

# DESTIG

CREATIVES WITHOUT BORDERS

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*HONOLULU*



SUSIE HAMILTON

*"I paint figures in a 'wilderness' which can be a natural or an urban one, a desert or a shopping mall."*



**Tell us about yourself and your background.**

I studied painting in London at St Martin's School of Art and Byam Shaw School of Art and I read English Literature at London University, going on to do a Ph.D on the theme of the transformation of identity in Shakespeare's plays. I am represented by the Paul Stolper Gallery in Museum Street, London and I am married to playwright and poet Peter Hamilton.



**Tell us about your work**

I paint figures in a 'wilderness' which can be a natural or an urban one, a desert or a shopping mall for instance. The figures in my paintings are often solitary and may seem overwhelmed or challenged by their environments and also by my method of painting which defaces or abstracts them into mysterious, metamorphic shapes.

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***"My paintings have been shown internationally with solo shows in Oslo and Moscow and they have been featured in books on contemporary art."***

**What makes your work and approach unique?**

My drawings and paintings are executed quickly and spontaneously with a combination of speed and precision and an economy of line or mark. They represent singular yet vulnerable creatures in a dynamic world which, with its flashing light, its contrast of dazzle and darkness, its free-floating cells and reeling particles, is one of excitement and danger.

**Why is your work a good investment?**

Well, maybe it would be best to ask one of my buyers but it seems to have become more and more widely noticed and collected over recent years, for example by some well known gallerists, by Deutsche Bank or St Paul's Cathedral or The Murderme Collection of Damien Hirst.

**Tell us about some of your achievements.**

I have had some interesting artist residencies including 'Here Comes Everybody' at St Paul's Cathedral. I wanted to paint people in the cathedral - cleaners, clergy and processions of

tourists - and the paintings were then exhibited in the south transept. Then I had a big solo show at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull, based on the work of seventeenth-century Hull poet, Andrew Marvell. My paintings have been shown internationally with solo shows in Oslo and Moscow and they have been featured in books on contemporary art, for example *Picturing People* by critic and broadcaster Charlotte Mullins.

**What are your sources of inspiration?**

Life. I draw in the street, in supermarkets, in malls and on beaches. I have also recently taken my sketchbooks to the ballet in London because I enjoy the challenge of drawing fast-moving figures and am inspired by the rapid succession of unusual and dramatic poses. I am also continually inspired by poetry, especially poetry in which nature is made strange (the poems of Marvell, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) or in which people, also made strange, change their identity or appearance.



***"I believe that art can communicate complex or profound or valuable thoughts through visual delight."***

**What are you passionate about?**

Predictably, painting and literature: the work of Cy Twombly, de Chirico, Poussin, Bosch, Chaucer, Ovid, Marlowe, Baudelaire, TS Eliot. I also love wild places and the vitality of creatures such as ones I have painted: lorises, lemurs, baboons, honeycreepers, doves. I love to depict things that 'fly' or leap: monkeys, insects, birds and recently the gods and demigods in Ovid's mythology.



**How do you feel about Art and its role in the world?**

I feel that some art has become too drily theoretical or message-driven and despises the idea of beauty.

I do not believe that beauty and truth, or ideas, are opposed and I believe that art can communicate complex or profound or valuable thoughts through visual delight.





## THE INTERVIEW

***"The combination of the hotel's decay and Eliot's scenes of poetic grime led to my sequence of atmospheric pictures of sordid bedsits, rats in tunnels and commuters descending into an underworld."***



### **Tell us the back-story of some of your projects.**

My recently published book 'On Margate Sands: Paintings and Drawings based on TS Eliot's The Waste Land' grew out of my exhibition at a decaying hotel in Margate, next to the bus shelter where Eliot wrote part of his great poem. The combination of the hotel's decay and Eliot's scenes of poetic grime led to my sequence of atmospheric pictures of sordid bedsits, rats in tunnels and commuters descending into an underworld. Rereading 'The Waste Land' with its many classical references also led me back to Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' which, with its descriptions of a swarming, energetic universe and its tales of human vulnerability in beautiful, luminous landscapes, is the source of my current work.



### **Share with us your upcoming projects.**

I am working towards a large exhibition of my Metamorphoses paintings. I shall be participating in a prestigious show of drawings, the Drawing Biennial, at Drawing Room gallery, London and I am working for Hospital Rooms, the UK charity that invites artists to make art in rooms in mental hospitals. The idea is to make the environments less soulless and arid and maybe to make patients feel less alone in their experiences. I shall be doing workshops and then painting a room in a secure psychiatric hospital in Exeter.



# SUSIE HAMILTON

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when engaging with dark or  
difficult issues."*

**Tell us about where you are based.**

I live and work in the East End of London with a studio ten minutes walk from my home.

**How do you want your Art to affect the viewer?**

I want it to energise the viewer, to communicate pleasure even when engaging with dark or difficult issues and to make the viewer feel his or her horizons expanded through looking at my work. I'd like my pictures to communicate something of the painful, comic, unfinished, gorgeous, untidy spectacle of life.

Eliot said he wanted to write about 'the boredom, the horror and the glory' and I suppose that I would like to do that, to express opposite or dissimilar things simultaneously in my work.

