both watercolours and oils. "It is all dependent on the subject matter and my mood at the time" he explained. "I will either make a rough sketch of the scene or take series of photographs and when I get back to Wombourne I start work on developing it or I will sometimes complete the whole

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picture 'in the field'. It all depends on the circumstances at the time."

There is absolutely no doubt that Brian is a very talented artist—a description with which other artists wholeheartedly agree to the extent that they have voted him into membership of the RBSA—the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists—which is the most prestigious society of its kind in the Midlands.

In coming months Brian hopes to spend more time in London talking to some of the galleries there and seeing whether he can develop more international links.

Brian is also a popular guest at art classes and clubs throughout the area where he often demonstrates the different techniques that he has learnt over the years. "It can be a little daunting sitting in front of an audience showing them the various ways of creating specific visual effects—but luckily as yet I haven't had a disaster!" he laughed. In addition Brian holds an "open day" at his home in Wombourne where those interested in his work can come and not only see (and purchase) finished works but also see Brian at work on his latest piece. "I am always surprised at the questions that I get asked. For some reason people seem surprised that there is a great network of local artists who are in touch with each other all the time. They seem to think that it is always a very lonely activity—and that is far from the truth."

Watch out for details of Brian's next local exhibition an 'Open Day' in a forthcoming VILLAGE VOICE.

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