

## November 2017: *Nicola McLean*



**Background:** I would like to introduce Nicola McLean, who is an Irish artist living in Northern Scotland. She is inspired by life and “all its wonders - animals, nature and ordinary man-made objects.” Her beautiful paintings create a “life re-imaged” as her website states ([www.ArtByNicolaMcLean.com](http://www.ArtByNicolaMcLean.com)). Over the past 7 years, she has won many well-deserved local awards. I find her art brings me to my happy place. Please help me welcome her. - Kirsten

**TPNC:** What attracted you to the type of art you create?

**McLean:** I tried several different mediums including Indian ink, watercolour and oil before settling on acrylic paint. It's my preferred medium now because it gives me the vibrancy in colour that I love and it has a quick drying time.



Initially I painted mostly animals, and they do still feature in my art a lot but I've found that as I've grown as an artist I am inspired by more and more subjects and don't want

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to limit what I choose to paint. Whatever the subject matter it will always be brightly coloured as I feel life is dark enough these days and like to use a vibrant palette in my paintings.

**TPNC:** What do you like about your art?

**McLean:** I like that I can choose anything whatsoever that inspires me and I get to re-imagine it onto my canvas in my own brightly coloured way. While I aim to achieve a recognizable likeness with my art, I also want it to clearly be a painting that is my own interpretation and not just an exact replication of the subject. I find art more interesting when you can see the artist in the work.

I also collaborate with a group of vegan artists from all over the world and I love that I can use my art as a way to raise awareness and funds for charities that promote vegan issues and help rescued farmed animals.

**TPNC:** What do you find challenging about your art?

**McLean:** Getting it seen! Living somewhere very remote, I've found the internet is a wonderful tool for helping artists get their work discovered by people who would never otherwise see it but the most challenging aspect of being an artist for me is the marketing and self-promotion required to sell art. As an introvert, that side of things makes me very uncomfortable and it's another reason why I'm grateful for the internet as I find it a little easier to market your art online than in person.

**TPNC:** What kind of education (if any) did you find helpful in creating your art?

**McLean:** I studied art at school up to A'Level (Equivalent to American APs, I think) but after that I went on to do different things at college and as a career and only painted infrequently over the years until about seven years ago when I started an art blog



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([www.nicseARTh.com](http://www.nicseARTh.com)) as a way to record my journey back into art. I'd say therefore that I'm mostly self-taught. I've learned different techniques using a mixture of reading and watching videos online and simply by experimenting.

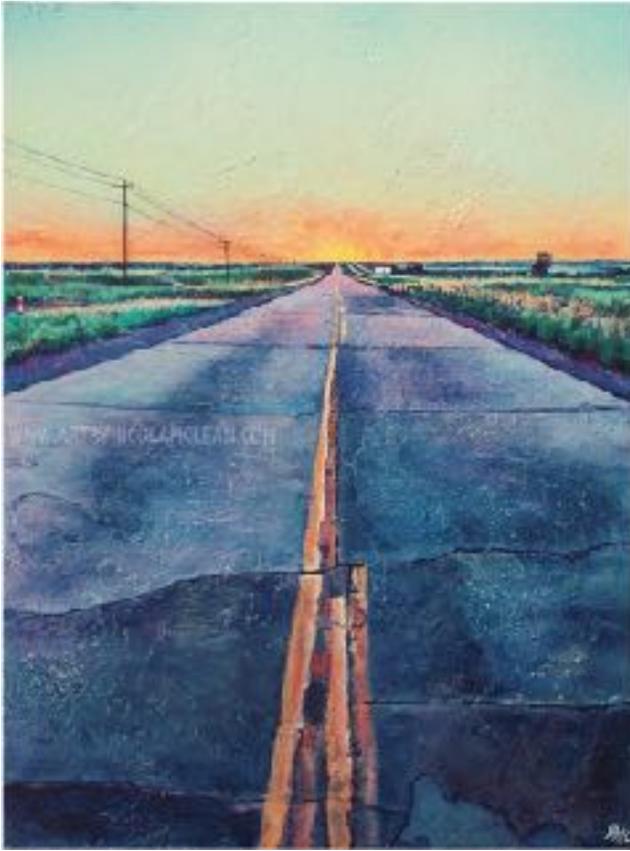


I also won an art competition a couple of years ago where one of the prizes was a 'Freedom in painting' workshop with an artist called Ashley Hanson. He really showed me a different way to look at the world and the subject I'm painting. While his is a very loose almost abstract style and I've stayed mostly representational, I learnt a lot from him with regards to mark making and my love of vibrant colour definitely grew after his workshop.

**TPNC:** Who influences your work?

**McLean:** I love so many different artists. I don't know that they influence my work as such as their subject matter is very different in that they do a lot of figurative work which I never do and mostly they work in oils, which I'm just too impatient to use but I love Scottish artist Jack Vettriano, and American artists such as Grant Wood and Edward Hopper. I also love how Salvador Dali's mind worked with his surrealist paintings and having experimented with pointillism several years ago, I am a fan of Georges Seurat

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who developed the style back in the 1800s. I guess mostly I like representational art but with a very painterly style.

**TPNC:** What kind of advice would you give someone looking to get into this type of art?

**McLean:** Just to always keep being inspired by different things and always be open to learning new ways of painting and challenging yourself as it helps you to grow as an artist. I think that you also need to recognize whether it's more important to you to paint what you love or to just paint what seems to sell as they aren't always the same thing, unfortunately! I could only ever paint what inspires me as otherwise my heart just wouldn't be in it and if those paintings happen to resonate with an art purchaser then that's just the icing on the cake!