

Michael Ross

(United Kingdom)

Modern Art



Michael Ross is a British artist whose journey began with childhood experiences in Nigeria, where the colors, rhythms, and raw beauty of Africa left an indelible mark on his creativity. With a career spanning acting, music, writing, and painting, he discovered his unique artistic voice through bold acrylic textures and dynamic brushstrokes. His work, often infused with an African influence, transcends culture and language, offering a glimpse into a world of vivid expression. Passionate about supporting emerging artists, he founded The North West Art Collective, ensuring that creative talent has a platform to thrive.

For Ross, art is more than an aesthetic pursuit—it is an act of magic, transformation, and connection.

"I was introduced to a living world of magic and colour, influenced by living as a child in Africa. All you have to do to be influenced by the world around you is open your eyes, listen carefully, and use every sense you can. Throughout my life, this is what I did. I have had many jobs where creativeness was a big part of what I was doing, and at first, I didn't realize this. When I did, the world opened up. I realised that when it comes to art, we create for ourselves, but more importantly, we also create for others. To create a magical piece from nothing, that myself and others can get pleasure from, is next to perfection for me. Art, to me, transcends language and culture. It's another facet of our skills, which is sometimes overlooked. My vision is to offer something to everybody, no matter who they are, to make them think there is so much more to life. I have a Facebook group called The North West Art Collective, based in the UK, whose mission is to help new and emerging artists by providing art fairs where they don't have to pay to enter, and any sales from paintings are entirely theirs to keep. All artists need a helping hand to get started—this is one small way I feel I can help."

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Interview

Your early childhood in Nigeria clearly had a profound impact on your artistic vision. Do you think the way we experience color and movement as children shapes our creativity later in life?

„As children we all soak up experiences we have come across in our lives. They say that children between say 7 years old and 13 years old are our 'formative years' It is at this time, more than any other, that we are little sponges and readily take up experiences that we are presented with. So for me, it was a massive cultural shift. Lots of colour, of brightness, of African dance, and so this of course shaped my memory of that time."



Your artistic style emerged naturally over time. Was there a defining moment when you truly felt you had found your creative identity?

„Most of my life, from being a small boy, I was drawn to creative pastimes, whether it be painting from the age of 8, helping prepare food to eat, becoming involved in the hairdressing industry, and even eventually becoming a professional actor and author. If you think about it, these are all creative pursuits. In a way, I couldn't have escaped them, could I? But I suppose it really was defined 4 years ago when art became a very worthwhile and important creative aspect of my life."

You have expressed that art is a kind of magic—transforming a blank canvas into something meaningful. What does this process feel like to you on an emotional level?

„Oh absolutely, to create something from nothing is nothing short of magic. It is as if the materialistic world falls away and you are somehow left with your inner self. It is very difficult to describe, I just know I feel happiest when I'm in that artistic creative flow. It's as if I have stepped into another world. Time stands still!"



Your work carries an unmistakable energy, a fusion of bold textures and fragmented forms. How do you balance structure and spontaneity in your creative process?

„In many ways I don't think about structure, other than the subject, a basic idea of colour, and the technique I am going to use initially, but then the spontaneity overtakes me. I try not to let my mind interfere with what my inner self wants to do. In a sense, I go with the flow'. To my detriment, when I have tried to think it out and be very disciplined, it is at that moment, that the result is not quite how I want it."

Beyond painting, you have pursued writing, music, and acting. Do you find that different art forms feed into each other, or does each discipline remain distinct in your creative world?

„Yes! Without a doubt, my music, acting and painting all act as one. I use the same energy for all of them..and strangely enough, the feeling of satisfaction is the same as well. If I need to, say, relax, all of these creative pursuits can do this for me."



