Painting from life: The art of Alice Leng

Island artist Alice Leng won the Jersey Summer Exhibition and RBC Emerging Artist Award in 2025. Now, following four years of classical training in Florence, she presents DAL VERO, her first solo exhibition at CCA Galleries International. **Elizabeth Talbot** takes a closer look at her portraits, horse studies and miniature works



■ Gli Orecchini di Corallo (The Coral Earrings)



■ Artist Alice Leng with works titled Lungo la via della Seta (Along the Silk Road) and I Fiori Rossi (The Red Flowers) Picture: ROB CURRIE (42556732)



■ Una Sera D'Inverno (A Winter Evening)

ALICE Leng's first solo exhibition at CCA Galleries International brings together a range of work that reflects her interest in traditional painting and close observation. Titled DAL VERO – Italian for "from life" – the exhibition takes its name from the approach at the heart of Alice's practice: painting the people and subjects in front of her, rather than working from photographs. It spans two floors, with portraits and still life downstairs and paintings and drawings of horses, alongside a collection of miniature medieval and bestiary studies, upstairs.

On the first floor, portraiture takes centre stage. Alice works entirely from life, spending many hours with each sitter and building the portrait over several sessions. The result is a collection of paintings that invite you to linger – at the faces, the expressions and the details that give each person their individuality.

The portraits vary in mood and composition, with some sitters meeting the viewer's gaze, while others appear more introspective. These differences in pose and expression give each painting its own character.

Four years of classical training at Charles Cecil Studios in Florence shaped that confidence. Having studied fine art, Alice wanted to develop her skills through traditional painting methods and was drawn to the studio's emphasis on learning from life.

"I immediately knew it was a place to learn how to really paint, how to really work like the old masters," she says.

Her training also taught her the importance of preparation. Before beginning a portrait, Alice considers the pose, clothing, background and direction of the light, making decisions that will shape the finished painting. The process requires a close understanding of her subject and how best to bring it to life on canvas.

"Sometimes it can take an entire day; you don't even paint. You just spend hours picking backgrounds, head poses and clothes," she says.

Upstairs, the exhibition reveals other aspects of Alice's practice. Horses have been part of her life since childhood, and the paintings and drawings on show reflect that longstanding connection. Alongside these is a series of miniature medieval and bestiary studies – much smaller in scale, but equally attentive in terms of detail. They offer a different perspective on her interest in traditional imagery and the craft of painting.

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>
> Alice Leng

The exhibition brings together work spanning around two and a half years, from early 2024 to June 2026. Although varied in subject and scale, a thread runs through it all: Alice's patience and attention to what she sees. Whether studying a face, an animal or a small detail within a miniature composition, she takes the time to look closely and understand her subject.

Her work has certainly impressed Lance Trevellyan, owner of CCA Galleries International, who has followed her development with interest.

"Alice is a wonderfully talented young portrait artist who paints the human form and anatomy with such detailed observation, capturing subtle facial expressions," he says. "Eyes transfix and mesmerise. With such skill, Alice draws you in, seducing you into thinking you know the person looking back at you. Alice's expert use of light and shade ices the cake. Painting in the style of the old masters, Alice is a young master in the making. I look forward to watching her progress; who knows, perhaps one day all the way to the National Portrait Gallery."

Having completed her studies in Florence, Alice has returned to Jersey to establish herself as an artist.

"Jersey has always been home, so it's nice to come back home, put down roots again, and not to be living out of a suitcase, moving every two and a half months," she says.

Alice is currently accepting commissions for portraits of people of any age, as well as horses. For more information, email CCA Galleries International: enquiries@ccagalleriesinternational.com, or call 01534 739900.

●DAL VERO, by Alice Leng, is showing at CCA Galleries International, 10 Hill Street, until Friday 27 November 2026.



■ Il Giovane Ufficiale (The Young Officer)



■ The Falconers



■ Medieval Study III

Long Table

The exhibition will also provide the setting for a special Long Table evening in partnership with Binney & Boarder on Saturday 14 November, from 7pm.

Held on the top floor of CCA Galleries International, the intimate event will begin with a glass of champagne on arrival, a tour of the gallery, followed by a five-course supper and an opportunity to hear Alice talk about her work.

Pianist Stephanie Humphries will provide a programme of classical music during the evening.

Tickets are £125 per person and places are limited. For bookings and further information, call Vicky Boarder on 01534 630775, or email binneyandboarder@gmail.com.



■ Le Scarpe Verde (The Green Shoes)



■ Romeo