

ANGIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD



The road to glittering success for UK artist Angela Wakefield was paved with stellar talent, sheer hard work – and the support of *Art of England*. Here we chart her remarkable journey

At the age of just 13, Angela Wakefield painted Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* – she knew then what she wanted to do for the rest of her life. Yet, in 1997 she was working behind a bar, living in a flat in the centre of Accrington with no serious career prospects. Who could have predicted that, just ten years later, this ambitious young artist would be hailed a rising star of British art and would have the highest online profile of any urban landscape painter? Or that shortly afterwards she would be propelled to the bright lights of Hollywood, when her *New York* painting on

the cover of *Art of England* was spotted by award-winning film director Danny Boyle?

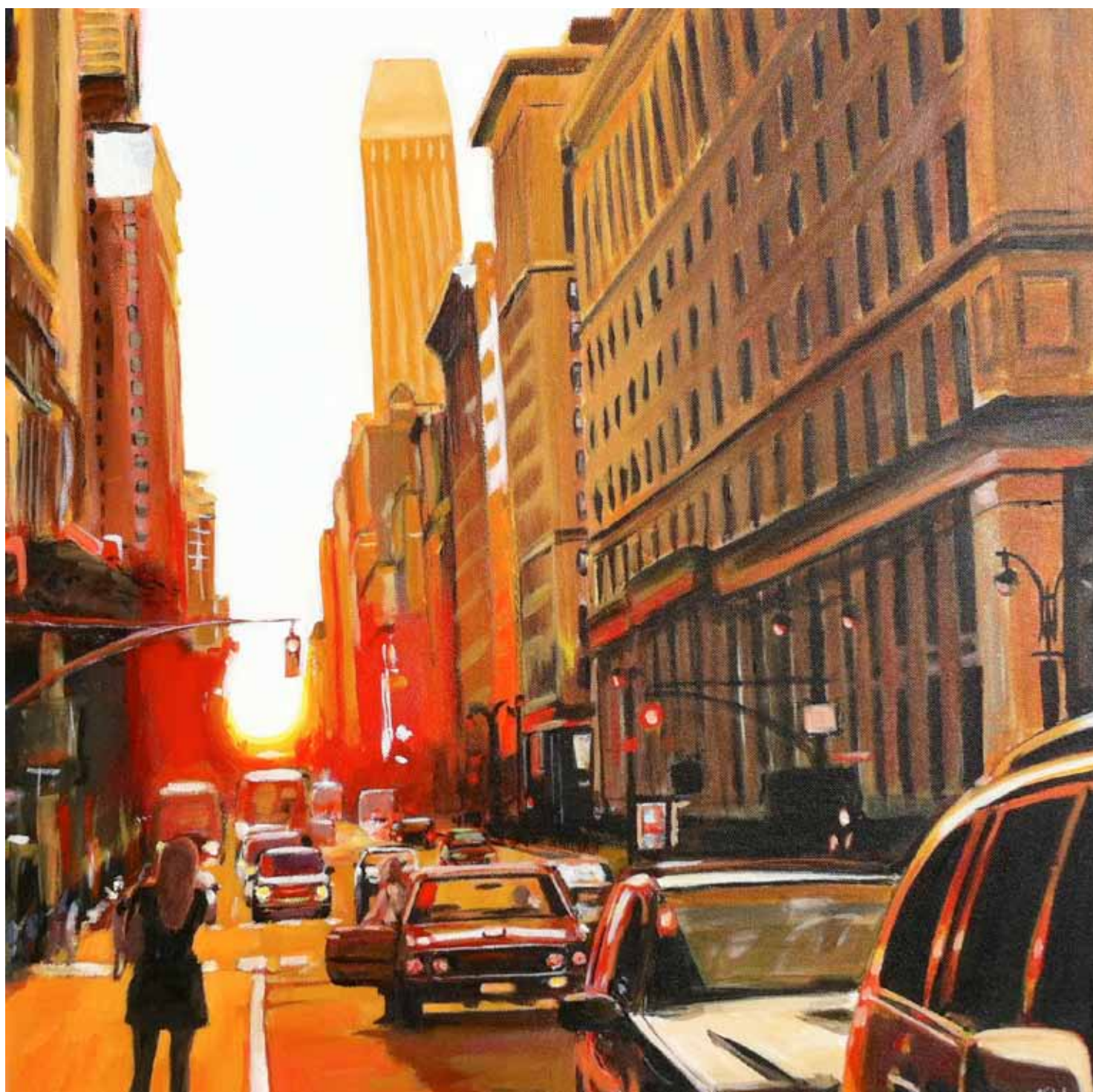
Since Angela first appeared on *Art of England*'s October 2007 cover her career has cranked up several gears and we featured her work again in 2008 and 2010. But it was her *No.19* in the *New York Series* that hit the Hollywood jackpot, when Danny Boyle spotted it on *Art of England* September 2011 front cover. The painting was chosen by Fox Searchlight Ltd to be used in Boyle's film *Trance*, a high-energy psychological thriller set in contemporary London starring James McAvoy, set to be

