



A visit to June Carey's studio offers clues to her enigmatic work, discovers *Jan Patience*

ARTIST PROFILE

JUNE CAREY

The Castle Gallery Exhibition

Inverness

If June Carey ever invites you to see her etchings, do not refuse. Studios are fascinating places, partly because you get to see work in progress, but also because they give an insight into the machinations of the mind of the incumbent. In Carey's space, images jump from the walls – startlingly vivid pastel drawings, mono-prints, watercolours and uniquely hand-crafted digital prints – all heavily and dazzlingly influenced by a sense-assaulting visit to India in 2004.

There are also the highly personal mementoes and aide memories that all artists pin up to inspire in their downtime, from endless photographs of India, an old magazine cover by Carey's art-school friend John Byrne, to a tiny pair of pink wings. But back to the etchings, Carey creates these in a tiny boxed-off area at the far end of her compact studio in the garden of her Stirling home. It is separated from other work so that the press, plates and printing process is not contaminated by dust from Carey's iridescent palette. It must be kept cooler than the rest of the room.

Carey seems enthused by life itself but becomes particularly animated when talking about the etching process.

She came to it late, some 20 years into her artistic career, at the Edinburgh Print-makers Workshop, and it set her imagination free. "Printmaking was never something that I really considered when I studied art" she explains, "but I had come to the point when I was sort of stuck".

"What I absolutely loved about etching was that it brought back the spontaneity into my art, which is something everyone has as a child but which you lose along the way".

The subconscious is ever-present in Carey's work, expressed as a true element of chance. "I love that you never know what is going to happen until the last minute".

Always original in her thinking, recently Carey has recently been using digital technology to create fresh and interesting work, with the help of Murray Robertson at Glasgow Print Studio. These prints, which are on sale at the Castle Gallery for £400, emerged from photographs of etchings and drawings which she had subsequently destroyed because "they weren't working". Each one has been printed digitally, then worked on by hand.

These pieces are captivating for their sheer unbridled energy. Carey is not an easy artist to pigeonhole and, as she acknowledges herself, she will never need to pay a therapist, because "it all comes out in my work".

Her visual narratives involve endless permutations of the same images and motifs. Birds, fishes moons and hands recur everywhere in her prints, but as her old friend and mentor from Edinburgh Printmakers, Alfons Byautas, notes: "this intensely personal art both reveals and conceals its meanings and messages".

The divided self is always present in June Carey's works. Her sensual figures may seem cool and aloof but there are infinite emotional quandaries to consider, which begging the viewer to keep coming back.

She lavishes as much care and attention into her three-dimensional pieces as she does her drawing or printmaking. One of the highlights of her outstanding solo exhibition last autumn in the Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum was a set of four Wishing Shoes, intricately beaded hand-made shoes in glass cases, accompanied by a June Carey original poem.