

# Huddersfield artist Caro Ward exhibits in New York

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She thought the offer of exhibition space in New York was a scam, but now artist Caro Ward is off to America.

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Shepley artist Caro Ward thought she was being scammed when a major gallery from New York expressed an interest in showing her work.

But now she's packing her bags and preparing to fly to the Big Apple for the opening of an exhibition that features four of her large-scale canvases.

The 58-year-old, who only began working as an artist in her mid 40s and specialises in horse paintings, says showing her work in New York could be a real boost for her career. However, she almost missed the chance. She explained: "The gallery got in touch last year but I ignored their email because I couldn't quite believe it. I thought it was a scam. I got a few more emails and kept putting off doing something about it; then I got a 'phone call.

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"They said they'd been trying to get hold of me. They'd seen my website and thought I had something unique. But I was still very, very dubious."

As luck would have it, Caro, husband Karl and twin sons Danny and Nick were due to fly out to New York for a holiday. "We had booked to go for the boys' 18th birthdays and Karl's 60th, so I thought I would visit the gallery to check it out and if it turned out to be a shed then I'd know it was a scam," said Caro.



Shepley artist, Caro Ward who is exhibiting in New York assisted by her son Nick.

But the Agora Gallery on 25th Street in the Chelsea district of New York turned out to be a modern three-storey art space showing international contemporary work. “It was just two blocks away from Times Square where we were staying,” said Caro, “it was amazing.”

In October last year Caro finally agreed to submit some work and began painting new canvases. The four selected are a mix of old and new work, but all have an equine subject matter.

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Horses have long been a passion for the Ward family. Caro herself is a former riding instructor and until fairly recently the family kept horses in their own stable block. In fact, the Agora Gallery is promoting Caro’s work as being produced ‘from her stable-turned-studio in the English countryside’.

Her works are usually large, up to 60 ins by 36ins, and painted with oils on canvas. She uses a technique that she describes as “painting in a watercolour way but with oils - it’s almost like the canvas is stained with paint”.

As it transpires this technique saved her from a lot of trouble and expense when it came to shipping the canvases to New York.



Legend of the Sea Horses by Caro Ward

Caro explained: “I was told I could either send them in a crate or roll them and put them in a tube. Because of the way I paint, the canvases could be taken off the frames and rolled without damaging them. I found a Nottingham company that makes tubes to order for £40 and it cost £200 to send a tube to New York. It would have cost £500 for a crate.”

The Agora Gallery is selling Caro’s work for \$1,700 dollars a canvas - around £1,200 - and will take 30% commission. “That’s about average,” says Caro, “but some London galleries will take up to 60%.”

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While tapping into the USA market is exciting for a provincial British artist, Caro is no newcomer to exhibiting. She has sold work in the Mall Galleries in London and exhibited locally in Huddersfield’s North Light Gallery and at Yorkshire agricultural shows. She is the invited artist for this year’s Holmfirth Art Week in July. Her work also sells in print form in outlets all over the region.

As well as working in her stable-turned-studio at home, Caro is also Artist in Residence at Kirkburton Middle School where she spends two afternoons a week teaching everything from techniques such as putting soap bubbles in paint (a technique she uses in her own work) to drawing and using watercolours. One of the paintings in the Agora Gallery, entitled Legend of the Sea Horses, was formerly on display in the middle school.

While Caro no longer owns any horses she says that painting them gives her a sense that they are still in her life. She explained: “The paintings have become my horses - but without the mucking out.”



Horse study by Caro Ward

In the past she had a source of ready inspiration just across the stable yard and often used

her own horses as models. She now takes a camera with her to horse shows. But, having worked with and kept horses for so long, she admits that she could draw them in her sleep and their features are as familiar as her own.

As Caro points out, artists have been depicting horses since the earliest origins of art itself. But she has yet to discover whether New Yorkers are horse lovers.

Her style is both representational and abstract. The Agora Gallery describes it as ‘modernist’ and says her work explores the connection between horses and people. Caro says she aims for a “slightly unfinished rather than over-worked” look, to allow the viewer’s eye to fill in the spaces and see something different every time they gaze at a painting.

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While horses are her main subject, she also paints other animals. But horses are her true love.

Caro, who worked as a travel agent before becoming a mother, took up painting when her sons started school. She was 43 when she embarked on an art foundation course at the former Huddersfield Technical College and went on to study for a BA Honours degree in fine art at Huddersfield University.

She and Nick, a business and enterprise management student at Sheffield Hallam University, will be flying out to New York on April 5 to attend a special reception in the Agora Gallery on April 7, then it will be back home to more painting and more horses. “We’ll see where it takes me,” says Caro. “It could open up an American market for me.”



On the Bit by Caro Ward