

PEMBROKESHIRE ARTIST IN NATIONAL COMPETITION

Castle School pupils stunned to see their art teacher on the telly.

Pupils at Castle School have always known that their art teacher, Sarah Hope, is talented. One of her incredible portraits hangs in the school's entrance hall which is part of a beautiful old Victorian manor house, just north of Narberth. Everyone who sees the painting remarks on its detail and vibrant colour. However, until recently, not many of the students appreciate that she has also been recognised by the art world, having recently been selected to compete in Sky Arts 'Portrait of the Year'.



Sarah explained. 'Portraits can reveal so much about the complexity of a person and their life story. Looking at portraits reminds me that, what bonds us as human beings, is our capacity to empathise with each other. I am not concerned with representing a surface likeness, but I want something deeper about the person to be present in the painting. My compositions are constructed very carefully, placing elements into the painting that suggest a narrative. I like to focus in and go close up', getting to the essential. I take pleasure in and am obsessed with detail. I enjoy devoting hours to accurately capturing what is just one second in time. In capturing that moment there is an intimacy. It could be gleeful, sad, serious, peaceful, tender ... but it is about sharing the intensity of that moment. My paintings invite the viewer to participate in that moment too and to empathise with the feeling the painting evokes in them.'



In addition to this remarkable achievement, Sarah has also won several prizes for her art. Last year, she was a prize winner in the Artists & Illustrators Magazine 'Artists of the Year' and currently is waiting to find out if she has been successful in this year's Jackson's Open Painting Prize Competition. Entered into one of the six categories, the Portrait and Figure Award, Sarah's composition, Memory's Scent, is also included in the People's Choice Award which is voted for by the public. In addition, the overall winner, from all the categories, will be decided on by an invited panel of six leading figures in the art world.

The school's principal, Harriet Harrison, said, 'sometimes we take for granted just how talented or knowledgeable all our staff are. It takes something like a national competition for us to appreciate this and we hope the pupils realise just how lucky they are to be able to draw on the experience passed on by someone like Sarah who has so much to share.'

A level student Beth Lee commented, 'Many of my sessions with her at A level have been one to one and I've been lucky enough to go to several exhibitions with her so I've got to know her and her opinions on art quite well. However, she is very modest so I didn't know anything about this, even though she's been my teacher for nearly 5 years. I prefer to work with different media so we have tried lots of different techniques. She never forced her style on me but allowed me to explore my own ideas. Part of a project last year was inspired by steam punk, which is very different. But through her expertise and guidance my drawings and tonal painting have also developed really well.'

And GCSE student Georgie Richards added, 'I knew that Miss Hope had been on the telly and was in a competition at the moment so it didn't surprise me as I know she is really good. She is very passionate about her art and it rubs off on everyone. Also she is very helpful and friendly. She's good at telling me what I should try to help improve my work and she compliments what I do and encourages my work. She gives me advice on how to keep up the momentum and lets me carry on with my own ideas without interfering but still suggests things that I know have made my work better. I hope she wins because she deserves to. I voted for her anyway!'

To see more of Sarah's work and to find out more about Castle School, you can visit their respective websites www.artist-sarah-hope.co.uk and www.castleschoolpembrokeshire.co.uk