released in March 2013. Phil Ascot, owner of Ascot Studios, the gallery which hosts Angela's work, told us when the 2011 cover came out the response was instantaneous and the gallery was inundated with queries. He said: "A dozen calls came in for the cover painting as soon as the magazine was released. We could have sold it over and over again. Within less than 48 hours, everything in the collection was sold. It got to the point we wanted to take the 'phone off the hook. Demand totally outstripped supply."

Mr Ascot added that the association with



opposite:
Bus to St Pauls, London, 2012, 120cm x 60cm. Acrylic
on Board. Painted earlier in 2012, **Bus to St Paul's**,
London, shows Angela's ability to capture the movement
and energy within the urban landscape. Like Hopper,
Angela's work has a nostalgic quality



Art of England had been an important milestone on Angela's road to success. He said: "I really do. Sincerely, yes. It brings people, it brings collectors into the gallery and interest is converted into a sale. We've got to give credit. In 2007, Angela first appeared in the magazine, with a double page spread and it was quite clear that we were getting interest from a different group of people – driven by *Art of England* – who

had seen 'something'. Suddenly, the eyes of an appreciative, art-buying audience were directed towards this work, which they loved. The affiliation with the magazine has been something very special and a great many of Angela's existing clients come through *Art of England*. The magazine really does do what it sets out to do – it supports burgeoning artists by opening its pages to showcase to the art-loving, art-

going, art-buying public just what's out there. It's certainly been instrumental in exposing her to a much bigger audience and cranking up her career. The movie coming along with it is the icing on the cake."

So, how does a northern lass, who happens to have a hell of a way with a paintbrush, react when Hollywood comes knocking at her door? "Disbelief at first. I

opposite:
New York Series No.32, 2012, 60cm x 60cm.
Acrylic on canvas

right:
New York Series No.19, 2010, 36in x 48in.
Acrylic on canvas.
The picture that lit the touch paper

was at home, painting. I just didn't believe it. It sounded too good to be true. I was, am, flattered, excited, very excited. That kind of thing doesn't happen every day!" One has to wonder how this remarkable turn of events came about. Where was Mr Boyle when he picked up the magazine? In an airport lounge waiting for a flight perhaps? Drinking coffee in his office? Who knows, but one thing is for sure; where previously hundreds of people knew of Angela Wakefield's work, with the magazine cover that became thousands and with the movie debut, soon millions will have the name of Angela Wakefield at the tip of their tongue.

Reaching the Hollywood heights will certainly see Angela rub shoulders with the great and good – Boyle, who will be the artistic director for the 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony, won an Academy Award for *Slumdog Millionaire* in 2008. But the road has not been an easy one. It would be fair to say that Angela was failed by academia in her early years. The education system neglected to identify her dyslexia, and it was not until she arrived at the University of Central Lancashire that this diagnosis was made. She felt relief at finally being able to explain the way her mind worked, and being offered the tools to help deal with this realisation was like being reborn. University nurtured her talent, which might have been stifled in a more traditionally conservative environment.

Angela's sense of optimism and a cast-iron work ethic compelled her to keep painting when things were tough, and to believe success was within her reach. She discovered she had a flair for computing and design and used these skills to fund her degree and her art career, working freelance as a web designer and graphic designer. This added a very marketable magic to her work and along with a zest for life, bucketfuls of talent and relentless hard work, paved the way to success.

Angela is in good company as a dyslexic; other famous examples include Richard



Branson, Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso. This is, undoubtedly, a significant factor in Angela's paintings. Her unique visual talent seems to be due to this 'internal wiring' and, rather than viewing it as an impediment, Angela feels "blessed with the gift of dyslexia". She remembers sitting in the back seat of the car as a child, watching the world whizzing by outside the windows. She recalls the rain, slightly diffused, impressionistic on

the windscreen, as the imagery seeped into the landscape of her mind. These experiences influence much of her work today, reaching out to her audience to convey a sense of being there – intimately and yet removed, putting us in the frame as if we too are in the back seat of a car, glimpsing the luminous colours of the world rushing past.

