

## **Comfort Zone Exhibition and War Art Workshop 8-31 December 2012.**

Half day workshop demonstrating the principles, techniques and materials used when painting and drawing in areas of modern conflict.

An exhibition of art works by Douglas Farthing will be on display at Mandell's Gallery Norwich 8-31 December. We would like to welcome schools and art groups to visit the gallery and take part in a half day workshop with Doug talking and painting, discussing with the groups what War Art is all about. This is a great educational opportunity the information on present conflicts coming first hand from Doug in art and words.

Doug Has served with the British Army for 26 Years; visiting many War Zones. He records his trips in a diary and is now developing this work into art. Doug has his War Art work on display in National Museums and Private Collections. The 'Comfort Zone' exhibition has deeper meaning than just the art; having been involved in conflict as a soldier, my comfort zone!. To adjust outside of the Army is very difficult... being out here trying to be normal is very testing!

This exhibition is the culmination of work after leaving the forces and adjusting to life outside. I served 26 years with the Parachute Regiment and soldiered in many conflicts. This exhibition focuses on time served in Iraq, Northern Ireland, Balkans, Afghanistan and the North West Frontier on the Pakistan border. My art records war and the effects on people and their surroundings. The paintings capture their lives, the landscapes, patrol or walk-in and the local people. I like to portray the reality of life; I document the real life events of people surrounded by conflict. A Soldier's profession is different to any other, especially the situations you find yourself in. It is so different to anything that you'll experience here at home.

- My eyes are naturally drawn to the darker and shadier areas of the landscape
- I don't try to paint technically, my style is more expressionist
- There's no plan, if I see something that interests me, I may draw it or take a photograph depending on where I am or what I'm doing
- I'll then sit in a warm space, like an office to develop the work into a formal sketch
- I normally record in my diary, I have been known to paint and draw onto the odd ammo box or paper from a photocopying machine, all making the work very energetic

The work at the exhibition reflects my time at War through the 1980s in Northern Ireland to the Balkans in the 90s then recent conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, I've thought about the themes of my paintings a lot of times. If I were to sit down and analyse my own artwork, my paintings reflect my experience of war and conflict throughout that time span. It's about counter-insurgency, IEDs, our guys patrolling in what we perceive as War Zones, but are actually someone else's backyard. When I look at them, I see the same problems we had in Belfast in the 70s and 80s. My paintings tell the story of hidden tension, a hidden war. I've obviously seen some pretty terrible things. It would be quite easy to paint those things but the depth and deeper understanding within the paintings makes them more real rather than graphically detailed.

There's a painting where a lot of soldiers are waiting to get on a Chinook to go on an operation. They're just stood around, huddled together. There's a bit of banter but actually the apprehension of getting off at the other end is so daunting - that's what it's about. I paint other things when I'm at home in England. Norfolk and Suffolk are beautiful, especially along the coast but I'm always drawn back to that piece of ground, that unseen danger, where there may be an enemy sniper hiding.

Details of the Workshop:

- 40 minute presentation. Doug will explain the principles he uses throughout his work to achieve the end art piece
- a walk through the exhibition

- demonstration on how a War Artist works in the field. This will involve the painting of a small oil study which will be selected by the group from one of Doug's war diaries. The group will participate in a discussion before selecting the work which Doug will then demonstrate, using principles which he presented to the group earlier.

Summary: This workshop will help the group understand the realities of working as an artist in a War Zone. The discussions are informative and educational. The subject is very emotive which will allow the group time to reflect on the effects of war and how to respond in art through the creative process.

Please contact Mandell's Gallery to arrange a visit with your group.

Costs: Comfort Zone is in support of the Parachute Regiment Charity. Donations welcome (this can be arranged on the day).