



# Caught on canvas

The Colour Factory in Winchester has gained something of a reputation over the years, from its production of a diverse range of crafts to painted bollards in the city centre. Liz Tighe meets one of the founders, painter Jenny Muncaster, who has gained a fine reputation

Jenny Muncaster's Winchester studio is awash with colour. Postcards hang on the walls depicting food, wine and sunny shores, while a large canvas of a Mediterranean-inspired still-life sits on a huge easel, surrounded by brushes, paints and sketches of new ideas.

Jenny is based at The Colour Factory in Gordon Road, Winchester, which she set up with embroiderer Linda Miller. Since then, Jenny has become one of the most renowned food painters in the country. Today her work adorns the walls of every one of Raymond Blanc's Brasserie Blanc restaurants and it is

also widely featured across the popular Hotel du Vin group.

"I've always loved drawing and painting," said Jenny. "Even as a child, I would spend hours and hours with my paints and to get to work full-time. Bringing together my passion for painting with my love of food, wine and travel is a real privilege."

Graduating from Winchester School of Art in 1988, Jenny, as with many of her peers, initially took on a part-time job to pay the bills. But she was determined that one day she would be able to work full-time as an artist. This has certainly proved to be the case.

"I took my portfolio all over the country to get my work in front of as many people as I could," she said. "Internet communication wasn't available then, which meant writing lots and lots of letters and sending samples out in the post. It was extremely time-intensive, but the hard work paid off."

Her work was soon being exhibited in several galleries in London, and with a greetings card range helping to boost her profile still further, commissions flooded in.

In 1994, The Colour Factory opened in central Winchester, providing a city focus for local artist types and a decade later, Jenny, Linda and



three others moved into a former park keeper's house beside River Park Leisure Centre.

Today, the building provides space, not only for its residents, but also for local children and adults interested in art and crafts of all kinds. The addition of a large garden work room, The Lightbox, has developed the space further, making it accessible to groups from schools and care facilities. A year-round programme of classes includes everything from, ceramics and glass to embroidery and painting.

"It's a very happy space to work in," said Jenny. "Many people come in out of curiosity, more than anything else, and then sign up for a workshop while they are here or leave with something from our gallery. As well as having large paintings and prints, we also sell smaller art works, jewellery, textiles, vintage tea sets and lots of artists greetings cards."

Together, those in The Colour factory have also lent their creative talents to other areas of the city, transforming a series of bollards in The Square into colourful Toulouse Lautrec, Kandinsky and Mondrian masterpieces to coincide with Winchester Hat Fair in 2005. "Since then we have also painted bollards for Southampton City Council and are about to start work on a new series for The Square's refurbishment," said Jenny.

Outside The Colour Factory, a lamp post adorned by a hand-knitted scarf, which is wrapped along its entire length in a range of colours and textures, has made its own outdoor statement. "It mysteriously appeared overnight," said Jenny, "and we love it. Creativity definitely encourages creativity."

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Much of Jenny's work comes from commissions, which she says she particularly enjoys. "Rather than painting formal portraits, I incorporate aspects of my clients' lives into paintings that capture their personalities and favourite hobbies and places.

"That might mean including the exterior of their home and their vegetable patch or a favourite jug filled with flowers, a family heirloom, a special bottle of wine or two, or an



unusual representation of family life. I recently painted a large food- inspired canvas for a couple that included a series of plant pots with seedlings growing at various stages, labelled up with the names of the children in the family.

"Working with people on an individual basis to creating something really personal gives me great pleasure."

And whether you are Raymond Blanc looking for an inspired interpretation of his next great dish, or simply want to capture a private passion on canvas for posterity, Jenny Muncaster will certainly bring it to life.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Jenny Muncaster, The Colour Factory, Gordon Road, Winchester. Tel 01962- 870789. [www.jennymuncaster.co.uk](http://www.jennymuncaster.co.uk). Jenny's work can be seen at her solo exhibition at The Minster Gallery, Great Minster Street, Winchester from November 17 to December 2.

Opposite page: Jenny Muncaster with Raymond Blanc; Above left: Brasserie Blanc's Snails; Top Right: Celeste; Above right: Vineyard View