



Twirling



Planting out, oil on canvas, Dia 20cm

MEET THE ARTIST:

Suzanne O'Driscoll

From the heart of Oxfordshire, artist Suzanne O'Driscoll recalls through her art the scenes and colours of her journeys to far-flung places. ▶

Her gallery-cum-studio is one of Oxfordshire's most extraordinary studios. The glorious setting was once part of the Blenheim Palace estate; a lush secret glade with hidden nooks and terraces tucked away off the road between Woodstock and Bladon Church, where Churchill is buried. A long drive leads you into the heart of the old quarry, in which a brightly light art space with a floating ceiling seems to hang in the canopies of the trees. An ancient apple orchard of gnarled branches and blossom overhead; roots deep in the land above. It's a world of fronds, foliage and birdsong you'll find colours and gentle curves to match both those of the Amazon rainforest and of Suzanne's art.

Suzanne is inspired by travel and the places and habitats she has explored around the world. On a travelling scholarship early in her career, she spent time in Mexico and Guatemala which triggered her passion for the vibrant and joyful colours which spill from the landscape, and still excites her today. It is Vietnam and Canada, however, that feature most in her recent collection of paintings.

"The Canadian landscape is unusual in that, because it's so enormous, it barely changes for hundreds of miles: the forests and lakes stretch out across great swathes of the country. It's so unpopulated there's a real sense of purity. Vietnam, in contrast, is a long narrow country crammed with interest because the climate shifts as you travel from province to province."



Secret Pot, 3 layers hand painted steel, large and small



Wires and windows oil on wood 9x6.5 ins

In a vibrant yet organic palette, rich in greens, blues, oranges and browns, Suzanne's Canadian paintings show flowers, views of nature, meandering paths which draw the eye, and the cycle of life. Whilst most are tranquil and welcoming in nature, sometimes they're slightly mysterious or even a little threatening. "In the wilds of Canada you feel so very small," she explains.

The Vietnam collection, in contrast, focuses mostly on buildings, markets and people. "Vietnam's a stunning place to visit," she smiles. "I'm always drawn to water and the way it meanders, moves and rests. In Vietnam it's everywhere and lots of everyday life takes place on the water. The population there decorate the front of their homes in the most wonderful ways. There'll be a house painted in an art deco style

“
a vibrant
yet organic
palette, rich in
greens, blues,
oranges and
browns



hideaway



lakeside

next to one that has been made to look like a castle, and a chequerboard one alongside that, and there are striped awnings everywhere. It's a visual feast of brilliant colour and pattern. Even up in the rural northern area, amongst the islands and the amazing granite hill rock features, the floating houses are still painted beautifully.

Suzanne is interested in the decoration she finds outside and inside buildings, and has been inspired by the glory beneath the arched ceilings of Spanish cathedrals to create a new more abstract series of work focusing on the shapes and décor within.

In addition to her paintings, Suzanne also creates fine metal sculpture of multi-layered interlocking garden-inspired shapes cut with perfect precision from robust sheets of steel to bring her drawn design to life. With the apparent delicacy of papercut art, and tasteful yet bold enamelled colours, they are light-

hearted and elegant with fanfares of flowers and small birds nestling on boughs. While you might prefer not to paint the front of your Cotswold cottage the colours of a Vietnamese rainbow, Suzanne's structures offer a charming way to add vibrancy to the walls of an Oxfordshire house.

Across the region, her largescale sculptures grace the exteriors of many buildings and public spaces. Keep an eye out for her open studio events, such as ArtWeeks, for an opportunity to flick through the broad portfolio and dig deep into the ideas behind each design: local landmarks and icons such as Didcot Power Station's cooling towers, the books of the university or the Morris Oxford car appear as elements in these massive metal murals, and are cast as soft shadows on the ground or walls below.



Boats in vietnam, mixed media on paper, 66x26cm

For more on Suzanne O'Driscoll, visit suzanneodriscoll.com