Angela became a mother in 2008 and had a second child in 2011. Her children are



left:

New York Series No. 21, 2012, 36in x 48in.
Acrylic on canvas. **21** and **22** (below left) are autumnal scenes of New York with dramatic lighting effects. Moody and atmospheric, these works are the result of a more experimental period in late 2011

opposite:

New York Series No. 31, 2012, 36in x 24cm.
Acrylic on canvas

clearly a source of inspiration and a catalyst for success; the experience of motherhood has had a marked effect on her artwork, in that it has become more worldly and of a more considered nature.

Angela produced her first series, on the north of England, throughout the late 1990s. Set in historic northern cities such as Manchester, York and Edinburgh, the paintings reverberate with a sense of movement and the relationship between light and dark plays across the canvases, illuminating the sets with a sense of energy and vitality. The series enjoyed an overwhelming response.

David Blandford-Jupe, art collector, said: "Northern art is not just limited to the gritty grind of the decaying industrial landscape; up-and-coming artists such as Angela Wakefield are continuing the legacy of great Northern art".

In 2009, Angela conceived the idea of painting one of the world's most iconic urban landscapes, in what was to become her *New York Series*. Whilst the Big Apple has long been a popular subject for painters and its imagery is recognisable to the point of cliché, Angela portrays this city with a startling freshness of vision. This exemplifies her ability to convey a feeling about New York and what it represents to millions of people, without rehashing the usual imagery of Manhattan that currently saturates the market.

The paintings were completed in 2010 and in September the following year, Ascot Studios took the cover of *Art of England* and an advertisement within the magazine. The choice of paintings selected for the ad' was breathtaking. The range of images portrayed a refreshing view of New York, a certain gritty realism displayed with a grand, film-like quality.

The critic Ian Welland wrote in a previous edition of *Art of England*: "Angela Wakefield is a rising star of British art. I have not seen such arrangement in art since viewing paintings by Edward Hopper".

Certainly, there is something in Angela's





art reminiscent of Hopper – a layer of emotional detachment perhaps, where the boundaries between landscape and humanity are blurred – and yet these spare and careful portrayals of the relationship between the lives of the paintings' subjects and their settings are vividly and emotionally charged.

There is, as art critic Ian Welland describes it, an instinctive quality to her work; as he wrote in *Art of England*, September 2011: "Angela Wakefield is the most instinctive artist of our age". This is high praise indeed and illustrates how the discerning eyes of collectors across the UK, Europe and USA are now seeing her work.

Increasingly, Angela is described as 'the leading urban landscape painter of her generation'. David Latham, a well-respected art dealer with over 25 years' experience of the art market and an extensive knowledge of Lowry's biography, wrote in his 2011 essay 'Art as an Investment in the Industrial North of England': "Those who are considering art and investment in art from the industrial North of England will be aware of the famous scenes from the region by LS Lowry, but there are also modern artists such as Angela Wakefield producing

urban landscape scenes. Art investments could play a part in a balanced portfolio of holdings, and unlike holdings in stocks and shares they represent an asset which can provide substantial personal satisfaction to the owner when displayed in the home."

Angela Wakefield is now firmly established as 'a name' – a formidable force in the world of art. She will continue to evolve as an artist because of her drive to embark on new challenges and we will continue to follow this progress, watching to see how she will adapt her impressionistic, painterly style to depict completely new subjects, locations and landscapes.

Her recent work, the later paintings in the *New York Series*, illustrates her growing ability to capture the full range of subjects we find in our urban environment, and her new project should test how this translates to a more rural landscape. While her early work had a certain naivety about it, there is something deadpan in her later portrayals.

Angela paints with a voyeuristic detachment, not wasting a single stroke. She refuses to indulge us with an ounce of unnecessary detail and the paradox is that this somehow imbues her work with

a charge which draws the emotion from a scene – and the audience towards it.

Angela Wakefield's art has received the seal of approval from the highest echelons of appreciation and, when artists entice not only the wealthy but also the influential, this can define them as an artist, empowering them to achieve more and more and amplifying the legacy they will leave behind. ■

Angela Wakefield is represented by Ascot Studios in Ribchester, Lancashire, UK, one of the North's leading independent art galleries.

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