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JANE SEYMOUR

SHARES HER
LIFE IN ART



TIME IN ART

JANE SEYMOUR OPENS HER HEART ONTO CANVAS

Depending on their age, fans of Jane Seymour know her best as a Bond girl, a medicine woman or a *Wedding Crashers* cougar. But the acclaimed actress says the creative expression she enjoys the most happens in a painting studio, not a soundstage. Seymour comes to Sarasota this March with an art exhibition at Chasen Galleries, and spoke exclusively with *SRQ* magazine about the upcoming show and her career on canvas and on screen.

WRITTEN BY JACOB OGLES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN FLYNN



What first drew you to the canvas and made you devote so much time and energy to creating artwork? **JANE SEYMOUR** I always painted as a child. I went through a terrible divorce when I was 40 years old and my now very ex-husband managed to lose all my money and leave me many millions in the red with lawsuits and things I knew nothing about. I just didn't know what to do with myself. My mother always told me that when you think everything is insurmountable, if you can accept however hard it is and then reach out to be of service to someone else, that something good will come from it. I took her advice and I put my last pennies that I had on a drawing of my children at a child abuse prevention function for Child Health USA. The artist ended up coming to my house. Doing photographs of the children, looking at the art that I had on the walls, which was just finger painting stuff I do of the kids, he offered to give me free art lessons. From there, I was able to find a Zen kind of experience. I couldn't stop painting or drawing. I started in watercolor, then went on to pastels, mixed media and ultimately oils. Now, for my modern work, I do some acrylics and I ended up sculpting. Then I was commissioned by Discover Card to do the first decorative credit card. My painting ended up with an exhibit at the Guggenheim with three of my paintings, and the one that was on the credit card was auctioned off for the Make-A-Wish Foundation and raised \$25,000 dollars. I went, "Wait a minute, somebody really likes this." I was at that point doing *Dr. Quinn: Medicine Woman*. I was painting every day on the set. Everybody loved the paintings and wanted them. The next thing I know, Korbel Champagne commissioned me to do a limited edition champagne bottle, which won some awards. I was put in a book, *Actors as Artists*. It took off from there and started being represented by a major gallery, Galerie Michael on Rodeo Drive. I was their only living artist. What can I say? This is my favorite thing to do. It really came from a self-healing. I never imagined that it would end up being at museum shows, and designs on fabrics, and design in sculpture and jewelry designs.

Jane Seymour will make two artist appearances at Chasen Galleries, March 9, 6-8pm and March 10, 1-3pm; 1830 South Osprey Ave., Sarasota. The exhibit also features photography by filmmaker Sean Flynn, Seymour's son.

You have a special Open Heart collection and have spoken about the "Open Heart" philosophy in your life. Can you explain what that means to you? I found I was able to process change and disappointment and tragedy, sometimes quicker and easier than some other people. People say, "How did you do that?" My mother, who survived an internment camp for three and a half years in Indonesia, was all about living, giving back and helping others. To be honest, the happiest people I know in the world are people who've overcome some terrible thing and have chosen to use that experience to do something to help other people on the same road. I just wrote and got a book published called *The Road Ahead*, which is all about moving through tough times in your life and being able to let go of it and be in the present moment, and create your own future. I've also designed all kinds of jewelry based on *The Road Ahead* and also the next collection called *The Ripple Effect*. It's all about the philosophy of picking yourself up, accepting and sharing with someone who's been through the same thing and learning from it, or sharing with someone that is going through it with you. Then, reaching out and realizing there are people much worse off than you, always. My work is about healing. My life is about change and dealing with it.

Everybody immediately thinks of you as a successful person, but have there been setbacks made you question that? Oh my goodness, yes. Something as stupid or little as doing a pilot for a series, it's a go and it suddenly doesn't happen. A lot of people go on and on about it; I'm on to the next thing. When it

comes to dealing with divorce or betrayal or losing someone I love, I feel and go through the process but I don't hang onto the negative in my life. I find a way to take that experience and build from it.

How different is the process of being an actress working with scripts and a painter working with paints? Very different. When you act, there are tons of people working on it. You don't have any control over anything. I don't have to "get the job" when I'm an artist. I paint for my own pleasure, and if someone buys it that's a wonderful, amazing end of the creative process because it means somebody appreciated it. Art is something that comes from me the human being, rather than me the actress. I would say that my artwork is the closest thing to me as a person.

Does it get daunting, to have everything on your shoulders when you paint? I'm not insisting that anyone likes it. The truth is people do, so that's very encouraging and exciting and satisfying. A lot of people will come to shows and look at it and just say, "Oh, that speaks to me because this happened to me in my life" or "I have a little daughter or granddaughter just like that." Sometimes they'll feel much more meaningful things and I've had people look at the art and cry and laugh and become so attached to it. I have collectors who own 30 or 40 pieces. I never know. It is a little daunting because this is my view on life.

