

Enduring Middle East: Scottish artist follows in the footsteps of Orientalist painter David Roberts

Scottish artist Joseph Maxwell Stuart travelled across the Middle East in 2012 making sketches of sites that have inspired thousands of artists: Petra, Giza, Wadi Rum, the pyramids etc



Old Cairo

His journey was assisted by the Delfina Foundation, an independent, non-profit foundation dedicated to facilitating artistic exchange and developing creative practice through residencies,

partnerships and public programming, with a special focus on international collaborations with the greater Middle East & North Africa (MENA).

Around 80 colourful paintings from the trip were on display in London's Pall Mall Gallery in a solo exhibition which featured scenes from Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Oman.

The artistic journey was inspired

by Orientalist painter David Roberts who went on a voyage of discovery in the 19th century. He set sail for Egypt on 31 August 1838 intending to produce drawings that he could later use as the basis for paintings and lithographs to sell to the public. Egypt was much in vogue at this time, and travellers, collectors and lovers of antiquities were keen to buy works inspired by the East or depicting the great monuments of ancient Egypt.



Joseph Maxwell Stuart



Roberts made a long tour in Egypt, Nubia, Sinai, the Holy Land, Jordan and Lebanon. He kept a diary and Maxwell's paintings are accompanied by extracts from Roberts diary: Petra, March 6th. – To-day we encamped in the centre of the remains of this extraordinary city, which is situated in the midst of mountains... this city must have been five or six miles each way in its extent; every

ravine has been inhabited, even to the tops of the mountains. The valley has been filled with temples, public buildings, triumphal arches, and bridges, all of which have been laid prostrate. David Roberts, 1839

Maxwell Stuart's colourful oil and watercolour paintings capture the spirit and beauty of famous Middle Eastern sites. The paintings were encased in oak and gold-leaf

frames crafted by the artist himself. The exhibition was accompanied by a new book 'The Enduring Middle East in the Western Imagination,' showing links the voyage of discovery by David Roberts.

Joseph Maxwell Stuart began his art education at the Ruskin School of Drawing in Oxford. From there he went on to Edinburgh University and Art College to complete a B.A. Honours Degree in Drawing and

Painting. He now lives and paints in the Borders at his studio situated next to the Dawyck Arboretum near Peebles on the Scottish Borders on the River Tweed. His preferred mediums are oils and watercolour, painting landscapes mostly 'in the field'. He particularly delights in the challenge of working directly from nature, whenever possible. Amongst others he has worked on commissions for the Great Western Railway Company.

