

# Abstract Fantasies

As this is a 'personal study' I thought to begin I would give a quick insight into the reasoning behind me studying the two different art forms, as an artist I obviously have some passion for the Arts and find fascinating the variety and skill of art in the world, from pop artists such as Andy Warhol to the great surrealist Salvador Dali, (a personal idol of mine).

I love exploring the art forms and trying as many mediums and techniques as available, if time would permit I would love to compare and contrast a endless array of great artists, like the mind boggling and revolutionary cubist work of Picasso showing multiple emotions and sides of a person in one piece , the bold and beautiful modern art of Lichtenstein showing the world in his own unmistakable way, the awe inspiring work of Cezanne and countless other artists who have made this area of our culture a fascination of mine and undoubtedly masses of people throughout the world in all times.

But as time isn't infinite and the list of amazing artists could take me to a ripe old age I have concentrated on two artists, neither the Monet's or Da Vinci's of the art world, but who's work has caught my imagination and gave me a urge to learn there ways and the way of their work.

The first artist I am studying, as mentioned in my introduction, is my uncle Kevin Phillips a Durham born artist who produces abstract pieces that capture the pure essence of the beauty of our world and feed it to us slowly through a blend of landscapes and amazing colour all at the control of intense colours and a brushstroke.

His work would be seen as an established art medium, done by many artists before him. Abstract arts is a form that is deeply linked to art and is a popular medium that allows artists to explore different perceptions of things produces in a way that may not be totally true to life but show great meaning through colours or objects. In the past I have worked a little into abstract, but more surrealist, and have never attempted to produce a landscape abstract piece like Kevin does of areas of importance in his life (like his hometown). And as I am studying Kevin Phillips' style I feel I should experience his art first hand and try to understand what draws him to mimic such amazing sights of nature and the world into incredibly colourful pieces of work and get a insight into why he has so much passion for abstract work.

My interview with Kevin Phillips was successful and conducted by email and a visit to Durham to see some of his work. From the interview I feel I have a little more information to help me break down Kevin as an artist in order to compare with my other artist. Each answer of the interview has been researched including influences, techniques, etc.

My second artist Nancy Wilson is also a British born artist I came across whilst searching the internet, she is not similar to Kevin in many ways, be it art, influences or her past.

Nancy Wilson Is a fantasy artist, producing amazingly colourful, imaginative and original pieces of work intended to calm the soul and give a relaxed look into a whole other world.

Nancy is a previous British body building champion who has pushed her body and soul to its very limits to achieve what seems physically impossible to most.

Whilst also combating M.E, a condition which could slow her work, she manages to produce images that radiate spirit and energy. This has given her a varied outlook on life and a eye into fantasy and original work that is created from pure feeling and emotion, as I looked through each piece I could imagine her spawning these fantasy images in her head and bringing myself to wonder where it comes from, I mean, this isn't art that creeps into my head when I try and think of my next piece. Nancy draws, in my mind, something very special out of herself to create this art, using many different mediums and imagination, varying to see which captures her vision the best. She needs no natural beauty to inspire like Kevin, she has endless magical and mystical landscapes, beasts, beautiful creatures, dark beings and hundreds more unimaginable images to myself just waiting to be seeped out through the fingers and soul of Nancy to capture the imagination of myself and I am sure many others who have come across her amazing images.

I conducted a interview with Nancy asking her the same questions as Kevin to compare there responses. The interview went well and I have sufficient information to analyse Nancy better and get a better understanding of her work.

I haven't tried work of Nancy's kind before, the closest thing being surreal work I have done drawing influence from Dali. I will be interested to see how my imagination flows when doing work in Nancy's style and am sure I will enjoy the free nature of her work, having little constraint of perfectionism which I feel is a plague of myself as I work, driving myself mad spending hours trying to get every inch perfect.

Now we have a quick insight into my two artists it is time to begin the 'Break down' of my two artists. Starting with Kevin Phillips I will analyse the responses to my interview and speak further into his answers to try and get a better view of his work before I attempt some pieces myself. So here we go then with the first interview, enjoy!

