

# The Studio and Gallery Kilbirnie

Set in a little courtyard off the bustling main street of Kilbirnie, the Studio and Gallery might lead you to expect Scottish views, cards and knick-knacks. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth; for, hidden away in its North Ayrshire backwater, this surprisingly spacious gallery runs monthly exhibitions that wouldn't be out of place in the centre of Glasgow or Edinburgh.

It is not the usual commercial gallery but has been set up to provide a space for emerging artists to have solo shows of their work. The gallery is simultaneously a physical exhibition space and a virtual gallery on the Internet. Each exhibition is filmed and made permanently available on the website, Youtube site and social media such as Facebook, together with printed catalogues, an interview and biography of the artist.

"We exist to promote edgy, innovative art," explains co-owner Adam McLean. "Many of our artists have been exhibited all over Scotland, but our gallery is unique in what it does for artists, so we attract really interesting people."



One of these 'really interesting' artists is well-known Glasgow artist Ronnie Heeps, who works from WASPS in Dennistoun and is part of the G31 Art Collective. His show - the Studio and Gallery's fourth, in July 2017 - featured his huge circular Kaleidoscope images in which mesmerising organic shapes drew the viewer in.

Another artist keen to break new ground is McLean's partner, Franzeska Ewart. Her debut exhibition, *The Birds Bear Gifts*, played with the surreal idea of women receiving gifts from birds, which were magically transformed. In October 2018, her second exhibition, *A Dream of Flying*, aims to extend this idea into even more surreal territory.



Surrealism being a particular interest of both McLean and Ewart, they were very excited to find, in a small house in Dreghorn, the surrealist Willie Dennis, whose work is almost unknown in Scotland. In April 2018, Dennis mounted a mind-blowing exhibition in which monochrome men floated in prison cells, while seaweed-swathed women swam with seals.

Many of these artists have used their Studio and Gallery shows as springboards to greater things. In November 2017 Ewart was accepted as an artist member of the prestigious Paisley Art Institute, and currently has three paintings in their 130<sup>th</sup> Annual Open Exhibition and has one of her paintings in the 2018 RSA Open Exhibition in Edinburgh.

Unlike conventional galleries, the Studio and Gallery charges their artists no commission. "It means artists can charge a bit less for their art, and as we're both retired, we really don't need to get into the whole financial thing," McLean laughs.



But solo exhibitions of paintings are not the only thing on offer at the gallery.

As McLean explains: "I'm an art historian, and I'm keen to share the knowledge and resources I've collected over the past fifty years. Over the last year I've mounted several 'educational' exhibitions including Astronomy in Pictures, The Witch figure, a survey of the later paintings by Hieronymus Bosch.



In the coming months the Studio and Gallery has a number of exciting exhibitions planned. In June, Joy Parker from WASPS in Selkirk presents her breathtaking show *A Ferrari Round India*. Best known as a mosaic artist, Joy has made mosaics for the outside of St Catherine Labourer Church in Glasgow and is currently making a Madonna statue for the interior.



Kilbirnie is a small town in the Garnock valley in North Ayrshire, some 25 miles west of Glasgow, close to Lochwinnoch and Beith. The closest railway station is Glengarnock and there is a half-hourly bus service from Glasgow, Buchanan Street Bus Station. There is a free council car park only 100 metres south of the gallery.

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[www.studioandgallery.co.uk](http://www.studioandgallery.co.uk)  
[www.facebook.com/Studioandartgallery/](https://www.facebook.com/Studioandartgallery/)  
[www.youtube.com/c/AdamMcLean](https://www.youtube.com/c/AdamMcLean)

So, whether you're an art lover or a painter, or perhaps looking for some affordable art, the Studio and Gallery is easily accessible by bus or train. And if you're bound for the seaside, it's a great stop on the road to Largs or the Clyde Coast.

