

Ian Spence

(leaving year 1962)

Ian attended Edinburgh College of Art after school, subsequently qualifying as an Architect then a Town Planner. He ended his working career as deputy head of Planning at Edinburgh Council in 2008, giving himself plenty of spare time to enjoy hobby painting, and in 2022 become President of Edinburgh Rotary. He cited his main influences at school as art teachers Nigel McIsaac and Shand Hutchison, inherited an artistic gene from his father which he has donated to one of his daughters, and his favourite subjects include family portraits, landscapes and architecture.



Asked recently (December 2023) about his passion for art, Ian said “I ‘rediscovered’ drawing and painting after a very busy professional life as an architect, urban designer and town planner, balanced with family and sporting activities. The images represent a pretty eclectic mix of subjects with a leaning towards portraiture. I generally become interested in a subject or an opportunity is presented and I tentatively move towards giving it a try. Everything is a little bit experimental. I do however, derive an enormous amount of pleasure from the process and learn to see and understand things rather than just look at them. Making the images involves total concentration and that is a marvellous foil to managing the complexities of life that engulf us. Something to be recommended”.

Key questions

1. What initially inspired your work?
 - a. Ian ‘discovered’ art in his 6th year at school, and got really engaged in earning his Higher Art qualification that year
2. Did you have any inspirational teachers at school?
 - a. Art teachers Nigel McIsaac and Shand Hutchison, and English teacher Hector McIver
3. Who are your favourite artists?
 - a. Local – S J Peplow, Barbara Rae (barbararae.com)
 - b. International - Vermeer, Turner, Gerhard Richter, Peter Doig
4. What is/are your favourite(s) among your own work?
 - a. Quick charcoal and pastel portraits
5. What is your range of subjects?
 - a. Portraits, landscapes, architecture, interiors
6. How do you choose your subjects?
 - a. Circumstances, opportunities, steadily developing interest in subjects
7. Do you have (or have had) other artists in your family?
 - a. Father – J.R. Spence: Watercolours, marine subjects
 - b. Daughter – Pernille Spence: moving image/films, installations/ projects (pernille-spence.co.uk)
 - c. Granddaughter – Edith Mackenzie: animation
8. Do you have any school photos, and did you win any prizes?
 - a. Photos only of the golf team, and no prizes!
9. Have you anything else to add?
 - a. I exhibit regularly with the Scottish Society of Architect Artists and at the Scottish Arts Club.