Below is the interview I conducted with my first artists, Kevin. In it I asked him a series of questions aiming to get a better insight into his work and influences.

1. *Most artists I have studied in the past have a degree of influence from other artists in their work, I personally admire Salvador Dali and try to use his techniques and work in my own, which artists would you say have or have had a influence in your work and in what way do they do so?*

**Its hard to say. When I was a student my influences ranged from the renaissance to present, now I admire the work of artists like Chad McCail and Fiona Rae. Its more their enthusiasm and the originality of their work that influences me.**

2. *What mediums do you usually like to work in?*

**Gouache and oil paint mainly and the usual drawing materials.**

3. *What are the common themes within your work? (e.g., landscapes, people. Feelings, etc.)*

**Ideas come first followed by subject and medium, its important to keep a balance between idea and medium.**

4. *Has this way of work ever changed, do they regularly vary or do you stick to the same method?*

**I tend to stay with an idea for several years and gradually allow change to take place.**

5. *What piece are you currently working on and what is it about, what influences are in it, what medium are you using and what is the theme?*

**New work brings together a wide range of disparate images within the formal constraints of a painting. The images are collected through drawing, photography and looking through old sketch books for inspiration.**

6. *What scale do you usually work in?*

**I start on a small scale and then move to a larger canvas for final, more finished works about 5ft sq.**

7. *How do you go about selling your work?*

**Through word of mouth and art galleries.**

8. *And finally have you had any exhibitions of late or any coming up?*

**My most recent major show was at 18<sup>th</sup> Street Arts Complex in Santa Monica California in 2002. There are details of my past exhibitions in my C.V.**

From this interview I have a little more information in order to understand Kevin's work and better analyse and understand it, studying his influences and hopefully produce some pieces of my own using the same means of medium, inspiration and artist influence as him.

From my first question asking about Kevin's influences I was told the names of two artists that influence Kevin's work. I have researched these two artists, Fiona Rae and Chad McCail and gathered pieces of their work in order to see if there is a link or degree of influences in his work to theirs.

Starting with Fiona Rae, an artist from Hong Kong whose bright and Abstract work are nothing short of eye catching. An example of her work is the image, called "Moonlight Bunny Ranch." (Image #1)

As you can see Fiona Rae has an amazing use of colour in her work, bright pinks, baby blues, oranges and yellows are used a lot in images I have seen of hers and do feature heavily in this piece.

In comparison to Kevin's work I initially noticed that he uses many of the colours Fiona likes to use in his work, and not ignoring the obvious fact that Fiona and Kevin both like to work in abstract, I feel this is an influence from her work to Kevin's. In the piece done by Kevin below you can see the use of colours similar to Fiona's.

Both pieces use simple abstract shapes to illustrate a bigger picture. There are of course many differences between the work, I feel Kevin's work is more obviously done on a canvas using paints, every stroke is apparent and gives a real arty feel, whilst Fiona's looks almost too perfect to be done in paints.

Kevin's image also appears to have more of a theme, abstracting a view rather than the random images in Fiona's Moonlight Bunny piece. I also like Fiona's work though and see why Kevin likes her work her use of colour is amazing and mesmerises me to look at it. The other image I have chosen of Fiona's is a piece called "Niwida" (Image #2.)

. I can see much other comparisons in this piece with Kevin's not mentioned with the past piece, again it's her pure imagination and use of shape that I feel has influenced Kevin's work.

The other artists Kevin mentioned as a influence was Chad McCail, a Manchester born artist who studied art at both college and university, like Kevin and myself. His method of work is not similar to Kevin's as he works in screen prints to create a modern and brightly coloured pieces of art.

This example of Chad's work is called "The Fall" (Image #3)

His themes are different to Kevin's who likes to take a idea and through work turn it into a abstract piece. Chad likes to tell a story with his work. He often, like in the below piece analytically describes the mechanisms of oppression in storyboards.

