

# Stunning Stroud photos are an inspiration for artist Christine

A dull day may dampen the spirits for some but for painter Christine Gaut it only serves to emphasise the colour around her.

And it is nature's palette which is all around her in the skies, hills, canals, valleys and flora which seeks to spark her imagination and inspire her oil paintings.

The end result is a celebration of rich hues that bring a familiar scene to life and offer a fresh approach and interpretation.

Looking through the eyes of this artist brings a new revelation on the glorious area we live in as well as offering a window into places we do not.

Christine's own visual language has developed from a young child. She found it much easier than words, although in recent months an exciting lyrical and poetic voice has emerged.

So much so that when one sees her paintings, a small lyrical phrase is placed alongside summing up the essence of the place they represent.

Christine's work radiates a passion, a passion for painting and a passion for life, everyday life. And it's often the ordinary scenes we take for granted which are celebrated on her canvases.

Many familiar scenes are in the mix in her latest exhibition which starts this Saturday at the Subscription Rooms.

It is her annual show and it is appropriately called My Passion to Paint. The exhibition features many paintings of the Stroudwater canal, the narrowboats and landmarks dominating the water's edge.

Two paintings were inspired by a couple of photographs which appeared in Stroud Life's popular Stunning Stroud section. One is of a couple walking along the canal path near Ebley Mill, taken by photographer David Joyce, and the other, entitled Canal in Winter, was captured by former CEO of Cotswold Care Hospice Marcus Green. Having gained permission from these photographers,



● The swan which chased Minchinhampton Golf Club head groundsman Paul Worster.

Christine sought to make her own representation using her visual language of paint.

Another photo which has inspired her is one called Swan on the 10th Fairway taken by Paul Worster, head groundsman at Minchinhampton Golf Course. He was apparently being chased off the course by the swan and took the photograph before making a hasty retreat.

Christine will be presenting a framed print of her paintings to each of the

photographers during her exhibition.

"I was just struck by the beauty of those photographs. I love the image of the canal in the early morning, there is a haunting feel about it.

"The winter scene too inspired me. It's as if the canal keeps its secrets to itself.

"I love the water mills around here, they are an integral part of the county with their historic uses and what they gave to their communities and towns around here," admits Christine.

"When I think of Stroud, I always think of it being proud and so it should be. It was one of the forerunners in the nation, a dockland, a turning point, from which produce went around the nations.

"I consider the canals as the motorways of the nation.

"But it's also about the people who worked on them and the communities they built up around them. A number of my paintings feature bridges because they fascinate me.

"Some are open, some are closed and some are shrouded in foliage, which gives another dimension," she adds. It's the layers of history and the stories her subjects tell which are fascinating. Christine is like a visual reporter, capturing those narratives with her amazing range of colour which, interestingly, she mixes on canvas rather than on the palette.

This passion to portray a message comes through. And, although she didn't turn professional until the age of 51 – some 16 years ago, the desire to paint was always there.

Over the years, although her paintbrush hasn't been in her hand as often as it is now, she has explored her appreciation of colour through other media.

Encouraged by her mother, an embroiderer by profession, Christine, who was originally trained as a Mayfair hair stylist, spent years working with fabrics in needlepoint, patchwork, applique, wall-hangings, dressmaking and soft furnishings.

It was her elder sister Fran Slade, who went to Hornsey Art School and Christine longed to join her but her father wouldn't allow it.



Christine, who is mentored by her sister and Fran's husband Colin Ruffell, a former Master of the Fine Art Guild, has attended master classes with fine art painter Sue Wales at her studio in Bath. Incidentally, Christine has now joined forces with Fran, Colin and their daughter Shyama Ruffell to launch a new online business called artistprints.com as well as relaunching her own website cgpaint.co.uk.

Although she has worked on commissions in pen and ink, colour wash and watercolour, her preferred medium is oil, where the ability to use the drama of light and dark gives her the greatest freedom to express her love of light, colour and form.

Christine, who has paintings in France, Spain, Australia and the USA, also appeared in award-winning novelist Katie Fforde's Wedding Season.

She will be one of a number of artists taking part in this year's Open Studios, part of Site 2013, a contemporary arts festival, now in its 17th years, organised by Stroud Valley Artspace and Stroud Arts Festival.

As well as open studios (May 11 to 12 and 18 to 19), Christine is having an open house exhibition at her home in Rodborough from November 30 to December 1 and December 7 to 8.

This artist has an ability to capture the drama of a place which resonates with her audience. And what uplifts

Christine most is when an individual is captivated by the same sense of awe and wonder of a scene that she did. But instead of looking at the actual place, they have caught it by looking at one of her inspirational paintings.

My Passion to Paint runs until April 20, except Sundays, at Stroud Subscription Rooms. It is open from 10am to 5pm.

To see more of Christine's work visit [cgpaint.co.uk](http://cgpaint.co.uk)



● Inspired by Marcus Green's Canal in Winter.



● A painting based on David Joyce's view of Ebley Mill.