

**What's your first memory of art?**

Kenneth Clark (right) presenting *Civilisation* on television. I was brought up on a hill farm in Mid Wales and watching it was like a door opening into a magic world.

**Were your family artistic?**

I grew up surrounded by the rich cultural traditions of Wales and my mother's passion for music, poetry and theatre. Members of my family were skilled craftsmen and women and I was encouraged to be creative.

**What is your career high so far?**

There are two special highlights. The first was representing Wales with a solo exhibition during the *Wales in Catalonia* festival in Barcelona 1995. Then in 2010, I was awarded the Arts Council of Wales' Creative Wales Ambassador prize, which has taken my work in new directions.

**What have you sacrificed for your art?**

A possible career in music. My mother wanted me to study the harp in London. I rebelled and did an art foundation course in Birmingham. I think I made the right choice...

**What is the best piece of advice you've been given?**

By Shakespeare, "To thine own self be true..."

**Which artists do you turn to for inspiration?**

Marc Chagall, Mark Rothko, Samuel Palmer, the 18th-century Welsh landscape painter Richard Wilson and also J.D. Innes, for seeing Wales in psychedelic colours a century ago. I also admire David Hockney for the joy in his work.

**Where's your favourite place to paint?**

The landscape of Mid Wales with all its layers. This is my ancestral landscape and therefore an extremely potent subject matter.



**What's your favourite art shop?**

I am not really an art shop junkie. Beautiful new art materials make me nervous.

**What one art product could you not live without?**

This can vary as I am dependent on many materials and tools – the tube of Prussian Blue seems to be a favourite at the moment.

**Who or what would be your dream subject?**

I am always open to new methods and subject matter. I see my art as an on-going adventure.

**When were you happiest?**

During my residency at Columbia University, New York, in the spring of 2012.



**MY LIFE IN ART**

# ELERI MILLS

A member of the Royal Cambrian Academy, Eleri lives and works in a Mid-Wales farming community. Her poetic landscape works combine embroidery, ink, paint and pastel

INTERVIEW: MARTHA ALEXANDER

**What's the biggest misconception about being an artist?**

That you are so lucky doing what you enjoy. "Enjoyment" does not come into it; it is a serious occupation, hard work and requires huge commitment.

**Do you still find art difficult?**

I am not a very mechanical person and have periods when I get stuck – it takes great self-motivation to keep going.

**Apart from art, what's your biggest talent?**

Playing the harp, which makes me very happy.

**What single thing would make your work easier?**

Always being in the right mood in the studio.

**Eleri's latest solo exhibition runs from 5-22 March at Thackeray Gallery, London W8.**

[www.thackeraygallery.com](http://www.thackeraygallery.com)



**What is your studio like?**

It has an industrial feel to it: high ceiling, good light and plenty of wall space for pinning up work. I like to have space to stand back and walk around as I am working.

**If money was no object, what painting would you like to own?**

*Arenig, North Wales*, JD Innes' final glorious painting in a series inspired by the mountain in

North Wales, which hangs in Tate Britain.

**What's the last exhibition you saw?**

William Kentridge's videos in the Tanks at Tate Modern (below). I like to be challenged and surprised by what I see, and have very catholic tastes.



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