



FOCUS ON: Chris Kettle

Terrarium II, Oil on canvas, 130 x 130 cms, £7,000

Is this a Still Life? Broadly speaking, it is. All my work is. But it's not a traditional Still Life... I'm very interested in ways of pushing the genre. I've been doing this for 20 years so I want it to be exciting. In a way it's more like an art installation which you can't walk around.

The flowers are magnificent... Thank you. In one sense I'm a flower arranger, just the slowest flower arranger in Hove. For this piece I took pictures of lots of flowers and then painted them, one by one, until there's a great display of them. There's no previous sketch, or anything. It's all built up, flower by flower, leaf by leaf.

The room is fairly dark, in more ways than one. I find a room, and then I edit it down until I've got what I need from it. When I've worked it out I find a way of 'putting the lights out' by applying dark washes over the top. I want the area around the flowers to be eerie, like a scene from a film where someone's just stepped out the room.

Who would be the director of that film?

Stanley Kubrick, maybe.

There's a loneliness about the painting. Are you a lonely person? Not at all. I live with my

wife and young daughter and my life is fairly hectic. So it's good to spend time with myself, and my paintings in the studio. Perhaps the loneliness in the picture reflects the fact that art gives me time to spend on my own, when I think much more clearly.

And there's a darkness, too. The darker side of the soul and emotions interest me more than the 'happy' stuff. But this is about what shines through the darkness, not the darkness itself. The power of the painting is all about light. So it's an optimistic painting.

What reaction do you want from people? I would like people to feel that they sort of understand the painting, but they don't know why.

What painting would you hang from your desert-island palm tree? Probably *False Forest*, by Nicola Samori.

As told to Alex Leith

Terrarium II will be displayed at the Naked Eye Gallery, Farm Mews, Hove, in the exhibition Dada + 8, Dec 11th-24th, 2015, alongside Alex Binnie, Simon Dixon, David Levine, Paul Ostrer, Joseph Rossi, Jim Sanders and Sarah Shaw.