The piece shows, in story board form, shows an age of men like figures being created by god like forms out of what looks like clay, and their systematic destruction of what they have created. This is a moral piece showing in a simple form the way mankind was created and has in time lived beside and created things in order to eventually destroy them like the final part of the story board as the tree's are being destroyed.

I think Chad's obvious enthusiasm and step by step idea development are inspirational to Kevin, and also, as I also do, I think Kevin likes Chad's art for its simple and direct point whilst always lacking irony, done in amazing quality work.

You can see Kevin's influence with Fiona Rae and Chad McCail through there use of colour, bright and bold extenuating the shapes. I think he has more influence from Fiona Rae as they work in beautiful abstract shapes and colours in their pieces. I think he admires McCails working methods and love of his subject rather than influence, as he said in the interview, "its their enthusiasm for their subject and the originality of their work that influence me."

Kevin and his Artist influences all have very original pieces of work making them very interesting to look at.

I particularly like Fiona Rae's work, I think the colour and imagination in her work is amazing.

I now want to look at more of Kevin's pieces now and analyse them to get a good idea of how he works and techniques he uses. From my interview I know he works mostly in oil paints, and his technique is to draw from photographs, make sketches and then start the painting, moving from a small to a larger scale.

(Image #4) This piece is my favourite by Kevin, it features a lighthouse as a centre piece, beautifully made within an abstract background. It looks to me that the setting behind the lighthouse is a inside room with a sea view from the window. The curtains at the front of the image lead to a door and window. Out of the window is a rockface and a boat, this is the landscape which Kevin often works on. This piece is abstract (apart from the obvious colours and shape.) in the way the outside is brought

into the inside (lighthouse.) I am familiar with this topic having previously done a Topic in year 11 on "Inside, Outside."

(Image #5) In this next piece there is a common link as in all the pieces, as I discussed for the first image above, curtain like shapes with bold shapes are at the forefront of the picture, as if they are inviting you to see the piece as the curtains do at the theatre or cinema. It again looks like a landscape with the sea and what looks like a Bridge, associated with coastal life again. Another common link in this piece that will also be seen in the others is repeated images appearing in pieces in this case butterflies on what looks like a sandy beach surface. The butterflies are the part I like in this image I think they work very well.

(Image #6 and 7) The next two pieces look like they are progressions of each other so I will analyse them both. The first one (Image #6) I think looks like a prototype for the one below it. The vase, curtain like images, birds (common link between more of his work.), window and net curtain and sea image with lighthouses at the end, using again landscapes. The image progressing from this (Image #7), if you look has all the things of the first piece except for progression of the bird (swooping towards the sea.), colour change and enhanced sea view.

Kevin's work is about landscape and images significant to him, as found from the interview, this is shown through the sea views and images that he only knows matter. I like the originality of Kevin's work, having never seen any artist with similar work myself. I like the use of colour and hope to create a few pieces like Kevin's using photo's of images significant to me and do them in Acrylic colours (similar to oil paints that Kevin uses.)

Now I want to look at the interview I conducted with Nancy, whose work is fantasy art, another area of art I like. I want to look at an artist who's work is different to Kevin's abstract to see if there are any links between them and widen my area of art knowledge.

The questions asked are the same as with Kevin so I will vaguely outline the questions, the full interview will be included.

**1. Influences?**

Impressionists, (Greco, William Blake, Van Gogh, Aubrey Beardsley, Leonardo Da Vinci, Susan Seddon Boulet.)

**2. How do they influence you**

Colours and textures of impressionists. Empathy with the mood and elongations of Greco. Aubrey Beardsley's linework and decorative effects. Susan Seddon's portrayal of spiritual beauty.

**3. What mediums do you work in?**

Any medium exploring limits of my ability.

**4. Themes?**

Currently the Communal memory of our universe. Beauty due to the daily bombardment of hatred and ugliness, balancing out hits effect, all visual images have a effect on the mind.

