

Lucy Pratt's Georgian home is tucked down a lane of higgledy-piggledy, picture-perfect houses in Chipping Norton. Her light, bright studio occupies the top floor and offers views across the oldest part of town. "I love that you can see the roofs of the town spreading behind you," she says. "Drovers used to come along this road with their sheep, and we look onto the almshouses which were built in 1640."

The house was in desperate need of care and attention when she bought it, and remains an ongoing project. "It had been rented for years when we found it and it was riddled with rats and damp. We're still doing it up – it still has enormous rat holes everywhere but I think the rats have gone!"

The studio, however, needed little work and quickly became Lucy's treasured hideaway. "This room works well as a studio because, being late Georgian, it's got high ceilings and lots of light coming in from either side. I chose it because it was one of the biggest rooms. Being at the top of the house it's quieter and the children know they're not really allowed up here."

It is vital for Lucy to have a studio in her home. She fits her working day around family life and the school run, so it's important to be able to seize any opportunity to paint. "We could do with the space and the children could do with another room but, at the same time, you never know when you'll get that striking 'have to put it down now' moment – when you get an idea and it's all you can see, all you can think about, until you've put it down in a notepad or made a few splatters of colour so that you can get back to it at another point. It would worry me having a studio too far away to do that."

The studio is stacked high with half-finished canvases: Lucy tends



# MY STUDIO

## Lucy Pratt

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: JENNY WHITE





sketches and the canvases that I've already started and I'll work on those for three to nine months – sometimes they go on for a few years."

The sketchbooks serve as visual diaries of her life and travels. There are sketches made when she lived in south London and countless others from her travels around the world. Ideas also come from objects she brings into her studio – sculptures made by her sister; puppets bought in Asia; sunflowers gathered from a field up the road.

Patterned fabrics are a recurrent theme too. The studio is strewn with throws and rugs bought on her travels. There's a sumac rug she bought in an antique shop and textiles from India, Thailand and south east Asia, where she spend most of her twenties.


A favourite object is an antique, sculpted African head she bought in an auction. "I fell in love with it because its eyes are shut, almost like it's dreaming. I dream a lot and I quite often try to put ideas from my dreams into paintings."

Also dotted around the studio are pots and bowls made by Lucy herself. Typically these echo the images and themes of her paintings. "I've always loved ceramics. My grandmother is a potter and she had a pottery shed at our house when we were little. She was always making things and we could always go in there and throw pots, so I've always felt very at home making things from clay.

"Making things in any shape or form is lovely. Sometimes you can become saturated in doing something two-dimensionally or you think, 'I'd really love to transfer some of those ideas onto something three dimensional.'"

Whatever medium she's working in, it is vital for Lucy to retain freedom and fluidity in her work so that she is able to pursue her imagination and

inspiration wherever they may lead. Her studio, with its charming blend of chaos and order, reflects this.

"It's important not only in my painting life but also in my living day-to-day life and family life that you have to leave space for exciting things to come in. If you don't, no wonder you don't get any adventure in your life – you have to leave room for any event to happen." 

switch from one to another throughout the day, listening to dance classical music as she works. Sometimes one painting will spark an idea for another, or offer a solution to a problem that caused her to lay an older one aside. She jokes that chaos and organisation sit side by side in her studio and in her work, yet it's this tension that spurs her creativity. "Quite often I'll have late-night painting sessions on Friday nights and over the

weekend. I'll start something and then I'll find I've got so many ideas I might have to start one canvas after another, just doing a little bit on each. On the practical side I like to build the colour again and again, to give it depth."

For inspiration, she turns to the piles of sketchbooks that are stacked on shelves in the corner of the studio. "I've always gone out *en plein air* to gather things from the environment and get inspiration, then I bring back the

## ARTIST'S BIO

**Name**  
Lucy Pratt  
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Oxfordshire, 1970  
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Banbury, Loughborough and Cheltenham Schools of Art  
**Next Exhibition**  
29 April - 22 May, Russell Gallery, London  
**More Info**  
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