

BRETT HUMPHRIES



Brett Humphries is neither obese nor alcoholic. He should be both. Why? Well, look at his new set of paintings. There's a chocolate milkshake piled with cream, a sumptuous blackberry fool and a glass jar overflowing with liquorice allsorts. There's also an espresso martini, a manhattan, a margarita and a whisky sour. Anyone who knows anything about Brett knows that he doesn't conjure his subjects from his head, or even from photos. That chocolate milkshake? It's real. And what's more, Brett made it himself.

So what does he do with his full-fat subjects when he's done? Mostly, he refrains from necking the lot. "I can usually resist them," he says, though he admits that he is very partial to one particular foodstuff. "You'll notice there are a lot of olives in my work," he adds.

One of the reasons for Brett's restraint is the time involved. First he has to make/assemble his subject matter, then arrange it into the perfect composition, then light it, and finally photograph it. This process used to take most of the day, though he has got faster more recently. Then it's a race against time. Food loses its shape and colour, after all. And maybe, in the process, it becomes slightly less tempting.

But as fans can attest, the result of this meticulous prep is painting of breathtaking quality. For the non-expert viewer (and, come to that, the expert viewer too), Brett's work is hard to fathom. How does he do that? Brett himself admits to being amazed himself sometimes. "I won't lie: the process is very very tough. But at the end there are times when I do look at the result and think, wow, did I really do that? And obviously I also get immense satisfaction from people's reactions when they see the work for the first time too."

The new collection maintains the high standard. The virtuosity is present as ever – check out the reflections in the glass in Cheese And White Wine or the pesto clinging to the pestle in Rustic Pesto. But the artist himself points to two works that he is especially delighted with. One is Chilli Peppers. "There's something about the red of a chilli that a photograph can't capture. But you can get close with oil. I think I really succeeded there, and it's the one painting in the collection that I would really love to keep for myself."

The other is Matcha Tea. Brett says painting the pattern and curve of the teapot was the single hardest technical challenge in the set. "It's right at the limit of what I can do," he admits. "I knew it would be, but I wanted to test myself. And I'm very happy with the result."

Works like these have established Brett as one of the UK's foremost photo-realist painters. His skill is rare. But he has been working on it for decades. After taking a foundation course in art, Brett studied Scientific and Natural History Illustration at Lancaster University. He later mastered computer-aided art as a designer and 3D sculptor at a CGI studio. He became a full time painter in 2006.

Today, Brett's works are in high demand thanks to their combination of virtuosity and sheer aesthetic beauty. But there has been the odd misstep. Brett once included an apple with a bite out of it, and the response was not good. "I realised people don't want bite marks on their walls," he says. So now the food in the paintings is always pristine and untouched. And it remains that way even after it's been painted. Well, mostly. "My daughter does tuck in sometimes. But I should stress, not to the cocktails. She's 11."



Brett Humphries

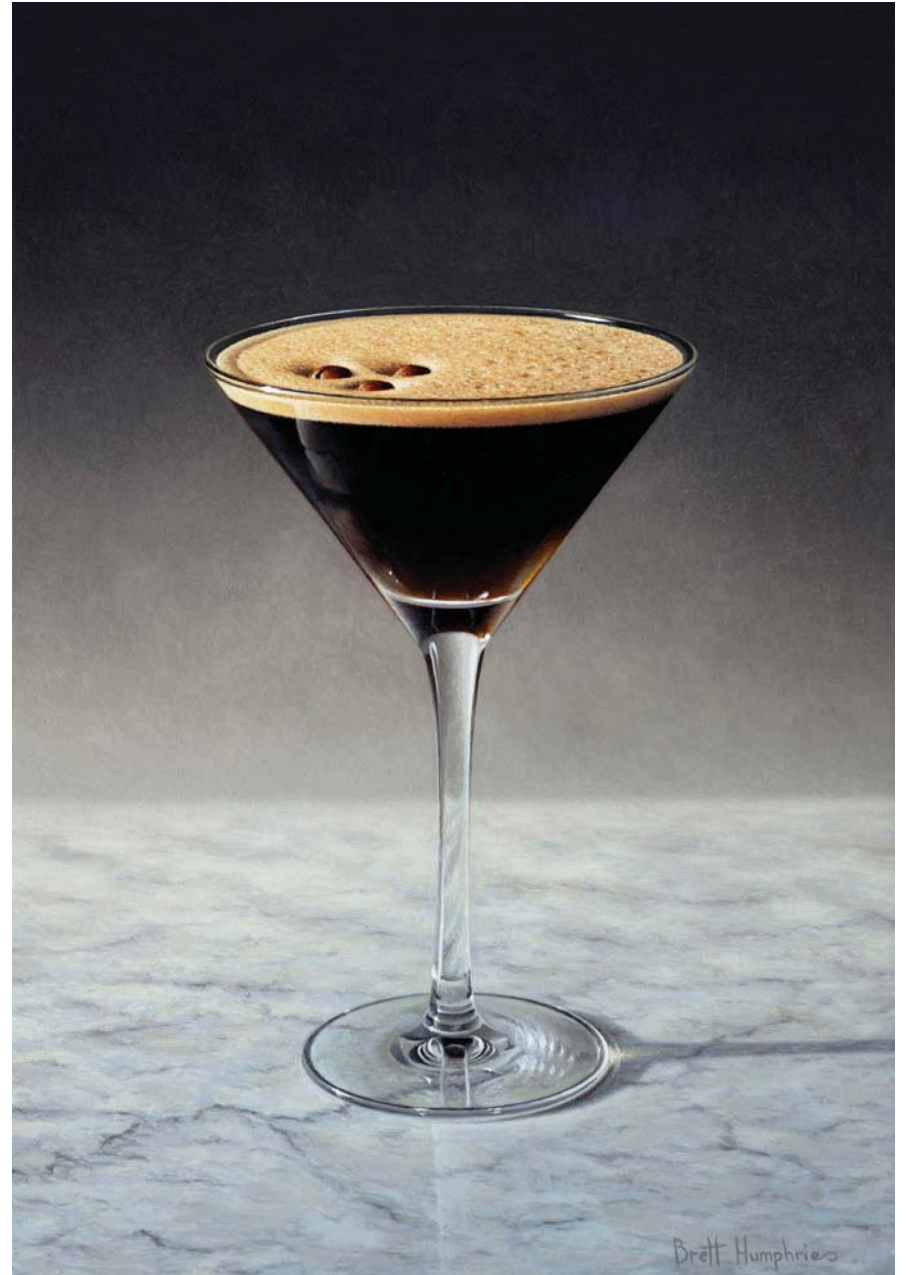
Matcha Tea, 30 x 44cm



Moscow Mule, 24 x 27cm



Whisky Sour, 24 x 19cm



Espresso Martini, 29 x 20cm



Olives, 19 x 26cm





Fruit Bowl, 32 x 38cm



Conkers, 21 x 31cm



Autumn Apples, 28 x 36cm



Cheese & White Wine, 34 x 44cm



Chocolate Milkshake, 35 x 25cm



Manhattan, 28 x 21cm



Blackberry Fool, 21 x 21cm



Chilli Peppers, 29 x 30cm



Margarita Cocktail, 29 x 31cm

Back Cover: Liquorice Allsorts 23 x 30cm



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**You are welcome to join us for the Private View with Brett Humphries on Thursday 14th November
5.30 – 8.00pm. Please RSVP if you would like to attend to art@cattogallery.co.uk.**

Exhibition Dates: 14th Nov – 2nd Dec 2024