

Artist Profiles

Nicki Darrell Ceramicist

Nicki's work tends towards the sculptural. She plays with texture, creating hand built works on a large scale, pushing the clay to its limits. Taking inspiration from natural forms she also works on smaller, decorative pieces.

Initially setting up a studio in a shed at the bottom of a garden Nicki now works in a purpose-built studio at home.

Nicki Said: "My interest in clay was kindled as a child by assisting a potter demonstrating throwing to tourists one day a week after school. Later I was taught basic throwing techniques which stood me in good stead when I returned to ceramics after an absence of thirty years."

This is the second year Nicki has opened her studio to the public. She said: "It's good to feel part of an art community. The experience of welcoming visitors to my home studio last year was so positive; a chance to get feedback on my work and an opportunity to renew some old friendships and make some new ones."



Ceramicist Nicki Darrell in her studio



Nicki Darrell's work

Yusuf Keten Painter

Yusuf was inspired to create by watching his eldest sister in Turkey working with ceramics, copper and other materials. Today, Yusuf creates abstract paintings, creating layers with the use of brushes, pallet knives and his fingers.

Yusuf said: "I create my work in a large, light conservatory which is virtually in my garden. This means that the seasons, and the sounds and smells that go with them, help relax my mind, letting my imagination work to its best ability.

"English is not my first language and I feel that I can express myself through my paintings and love the idea that other people take on my work and put their own interpretation on to it, and enjoy having conversations around this."

This is the first time Yusuf has taken part in Norfolk & Norwich Open Studios. He said: "I am looking forward to meeting people and sharing and talking about my work with them."



Painter Yusuf Keten in his studio



Yusuf Keten's work

Abbey Stirling

Painter & furniture upcycler

"Art has crept up on me with age. I'm a writer by trade, but being a mother ignited a creative passion in me that writing alone can't fulfil."

When Abbey had her first son she started upcycling furniture for his nursery, and the painting, waxing and distressing of the paint rekindled her love for expressionism.

The furniture became works of art, and with the addition of decoupage Abbey began getting commissions.

Abbey said: "It gave me the confidence to start painting canvases again, and that's definitely what I enjoy the most. I've always painted landscapes or objects, but I'm discovering a love for figures and faces. Now I can't stop analysing people – everyone's made up of shapes and shades."

Abbey moved to Norfolk two years ago and, within weeks, converted a barn to use as a studio. Abbey said: "Surrounded by monastic ruins and rural farmland, it's a hidden gem. I feel so privileged and at peace when I'm there. It's my happy place."

This is Abbey's first time taking part in Norfolk & Norwich Open Studios. She said: "I see it as a great way to meet local artists and increase my profile as an artist and small business. I couldn't be happier here in Norfolk, leading a healthier more creative and fulfilling life."



Abbey Stirling in her studio



Abbey Stirling's work

Henry J Stephen Sculptor

“I have always found a particular solace in making.

“Being an artist never occurred to me, but I came to a cross roads in my life where I could take a chance and follow a dream. I have now been working professionally in sculpture for just over a year and half.”

As a metal work sculptor, Henry says that his work resonates with the wild surrounding of Norfolk.

He said: “I love metal work! The raw energy and heat of its fluid transformation, there’s something transcendental about changing the material into a piece.”

Henry uses welding, plasma cutting and a good old hammer and heat to bend and shape his work.

His work space used to be outside under a small awning and then his parents offered him a space in one of their old stables. Henry said: “This space has allowed me to create more ambitious work and allows a lovely space to meet people and talk about all the beauties of Norfolk, and have a nice cup of tea.”

He said: “I come from a background of debilitating mental health issues and drug and alcohol addiction and metal work has been a constant through my recovery and a way to help me alleviate the symptoms. I am lucky enough to have eight years clean time, and bring a huge amount of gratitude to my practice.”



Sculptor Henry in his studio



Henry J Stephen's work