

For the love of colour

Artist Cherrie Mansfield lives her life in full colour. Periwinkle purple, magenta and teal enliven her home, and she favours a wardrobe to match. It's no surprise then that colour is the striking feature of her work.

An eye-catching combination of colours is often the starting point for Cherrie's abstract acrylic paintings, whether in the pattern of a friend's dress, a display of plastic spades at the seaside or the dramatic coastlines of West Cornwall.

Cherrie says, "Colour excites me, grabs my attention and fuels my creativity. I work predominantly with acrylics and prefer palette knives to paint brushes. Sometimes I begin a new piece with a clear idea in mind, at other times colour is the starting point, and everything else flows from there."

Cherrie remembers a creative, colour-filled childhood in Horsham, West Sussex, where objects like her mother's bright yellow peeler, the little red wheelbarrow she used to help her Dad in the garden and her purple flares all made a strong, lasting impression.

"We didn't have a TV when we were growing up so we had to find other ways to entertain ourselves. Whether it was colouring, painting by numbers, making candles or performing plays with my brother and friends in our front room, I usually had some sort of creative project on the go!"

Cherrie's early creativity encouraged her to take art at school, where she began experimenting with paint, collage and PVA glue mixes.

left: [Taste of Tahiti](#) acrylic on board





After receiving little encouragement from her teachers, she gave up making art and went on to spend four years studying geology and environmental biogeochemistry at university in the north-east of England.

“Colour excites me, grabs my attention and fuels my creativity”

The influence of this time can be seen in the strong references to geology and the natural environment in her work. Hours of fieldwork involving close observation of rock formations seems to be reflected in the bold marks and layering seen in some paintings, while other pieces directly reference the colours and forms of minerals like feldspar and malachite.

After deciding not to pursue a career in geology, Cherrie and her husband Peter settled in Worcester. It was when they began making frequent trips to West Cornwall, home to vibrant artists’ colonies since the late nineteenth century, that Cherrie revived her interest in art. She took up evening classes at the local college in Worcester. Short courses at the St Ives School of Painting and Newlyn School of Art soon followed and are something she continues with from time to time. These have brought her into direct contact with teachers who knew some of the renowned artists whose work she admires, including Patrick Heron, Terry Frost and Sandra Blow.

Cherrie’s love of these artists with their striking use of colour is reflected in her own style, which usually involves one of three techniques. The first was inspired by an exhibition of Matisse’s later work in which he cut out coloured paper because he no longer had the strength to paint.



top: [Fragmentation 71](#) mixed media on canvas board
centre: [Beyond Bamaluz](#) acrylic on canvas board

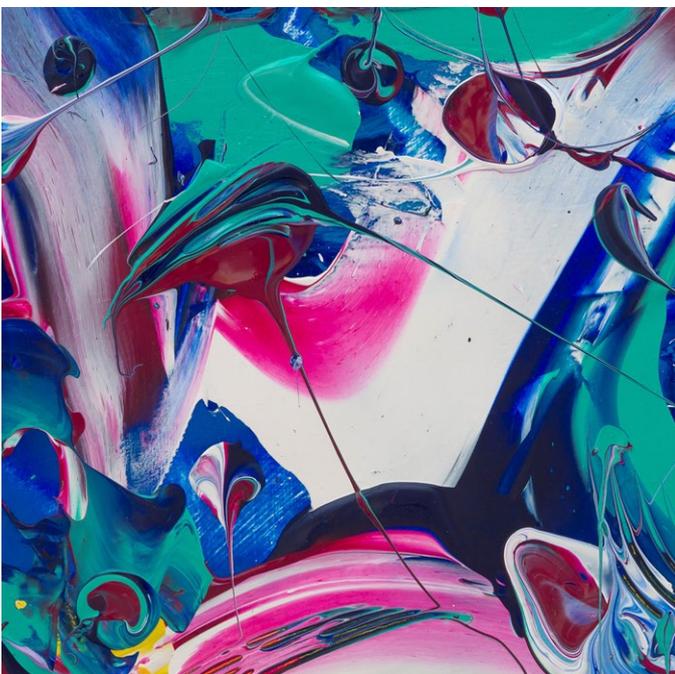
In her pieces, which she describes as cut outs, Cherrie liberally applies paint to paper then uses an industrial strength punch to create shapes that are carefully arranged to create the final composition.

Cherrie also creates work that appears to resemble landscapes or seascapes, although this is not usually intentional. In these layered works, it's all about how the colours interact and making marks into the paint. She also uses palette knives, scratching or collage to create texture and depth.

Her third technique results in thrown paintings in the style of Jackson Pollock and gives her the least control in terms of how the paint will land or what the finished product will look like. Cherrie says, "When I first started painting I expected to create work I was pleased with every time and was disheartened when I didn't. I soon realised that it's as much about the creative process, or perhaps more so, than it is about the end result."

"I've also learnt that knowing when to stop is vital. In many respects I'm a bit of a perfectionist, but that doesn't sit comfortably with my style of artwork. It's so very easy to overwork a painting!"

A new rhythm acrylic on paper



Frequent cups of tea are essential, providing a moment to take a breath, step away from the canvas and reassess. Sometimes, a painting gets added to the discard pile to be revisited at a later date, sometimes quite a bit later.

Another challenge for Cherrie is finding time to paint as she works full time and is also a co-organiser of the annual Worcestershire Open Studios. In an attempt to kick start her creativity after a somewhat unproductive period, and inspired by an article about daily painting in *Artists & Illustrators* magazine, she set herself a challenge to paint 30 paintings in 30 days (it actually took 31).

"I've learnt that knowing when to stop is vital"

"I didn't set out to create a perfect series of work, but in the words of Andy Warhol, to 'just get it done'. I also found that I developed a more regular rhythm of painting that lasted beyond the challenge."

Algal bloom acrylic on paper



“It’s as much about the creative process as it is about the end result”

Cherrie’s gone on to participate in the global art initiative #the100dayproject, involving doing a creative action every day for 100 days. Her first 100 day project involved tackling that discard pile and the results can be seen on Instagram at #100daysofrevivingdiscardedart.

The discipline of these challenges has served her well. Cherrie’s work is regularly exhibited in the West Midlands and has also been shown in London and St Ives. She has been shortlisted in a number of national competitions, including the National Open Art and the prestigious Cork Street Open. In 2017, she was an ArtGemini Prize finalist and one of her paintings was selected for the Society of Women Artists Annual Exhibition. Two of her pieces have also been published in *101 Abstract Artworks* produced by Art Has No Borders.

As her work has gained recognition, Cherrie has enjoyed encouraging others to get creative. She shares her techniques with visitors to her home during Worcestershire Open Studios, gets her godchildren, nieces and nephew engaged in art sessions and has run a workshop on why being creative is good for personal wellbeing. She’s particularly proud of a collaborative project she led with St. Peter’s Baptist Church to create a striking piece of artwork celebrating the rich diversity of those who are part of the church.

In the end, it’s always the joy of colour that draws Cherrie back to her studio, where the excitement she experienced as a child opening a new tin of crayons or a bumper pack of felt tip pens has never quite worn off.



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