**5. Are your themes Constant or vary?**

Generally Fantasy art.

**6. Current piece?**

Two to three pieces, large oil painting is an archetypical Mayan Dancer, computer work are on fairies and mandalas whilst researching sketching symbols and effects.

**7. Scale?**

I work in all sizes

**8. 2D or 3D?**

Most of my works is 2D due to my condition

**9. Presenting work?**

Marketing work is the hardest part. I am a member of the art house and on the board as an artists representative. Website.

**10. Exhibitions?**

I am looking for a sense of the familiar from viewers and an opening into their minds laying a seed of beauty, and opening a sense of oneness with the world.

I am exhibiting in the art house gallery Doncaster on Sat Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2003.

(I attended this gallery and have a photo of the piece Nancy was exhibiting that will be included within my personal study.)

I now want to look at some images of Nancy's influences.

This image is done by Susan Seddon, Nancy mentioned her admiration of Seddon's portrayal of spiritual beauty and you can definitely see this in the two pieces here. (Image #8 and 9)

(Image #8) This piece is called 'Grandfather speaks with eagles', it's the image of a Shaman man, her area of work at this time and a layered eagle image among it. It uses lavish colour and definitely shows spiritual beauty.

(Image #9) This piece is my favourite of Seddon's and one of the best pieces of fantasy art I have seen, I tells the story of the search for the balance of masculine

and feminine and the transformation from innocent romantic love to a wise understanding of mature love. These are shown through the masculine and feminine images and the meeting of the male and female sides done using amazing imagery and colour.

(Image #10) The next piece is by Aubrey Beardsley and is included to show why Nancy likes the linework of Beardsley. I chose this piece specifically to show this as it has excellent linework and detail.

(Image #11) this piece by William Blake I think shows where she has her fantasy influence. The image of the evil beast trying to steal the innocence of child life is a fantasy image that still relates into life.

Through these pieces you can see where Nancy's influences are, as mentioned in the interview. Other images of Nancy's artists are included in this study.

I now want to look at some of Nancy's pieces and get a better insight into her fantasy art in order to create a piece of my own from what I have learned.

(Image #12) I chose to look at this image because it shows the influence of Aubrey Beardsley in her work, it shows excellent linework just like Beardsley's. The image is of an Owl and looks like it may have been done into Lino. I have worked in such a way before to make prints.

(Image #13) this image by Nancy is of a Gryffin, a mystical beast and is an example of Nancy's Fantasy art, she uses excellent colour and detailed linework to create the image. I like the beauty of this image of a magnificent mythical creature and admire the imagination taken to create it.

(Image #14) This image is one of my favourites of Nancy's, it has amazing originality and imagination. The image of powerful and fiery beasts is fantastically drawn with colours of fire, creating both power and beauty in a perfect example of fantasy art.

(Image #15) This piece is of a brilliantly colourful bird, with many colours through its feathers on a magical looking tree. I like the colour work on the bird in this piece, it bears relation the beauty of a peacock whilst being more elegant and magnificent. This piece drew inspiration from life creating a higher being from that.

(Image #16) This final piece of Nancy's I want to look at shows the diversity of her work. This piece must have taken a massive amount of effort and time to finish especially for Nancy as she is limited. Using a Biro pen, which I have used before, Nancy has created a whole image out of littler shapes by shading the Biro lighter and darker. The image looks like a impressive figure of a man through the shapes made by the Biro. I think this piece is great mixing different mediums, with a striking and eye catching piece of unique fantasy art.

Having looked at Nancy's pieces and talked to her in both the interview and at her exhibition I feel I have a greater understanding of her work and would like to try a piece of her work to finish my personal study, along with one like Kevin's. There are



not many links between Kevin and Nancy's work, the only I can think of is the imagination, skill and originality needed to create both abstract and fantasy art. Hopefully the pieces I create in both the styles will be of a quality and feature influence from Nancy and Kevin.