

## FROM THE SCOTTISH LOCHS TO HONG KONG

*As Far as The Eye Can See, 51 x 51 cms, acrylic on wrapped canvas*



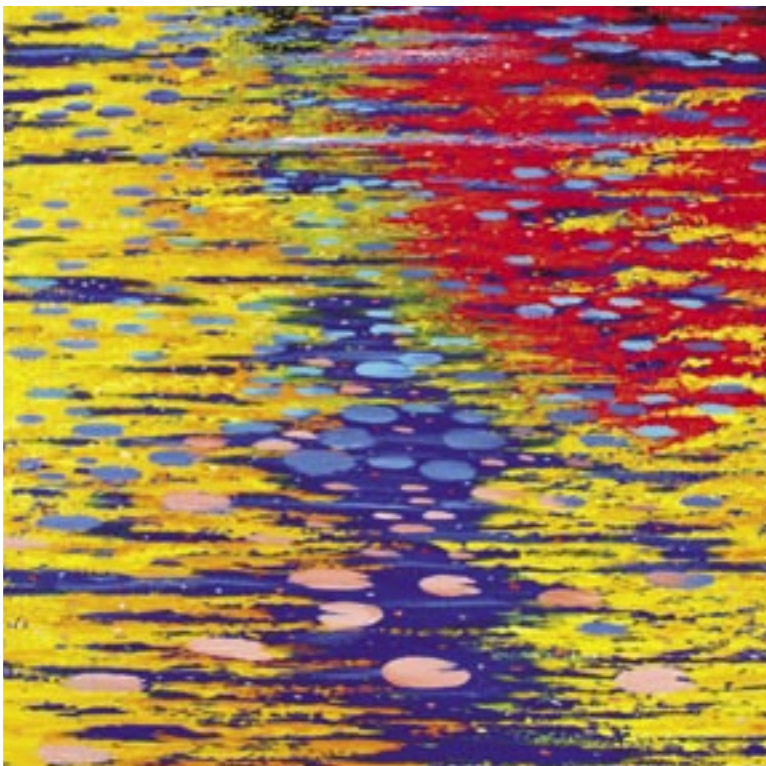
If you like colours, the sense of depth one sees in optical art and nature you will fall for Ronnie Ford's work, if you don't like any of the previous he will change your mind.

By *Rita Silva*

“ When I was 16 I slavishly copied a Canaletto brushstroke by brushstroke “



*Poppies among the Borage, 51 x 51 cms, acrylic on wrapped canvas*



*Reflections, 91 x 91 cms, acrylic on wrapped canvas*

Scottish painter Ronnie Ford is back in Hong Kong. He is exhibiting his latest works inspired by the French countryside and Scottish landscapes but at the same time trying to emulate the Chinese masters by 'capturing the spirit' of those sceneries.

**For how long have you been painting? Where does the interest in this form of art come from?**

My primary school teacher recognised that Art was the tool that would lead me to educational success. Art has been my passion all my life and I have explored many aspects, many media.

**You have a solid artistic background and you have been teaching for a very long time, do painters need to learn technical skills or can amateur painters be just as good?**

Drawing, in any of its forms, is the basic language of art. I am a great believer in learning the rules thoroughly before breaking them. But then, any amateur or self-taught artist is just as capable of doing this as an artist with formal training.

**How would you define your style?**

My style has been developing over the past 35 years from my studies and interest in world art, sculpture, optical and abstract art. It is constantly evolving.

**Do your style and techniques vary along the years or have they remained similar?**

When I was a teenager I was exploring textures, sticking sand and wood in my works. At Art School I focused on sculpture for my degree but was also painting in all media. I completed hundreds of watercolours in the seventies, encouraged by Charles Bone, a Scottish watercolourist and Art School tutor. I also explored optical art - painting, printing, sculpture - in great depth.

In the eighties I was painting super-real pieces. People said "Oh, wow! You can draw and paint realistically as well!" I haven't finished exploring innovation in texture yet. Who knows where the future will take me.



*Les Montagnes Jaunes I*, 30 x 100 cms, acrylic on wrapped canvas

“ Terence Conran opened the new wing of the Cotswold House Hotel where I was commissioned to do four large pieces ”



*L'Ombre du Soir*, 91 x 121 cms, acrylic on wrapped canvas

**You've worked in Hong Kong for more than 10 years, is there a big difference between the way Art is approached in Asia and in Europe?**

The traditional methods of teaching are quite different, but, as in many aspects of life, you can see western influences on Asian art everywhere now, and vice versa. In my work there are many Asian influences – the creation of different levels, taking the viewer on a journey, the idea of not just copying nature, but capturing the essence of the subject, capturing the spirit of the landscape and beyond that now in my *Timescapes* – capturing time and space.

**Is there any painting you would like to have painted?**

Kokoschka and Klimt, Salvador Dalí, the American Ruralists, Vasarely, Song Yu Min, Wu Guanzhong, the Japanese print-makers, Chung Yee – I can stand and gaze in awe at their technical brilliance. When I was 16 I slavishly copied a Canaletto brushstroke by brushstroke. But no... now I love doing what I do and don't envy anyone.

**In this exhibition the landscape is the protagonist, are all your paintings like these or do you have other favourite themes?**

I draw and paint anything and everything. I have done a lot of figurative work in the past. I have a large collection of portraits of my wife, Carol. But the landscape in all its moods captivates me and allows me the opportunity to explore and create ever-changing canvases.

**Some painters claim to find inspiration in certain locations, do you have a favourite place to paint?**

I don't often paint on the spot. I've had too many mosquito bites! So now I look, I photograph, I sketch quick notes and colour studies, then I let them all filter down in my studio, when I'm ready, I create. In terms of places France features strongly because of the wonderful light and colour. Currently I am rediscovering the beauty of my homeland, Scotland. I have many places still to explore.

**Scotland and France are two of the countries reflected in your work, what about Hong Kong? Are urban settings not interesting to you?**

Urban landscapes are also fascinating. My folio contains many drawings of Glasgow tenements and shipyards. In my sketch pads there are studies of textured walls from many European cityscapes. I have hundreds of sketches of Hong Kong streets, markets, temples, gardens; reflections and distortions, which hopefully one day will be worked up into an exhibition capturing the spirit of Hong Kong through my eyes.

**In Asia there are some amazing landscapes to portray, have you painted any?**

I have done a series of paintings entitled *Dreams of Asia*, inspired by Chinese landscapes. My previous exhibitions have also featured paintings inspired by Balinese rice terraces and the colours of the Balinese sea.

**Colour plays an enormous role in these pieces of work, are you influenced by any painter or artist?**

My colours have developed from my love of nature and my experience of studying life. I like to use a mixture of harmonious and contrasting colours to create the *chi* or energy in my paintings. Occasionally I venture into the Fauve palette.

**I know you have some paintings at one of Terence Conran's properties and I guess that is a big backing coming from such a major style guru, have you seen any result after that?**

Terence Conran opened the new wing of the Cotswold House Hotel where I was commissioned to do four large pieces. I have now been approached by a gallery in the Cotswolds who want to hang my work.



*Spring Mist*, 51 x 51 cms, acrylic on wrapped canvas