

endless Discovery

Artist Sophie Dagleish was ready to travel the world in pursuit of a career as an interpreter, until she was seduced by the Australian landscape and lifestyle following a short visit downunder. Now, she spends her days painting with a passion in the sunny studio of her Point Piper home.

BY ROJE ADAIMY

Sophie Dagleish is loving life right now. Relaxed at home, nestled amongst a collection of her nature-inspired paintings, the French-born beauty inspects every detail of the work she has created for her upcoming first solo show. But if you had asked her ten years ago what her plans were for the future, working as an artist in Australia was definitely not on the cards.

"I honestly thought I'd be living in Paris, with a French husband, and travelling the world as an interpreter," Sophie says. "I never thought I'd marry a Melbourne guy, live in Sydney and paint Australian nature!"

For the past five years, Sophie has enjoyed life in Sydney's eastern suburbs with her husband and their two young children. Their stunning Point Piper home, perched right above Sydney Harbour, is a long way from the serene French countryside and bustling city of London Sophie had gotten used to during her years of work and study.

It was after graduating from Lyon University in France at just 19 – en route to Geneva to further her career in language – that Sophie first arrived in Australia in the hope of work experience.

"The next thing I knew I had fallen in love with the country and a young Australian boy," she says with a smile.

Away from the small, pretty and sophisticated character of France and central Europe, the sheer size of Australia seemed to touch a nerve with Sophie.

"I thought this country was absolutely magical," she says. "I remember very clearly how I felt about Australia the first time I arrived. The nature is fabulously beautiful – it's raw and powerful. I found it very moving."

Although they had plans to eventually settle in Australia, she and her husband headed to London where they lived for 17 years. During that time Sophie had a change of heart and decided to veer away from her love of language in search of a way to vent her creative spirit.

Having been inspired by her mother's sculptures and ceramic work as a child, she was always attracted to the concept of form and design. At that point, interior design was the perfect outlet, so she went on to study at London Design School for a number of years. The knowledge and skills she built while studying was the perfect gateway into the art world, she says.

"There are very strong similarities between being an interior designer and doing what I do as an artist," Sophie explains. "Not because what I do might be considered interior decorating, but because with interior design you're given a blank space. ▶





◀ "Whether it's an outdoor space, an indoor space, you've got basically a blank page and you have to create something. You've got this incredible freedom and you can do whatever you want."

And it's in this freedom of expression that Sophie finds so enjoyable. She thanks the beauty of Australia for giving her the chance to explore a passion that she believes had been dormant within her for a long time.

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The heavenly skies and stunning greenery on either side of her glass-walled studio is an obvious point of reference for the artist's colourful and dreamy creations. "This is the ideal studio, with lights on both sides, and very quiet," she says. "I always paint with incense, my music, so I do enter a 'zone', in another world."

Most of her work is inspired by the environment around her, and reconstructed in a semi-abstract way.

"I do want to give enough information to create an environment, but not too much information, so that it leaves enough room for people's imagination to go beyond and explore the painting," Sophie says.

She spends hours-on-end walking through the streets of the eastern suburbs taking photographs, discovering secluded areas of Sydney to capture inspiring and unique natural landscapes for new pieces of work.

"To some people, I like when they imagine places far away," she says. "People think some of my paintings are of France, when in fact it is of a park just down the road from where they live. It's fantastic!"

In between working on new and commissioned paintings, Sophie finds solace in studying at the National Art School to keep in touch with what is happening in the world of art. "I certainly believe it's extremely beneficial to be in touch with experts, people who have been painting for a long time because there is always something to learn off them." ▶



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◀ On top of painting, Sophie believes her very-French epicurean nature has allowed her to explore her love for everything creative – from food and cooking, to fashion and wine tasting.

But for the last 12 months Sophie has been working hard to build her name and reputation in the art industry. She has already received enormous praise from those around her – especially her children.

"My daughters are my biggest fans! Children always think whatever you do is wonderful," she says. "My husband is also very encouraging because I'm given the chance to paint as often as I want to."

Sophie is now preparing for her first solo show at the renowned Frances Keevil Gallery this November, which she says will be a celebration of her work. Beyond that, she aims to continue to explore the wonders of the art world and take her paintings to the next level.

"With paintings, I see it as an endless discovery," Sophie says. "I have no doubt that when I'm an old lady, I'll still be trying to learn how to achieve new effects. I'll always have something new to learn!"