

Artist Kirsten has the heart of a lioness

A wildlife painter who gave up a potential art career after having her confidence knocked at school is celebrating her first solo exhibition at a major Edinburgh gallery.

On leaving school in St Andrews, demoralised Kirsten Mirrey took a job at a horse stud farm and only picked up her brushes to paint portraits of cats and dogs as a hobby.

But now her stunning large-scale paintings of lions, tigers and other big beasts – which sell internationally – are to go on show at [The Watson Gallery](#) in the capital's Queen Street from 20-27 October.

Fife-born Kirsten, 28, said: "When I was preparing for school exams my art work was getting some harsh critiques and it really knocked my confidence. I started to think that art was not a viable career option for me and so I took on an apprenticeship in equine care."

Alongside her work at a Leven stud farm, Kirsten started producing portraits of family pets and they became so popular that after five years she plucked up the courage to strike out full-time working as an artist.



Kirsten Mirrey – self taught artist inspired by fellow Fifer Jack Vettriano

A huge fan of David Attenborough's wildlife programmes, she developed a talent for large works featuring big cats, orangutans and other animals from the African continent and now her oil paintings have a huge following with buyers in America, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand snapping up her work.

She added: "I was doing pet portraits for local people and it was all word-of-mouth but after putting my work on Instagram and Facebook I quickly found that a lot of people were

interested in what I did.

“I started to experiment with wildlife, especially big cats, and realised that was the direction I wanted to go in my work. A lot of people that have collected my pieces are from overseas and have never actually been to see them in person.”

Another major influence was fellow Fife painter Jack Vettriano and like the former miner turned best-selling artist, Kirsten got her first break selling her paintings in a Kirkcaldy furniture store.

She said: “I have always loved Jack’s work and bought a print of his famous Singing Butler many years ago. He was local to me and seeing someone from Fife making it into the big league of art, and the fact that like me he didn’t have any formal training, was a huge motivation that it can be done.

“Rejects Department Store in Kirkcaldy is a bit of an institution and has always promoted local artists, including Jack in his early days, so I was thrilled when they took a chance on me and started displaying and selling some of my paintings.”



First solo exhibition at The Watson Gallery, Queen Street, Edinburgh

Now working from [a studio in Edinburgh](#), Kirsten said other influences on her work and style included Scottish wildlife and fine art photographer David Yarrow, known worldwide for his breath-taking large format images and also [represented by the Watson Gallery](#), and French-American painter [Mark Maggiori](#) who specialises in the American West and images of cowboys and native Americans.

“Mark is a phenomenal painter with his use of colour and light and there is a real wow factor in his work. That’s what I want to be able to achieve That’s what I aim to achieve in every piece I create -the wow factor – to have people look at my

work and say, wow.”

The exhibition will showcase her latest and still unseen wildlife artwork which combines both Yarrow’s large format strengths and Maggiori’s powerful use of light to create something very special.

- Kirsten Mirrey will be painting live on the launch evening of the first day of her Wild at Heart exhibition at the Watson Gallery, 39 Queen Street, Edinburgh, which runs from 20 October.

For more information and to book a place at the opening day please visit here <https://www.watsongallery.co.uk/events>

