

# Essex in Silke

Danbury artist Silke Ukena is well known for her poppy paintings in pastel but she is also talented in ceramics, watercolours, oils and sculpture, writes Caroline Foster



Silke Ukena

**B**Y TRADE, Silke Ukena is an osteopath, but for more than 20 years she has given into her passion for art, something she says she was drawn to by the work of her great grandmother, Vala Lamberger, an exceptionally well-known German portrait painter during the 1930s to 1950s.

Silke grew up in Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, but in 1976 she moved to Hertfordshire while studying osteopathy and naturopathy at the British College of Osteopathic Medicine in London. She then moved to Thundersley in Essex to set up her osteopathy clinic and raise her four children before moving to Danbury just over seven years ago.

As well as finding time to paint, exhibit and complete commissions, Silke has made time to train extensively in various mediums under the tutelage of many talented artists, such as Basil Emmerson, John Worsdale, Lesley Ann Hartman and Jimmy Johns. Silke also studied at the Lavender Hill Studios in Battersea and is currently studying for an art degree at Havering College, under the guidance of Chris Stevens.

Silke explains: 'Everything I try, I love. I want to learn the techniques, but then adapt them to my own ideas. I don't want to copy other artist's work, I want to be creative in my own way.'

And creative is exactly what Silke has achieved in her approach to vibrant figurative work and life drawings, or to landscape and floral paintings in watercolours, pastels and oils. Silke has also dabbled in ceramics and sculpture as well as silk printing until, she says, the fumes got to her. Silke may have



Poppies by Silke Ukena

turned her hand to many things, but she is still looking to develop new techniques and encompass new ideas.

'I was recently looking at wax paintings and thought I'd like to try that with my poppies, as I can see how the petals could become more fluid with the wax than with pastels,' Silke explains.

Flowers and poppies have been the subject matter for a lot of Silke's paintings. 'I love them,' says Silke, 'the colours and shapes are just beautiful.'

Taking inspiration from the Essex countryside, near her home in Danbury and when she is out with her family, Silke says people may recognise some of the Essex scenes as well as a range of watercolours from the Suffolk coastline around Walbeswick and Lowestoft where she spent a lot of her time holidaying with her children.

Silke has exhibited widely throughout

Essex including at the Beecroft Art Gallery in Westcliff on Sea, the Wild About Art gallery at Leigh on Sea, Hylands House in Chelmsford and the Maeldune Heritage Centre in Maldon. Currently, Silke has work on display at Sandon Garden Centre in Danbury and the New Art Gallery at Barleylands Craft Village in Billericay. In May, Silke will be taking part in a group exhibition, with fellow art degree students from Havering, at The Garage in Hexton, London.

'The exhibitions are extremely rewarding, although a lot of hard work,' says Silke. 'If people like my work and buy it, that is obviously fantastic and makes me feel good about what I do.'

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To find out more about Silke's work, visit [www.sosilke.co.uk](http://www.sosilke.co.uk)

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