



Stag in the frame



Got an empty space on your wall? Brian Phipps meets a painter from Bristol whose work is a favourite with stalkers

It was July 2008, you remember, traffic queue, sweltering heat – it was the CLA Game Fair at Blenheim Palace. I was yet again hotfooting my way towards the nearest mobile bar to quench my thirst when I caught a brief glimpse of a vivid red huntsman's jacket. Diverted, I walked in to the marquee where sporting artist Teresa Davis was exhibiting. I stood in awe, rotating 360°: oil paintings ranging from a simple fox head to huge roaring stags stood before me, their colours jumping out towards me.

Teresa wanted to get to work on a new stalking painting but she was surrounded by admirers who were firing questions at her. I pushed through and got my question in: please could I visit her studio on the outskirts of Bristol?

Teresa is a self-taught artist specialising in oil paintings. It's a career that began by accident. "I was working as a finisher in an architectural model-making business," she says. "One evening, on a break, I showed a friend my sketch pad on which I

Painted or drew anything from horses to pet mice. He asked if I could paint a portrait of his dog. It started from there."

Teresa's friend was overjoyed with the results. Word quickly spread. Teresa was in demand and commissions came rolling in. "I've hunted with the Mendip Farmers' Foxhounds all my life and regularly pursue country sports so when they offered me a stand at their terrier show later in the year, I jumped at it," she says. "I was amazed at the response."

This gave Teresa the confidence to attend her first big show. It took a large financial outlay but with plenty of paintings to display, Teresa booked a stand at the National Amateur Garden Show at the Bath & West Showground. This was, again, a success. Driving home, she knew she had a decision to make. Having a regular income from her full-time job left her with little time for painting. She had to follow her dream so, in October 2003, she took the plunge and became a full-time professional artist.





In the first few years, the hunt provided Teresa with several commissions and asked her to attend many of their functions with her stand. In the summer of 2005, she was able to repay some of this kindness by painting a map of the Mendip Farmers' hunt country, raising more than £3,500 for hunt funds.

Teresa's work has led her to experience many types of fieldsports. It is not really possible to capture a subject unless you've seen it first hand. This is a rule Teresa works by and she travels the length and breadth of Britain photographing and studying her subjects. She visits Scotland every year for a week's stalking.

"When I paint I like to do it from experience. This helps me portray the scene on to a painting," she says. "When I'm sat on top of a mountain in the Cairngorms, soaking up the atmosphere and seeing the terrain or standing on the heather and breathing the fresh air – that's what it's all about."

Teresa takes dozens of photographs throughout her stalks which are invaluable for reference when back home.





It doesn't have to be in Scotland. People have watched in amazement as she stands knee-deep in water taking pictures of antique fly fishing equipment bought from sporting auctions and placed beside a picturesque river up on Exmoor. But Scotland is where Teresa's all-time heroes painted: Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) and Thornburn (1860-1935) both regularly visited Gaick Estate in Inverness-shire which is one of Teresa's regular haunts. "I feel emotional to be walking in their footsteps," she says, "just sitting in a Glen, knowing that they painted the view from where I'm sat."

Because of the subject matter and style of Teresa's painting, people are sometimes surprised to see a woman sat at the easel, even when she's on the stand at a game fair. People still ask her partner David if he's the artist.

Teresa still does pet portraits but her heart lies in countryside sports. Large paintings are her forte. She starts at 6.30am in the summer to get the perfect light for painting, often not finishing until 6.30pm.

She makes prints of some of her work. Her *Countryman's Kitchen* is the most popular. Her work is in demand by collectors who contact her regularly to see what's in the pipeline. If you visit the CLA or Midland Game Fairs, be sure to look her up and visit her stand for a chat and to have your breath taken away by her work. ■

Win win win!

You could win one of these beautiful Teresa Davis prints. The print of the stag's head is called *Challenger* and the other is *Countryman's Kitchen*.

Simply answer the question: How many species of bird are depicted in the *Countryman's Kitchen* print?

- a) 3
- b) 4
- c) 5

Send your answer on a postcard to Art Competition, Sporting Rifle, Lawrence House, Morrell Street, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5SZ or email it to blaze@charliejacoby.com and don't forget to enclose your name, address and which print you would like to win.

They are each available as limited edition prints of only 150 in amazing Giclee quality. Each of them are 49cm x 38.5cm.



Contact Teresa on 01179 712308 or 07815 489104, www.teresadavis.co.uk. Meet Teresa at the CLA Game Fair on 24-26 July, Honiton Agricultural Show on 6 August and Midland Game Fair on 19-20 September