



# Scotch on Canvas: The Whisky Artist

Amidst a Transatlantic lockdown collaboration between Messrs. Whisky & Co.'s John Robertson and whisky artist Gisela Garcia Gleria, we spoke (virtually) with the painter to find out more about her inspiration for putting whisky on canvas and **how she captures the subtle essences of the dram.**

## A blend of craftsmanship

In our last outing (so to speak in these stationary times), we ventured between the worlds of fine art and Scotch whisky to explore parallels behind the two crafts, and how one artist, Gisela Garcia Gleria, has been blending the two.

With much more whisky inspired artwork to come from the talented Argentinian, we spoke with Gisela to find out how she became a painter, why she believes whisky makes such a powerful subject, and how she translates the aromas, flavours and sensory experiences of drinking whisky from glass to canvas.

## How did you get into art and painting the subject of whisky?

I started painting when I attended the scenographic production course at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. It was here that I first learned how to create large scale artworks. Years later I adapted my technique to canvas and changed the subject of my paintings, venturing into landscapes.

After my first solo exhibition - landscapes of the ruins of Epecuén, a city that disappeared after a great flood - I started looking for a new subject to paint.

One night while I was drinking my habitual dram of whisky I began to look for images of other landscapes that inspired me. I found one photograph of a sunset in the mountains that perfectly mirrored my feelings from the Scotch, and I decided to paint it.

From that moment, painting the subject of whisky became a passion. I began to exercise sensitivity and expand the range of perception in each whisky that I tasted, observing more closely its colour, aromas, flavours, finish and the atmosphere or mental landscape that each one evoked in me.

The result was the 'Free Spirit' series, in which each painting refers to a particular whisky in a landscape that, according to my subjectivity, is a reflection of its character, its history, its terroir and its spirit.

## Why does whisky make such a powerful subject?

I see whisky itself as a work of art; each expression is unique in its own way. They are all the result of many years of work, where every person involved in the process must play their part with total commitment and skill. It is a creation that carries centuries of history behind it, has accompanied humankind across all circumstances, and has evolved with us.

Like paintings, whisky can reflect moods; it communicates, unites, accompanies, transports and generates unique sensations for the drinker. It is the legacy of those who were part of the creative process at one point in time, expressing their place of origin and their spirit in each drop, just as much as my spirit lives in each brushstroke of colour.

## How to do translate your inspiration from a whisky onto the canvas?

Each canvas is the result of a process that begins by tasting a whisky. First I look for the impact the whisky has on my senses, analysing all of the sensations that it creates and looking for the right mental image that accurately represents it (although that image often finds me first).

Once I have the image, I investigate the characteristics of that whisky, its production process, the distillery, its history and its geographical location. Then I look for a photograph that comes close to the mental image that arose in my mind when I first tasted it, preferably from a place in the area where the whisky comes from. Finally, I start painting, generally adding some personal detail to the scene.

## What has been your most memorable painting?

It is very difficult to choose one particular painting. Each one has its own unique history, and each has represented a different challenge, so they're all special to me.

There are some that I keep for their meaning; among them is the one I painted in honour of the bottle of Chivas Regal 12 that my father bought the year I was born and that we opened last year on Father's Day. It was a special celebration. That whisky and that painting will always take me back to a beautiful family moment.

Another painting that I keep is 'Pride' in honour of The Dalmore 12. The painting shows the face of a deer in the foreground, wrapped in a winter atmosphere. It is an almost monochrome painting, something rare for me since I usually use very strong colours. This painting represents the nobility of the spirit, who, still aware of its fragility, faces life firmly, looking straight ahead and being the protagonist of its own history.

I also keep 'Epic Spirit', a tribute to Sassenach Spirits, the whisky released this year by Outlander actor Sam Heughan. Unlike the rest of the series, I was not lucky enough to try that blend. But the painting pays tribute to dreams fulfilled, to perseverance, to the will power of those who believe in themselves.

As a whisky lover, seeing a young artist manage to create his own whisky and being able to turn a project into reality with such care is something I admire and inspires me to continue creating.

## What do you hope to achieve in the future with your whisky paintings?

I hope that my art helps to bring more people closer to the fascinating world of whisky, and that those who already enjoy this wonderful spirit find a new way to approach the experience of drinking it.

As soon as COVID-19 isolation is over, the Whisky & Art experience will take place at the Whisky Museum in Buenos Aires. This museum houses the second largest private collection in the world, after Edinburgh, and its owner Miguel Ángel Reigosa is a benchmark in Argentina's whisky world.

There I will display my paintings in tribute to the expressions of Tomatin that are going to be tasted at the event, and to the distillery itself. This project was postponed by the pandemic but I am looking forward to it happening soon.

In the future I would like my art to reach some Scottish distilleries, since I also paint them, an interesting subject that was born from an exchange of ideas between John and I and that has become a new series in itself. And, of course, it would be great to have the opportunity to paint right there at the distilleries; I think it could be a truly fascinating experience!

I want to thank you for the interest you show in my art and give special mention to the importance of sharing the experiences and the vision that each one has surrounding the world of whisky. The exchange of ideas that we have enriches us and gives us a different way of seeing, appreciating and enjoying whisky and art, two beautiful expressions of spirit.

**Gisela García Glería** is an artist living and working in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is a passionate whisky enthusiast, and is open to commission requests for whisky inspired artwork from whisky lovers everywhere.

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Strathisla Distillery in winter



Ardbeg Distillery battered by waves



Dalwhinnie Distillery under moonlight



Arran Distillery in a storm



Bruichladdich Distillery under cloudy skies



The view to Skye from Raasay Distillery's still room

## About Messrs. Whisky & Co.

Messrs. Whisky & Co. provides consultancy, experiences and media services to the Scotch whisky industry and its consumers. Founded in 2018, it was established with one guiding principle: to help discerning whisky businesses, producers, retailers, societies and enthusiasts get the most out of every dram.

To us, Scotch whisky is the most social of currencies. This is our ethos and we promote it across the world, bringing people closer with Scotch whisky.



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