Do you often find people who come in just to see Jane Seymour the actress and then fall in love with the artwork afterward? A lot of people come in and go, "Oh, I had no idea you painted." Then they say, "Which one is yours?" Then we go, "The whole gallery." Some artists paint the same thing over and over, and you can tell there are 20 paintings that are similar. I have a wide range of styles and mediums so that sometimes confuses them. Usually, somebody finds something they really like, whether they purchase or not. Of course, I get the art teachers who come in to criticize or whatever, but actually, they tend to come in and they tend to like it too because it's very free. I'm not specifically trained, and watercolor is the hardest medium. So, anyone who paints watercolor looks at it and knows what they're dealing with.

Why work in such difficult mediums like watercolors or oils? These aren't garage hobby kinds of painting. I paint with some of the best painters around, especially some of the young painters. They like my work and I love their work, so I'm always stretching myself to learn different techniques. That's very much the actress in me, always trying to expand my horizons. I just love being in a room with other artists when we paint together. I love painting with children. Children are so free and I think you learn a lot from sitting down next to a child and seeing what they do when it's straight from their head and into their hand. They go into a really cool space. If you were dealing with children that had real issues, they would probably paint what it is they're not able to talk about.

How much of your personal time goes into painting? It depends on what's happening. I have periods where I have commissions and I have to do some paintings that people are very specific about. Then I want to paint all the time. And I've been traveling a lot recently. Much of the time is spent looking at life, looking at nature, seeing images and colors and combinations that I'm interested in, and bringing it into the studio. Right now, I'm very interested in the bark of a tree that I saw in New Zealand.

You were last here for the Sarasota Film Festival with *Bereave*. How did you feel like audiences and the people you met during that trip have responded to your cinematic work? It's a movie that hasn't gotten a general release yet. People appreciated the fact it was something not many people have seen. A lot of people really

loved it, and everyone that actually ends up watching loves the movie. I've got a number of other movies coming out. I've got one called *War With Grandpa* with Robert De Niro that comes out in February. I have one called *Little Italy* with Emma Roberts and Hayden Christensen. I'm not sure when that comes out, but that's finished. Then I have a series, and that's the next big thing called *Let's Get Physical*. That launches on POP TV on the 23rd of January. There are eight episodes and then after that, it goes to Netflix. I'll do anything I think is good. I love the process, love playing very different characters.

How do you feel about what's happening in Hollywood as far as the revelations of how women have been treated and the calls to give women a greater voice? This has been hidden, not just in Hollywood but in many walks of life. It's in politics and in business and everywhere. People now have to pay attention because the companies are letting go of people they were protecting before. If someone clearly has done something wrong and they've paid millions of dollars to hide it, there's going to be some smoke. There's going to be some fire in that smoke. If you make advances to someone, male or female, and they go, "No, thank you," that means no. If you say no and you don't get that job or you lose your job, that's when things get wrong. It happened to me on a film a long time ago. I was basically told having gone through all the regular channels to do the film test and everything and rehearsals and agents, a very powerful man basically told me that I had to perform something, otherwise I was not going to get this job. I was so appalled and upset that I quit acting for a year. Artists paint by themselves. They're on their own. Nobody hires or fires you as an artist.

You call art your favorite thing. What sets it apart? It puts me into a magical state. Wherever I go, I take my paints with me, and if I have time, even if it's just a little small work, I love the experience of being creative, it's just what I do during the day. Some people need a vodka and tonic, I need a painting.

You appear in many of your own paintings. Is there any meaning to that? Yes, there's a story behind everything. One's *The Women In Red Dresses*, a series of women including myself. I wanted to send a message of freedom and looking forward and being at one with the world. The shadow, which is attached to me, but I'm not attached to it. I'm looking forward. The one in the garden with all the flowers is probably one of my favorites. That was the last day I had this home that I owned for 20-something years that was the most beautiful castle in England, near Bath. It was over 1,000 years old. We spent every spare minute we ever had going there and raising the children there. I restored the house, restored that garden and it was at its prime that day. It was very special to me, and then I had to sell it. So that was my ode to that life. Then there are the pictures of me with Christopher Reeve, or with Joe Lando. Those are two men that I adore. I've actually done very little on *Dr. Quinn*. If I do anything of me in James Bond, it's sold before it even hits the wall.

Why have you and Joe Lando, who played your husband on *Dr. Quinn*, stayed so close? We worked together on it for seven years, and he's just a great guy. We get along well and our families get along well. Plus, that was a very intense working experience. We worked 18-hour days for seven years. We're actually closer now. We're all growing older together.

Coming back to Florida, is there anything you'd like to share? I love Florida. The weather is very nice, the people are lovely and just very artsy. I love it. I love Florida. **srq**