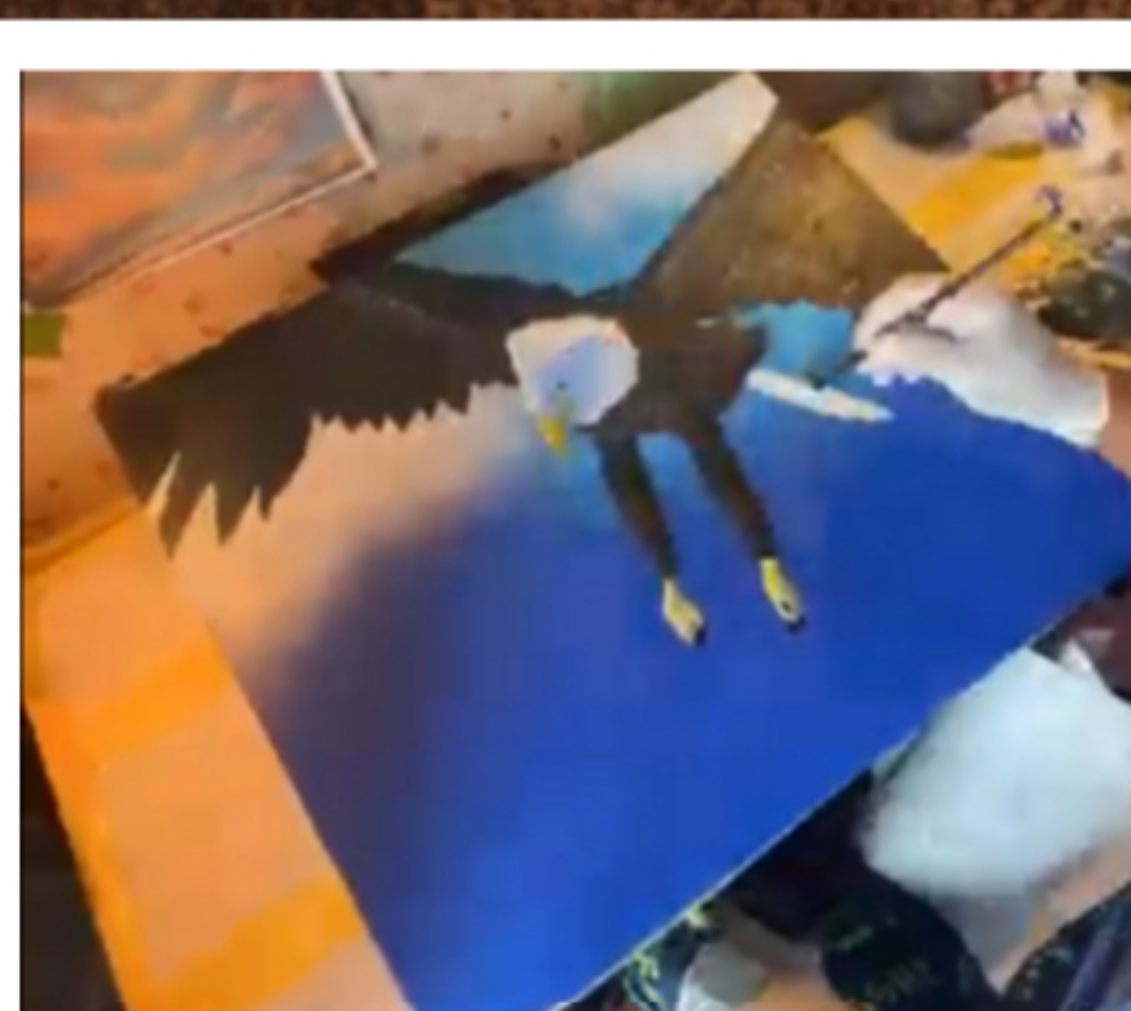
Your initiative, The North West Art Collective, helps emerging artists overcome financial barriers. What inspired you to take on this role, and what impact do you hope to make?

„This is the easiest question to answer. Let me explain it like this. All new and emerging artists, have to go through a difficult time at the beginning of their career, of which there can be a financial burden. Let us think about this. It can cost money for someone to accept a painting, then it costs money to be accepted to exhibit, then it can cost money to pay for a wall to exhibit a painting, and after all that, if you are lucky enough to sell your painting, then a hefty commission is taken off you for selling it! How is that helping a newly emerging artist? So this is what our North West Art Collective will do. There is

absolutely nothing to pay to join in our exhibition, and if you are lucky enough to sell a painting, all the money you were paid for it..is yours! How does the collective survive? We find important venues, where they want increased footfall, advertise the venue and find organisations that want to help emerging artists as well. This gives a new artist a big confidence boost."

Much of your work is influenced by Africa. Is there a particular memory, image, or experience from your childhood that continues to resurface in your paintings?

„I suppose there was a time when I was 8, being shown how to paint by a local African. He didn't have expensive acrylic or oils, he didn't have a nice canvas. It could be the bark of a tree, his brush a feathered piece of stick and the colours, usually watercolours using natural dyes from the plants that were readily available around us."



You mentioned that you create for yourself first and foremost. How do you navigate the balance between personal expression and the expectations of an audience or the art market?

„Personal expression has always come first for me, And I have completed several commissions, which so far have always turned out very well, but art is subjective, and no matter how well the client knows you, I am always wondering, will they like the finished product? I am always pleased with the result, but waiting for the client to see they are happy, can make me a little anxious."

Your use of dried acrylic paint swatches and oblong brushstrokes has become a signature technique. How did you develop this method, and what do you love most about working with these textures?

„You know, our life experiences come from flash moments in everything we do and see, it applies to art, music and writing books. So, for the dried colour swatches I use in my style, I once saw someone do something a little similar, and I thought, how could I improve that, use it differently? How would I decorate it before it dried? It was the same with the brush strokes I started to use. Again I saw something similar, I can't remember where, and the brush strokes were a lot smaller and not as bold, so again, I put my interpretation on it, and through a sequence of trials and error, came up with a technique I am happy with."



If someone unfamiliar with your work were to stand before one of your paintings for the first time, what do you hope they feel or take away from the experience?

„This is a great question. But we have to remember, as I mentioned earlier, that art is subjective. One painting can be loved by one person, and rejected by another. In my case, I would hope that they would feel the energy, that colour is such an important aspect of our life, that they are caught up in this, that they would recognise that there are two ways to look at a painting, as a whole, and then close up, maybe on the colour of the eyes, the pattern in the head, the complimentary shades of colour in the background. I would like to compare a painting to good food."

There is a beginning, a middle and an end...and if at the end you feel some satisfaction, even a little smile, then I am very happy."

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