



What's your first memory of art?
Seeing Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* in the Louvre when I was 11. It was the most exciting thing I had ever seen.

Were your family artistic at all?
Yes. My great, great uncle was the celebrated garden designer Harold Peto. My father was a talented draughtsman and amateur architect and my mother took up painting in later life.

After several different jobs, how did you make the switch to painting full time?

I sold my art dealing business at the age of 30 and had enough money to survive for a single year. I booked a gallery space for the end of that year and started work on my first exhibition.

What was your big break?

Being spotted by Messum's in 1995. The founder David Messum liked my gritty realist paintings.



Your summer school reopens this September. What spurred you to set it up?

There is a shortage of schools where students can go and learn about the art of making paintings. Many of our students inform us that they learnt more on one of our weekly courses than over a whole three-year degree.



MY LIFE IN ART

HUGO GRENVILLE

To coincide with the opening of his new art school, the leading Romantic painter shares his love of Matisse and Mahler

INTERVIEW: TERRI EATON



What do you enjoy most about teaching art?

I love sharing the experience of looking at great art, and seeing how it still reaches out to us down the centuries. We can learn so much from the masters about how to respond with utter commitment and emotional honesty to the world around us, and indeed to our own feelings.

How do you balance your time between teaching and painting?

We are introducing a new

one-day a week programme in Bristol. I feel that it is actually an ideal proposition. It allows time for ideas to be absorbed and nurtured by students, and it keeps my teaching fresh.

Which artists do you turn to for inspiration?

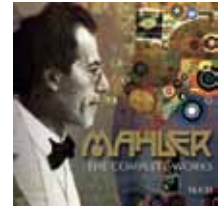
I turn always to Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse. Their work is revelatory: it changes the way you see life. I also admire the English tradition of storytelling, especially Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Walter Sickert and Stanley Spencer.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given?

John Miller said to me shortly before he died, "Paint the pictures you really want to paint." I try to live by this advice.

Where is your favourite place to paint?

In the studio, listening to Mahler, with the light from the huge west window falling over a reclining nude figure. Life doesn't get better than that!



What is the last great exhibition you saw?

Daumier (1808-1879): Visions of Paris at the Royal Academy of Arts. He took complicated subjects, pared them down to their essence, and presented them strongly and simply.



Which is your favourite art shop?

L. Cornelissen & Son is the prettiest, but if I want a wider range of products, I go to Jackson's.

What's the biggest misconception about being an artist?

People think it is a soft option but it's one of the toughest ways in which to earn a living.

Do you still find art difficult?

I think it always will be difficult. But without the disappointment, one's art would become complacent and banal. The journey is what it is all about.

Apart from art, what's your biggest talent?

I like growing flowers.



The Grenville School of Painting re-opens in September on Bristol's Merton Road. For more details, visit www.hugogrenville.com