

HOUSES DECORATION GARDENS RECIPES TRAVEL TOP 100 THE LIST VIDEO SHOPPING

HOUSES

Inside the magical Chelsea studio and hardworking home of artist Suzy Murphy

The studio where Suzy Murphy paints her vast, colour-drenched landscapes is a deeply personal space, while her nearby house acts as the serene backdrop to her family life

By Virginia Clark

Photography By Elliot Sheppard

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Suzy Murphy in her studio Elliot Sheppard

‘I spend far, far more time in my studio than I do in my house,’ says Suzy Murphy. ‘It’s my most personal space, far more than my home. When you walk into an artist’s studio, you walk into their brain because everything that is there is either what I have created or I’m going to create.’ Indeed when she has a show coming up, Suzy retreats from her nearby house to the studio full time during the week, cooking in the kitchen and sleeping in the mezzanine bedroom, surrounded by canvases large and small.



The studio has a rather enchanted feel to it, situated behind a heavy gate directly on one of west London's busy main roads. The building, set back from the road and reached through a charming front garden, was designed in the 1920s as a set of artists' studios. The separate spaces have since mainly been converted into flats, as Suzy's was when she first found it 15 years ago. She immediately made an offer on it, and then set about gutting it and restoring it as far as possible to what it would have been when it was first built, painting the doors black as it was specified in the original deeds, and installing lights that felt more 1920s. It is a small space, but striking: the main double height space is given over to canvases and work tables, with daylight flooding in through the skylights, while the mezzanine above is home to a bijoux bedroom and bathroom.

Everything in the studio is exactly as Suzy would have it, and it is, as she says, intensely personal. 'With homes, you design them for everybody in your family, where the studio is in many ways the most indulgent space you can have.' Even on a normal day, she arrives there around 10am and stays until 7pm or 8pm, rarely inviting people in. 'I've always kept a very strong demarcation between home life and studio life,' she says. 'Otherwise, as a mother you would never really get anything done. When my youngest was about seven,' she laughs, 'I took him into the studio one day and he looked at me and said, "Oh, so this is where you come to get away from us." I was like, "no, no, no, darling. Not at all. Where did you get that idea?!"'



The original studio staircase leads up to a mezzanine where the bedroom and bathroom are located. Elliot Sheppard

Suzy's The Evening Star Does Shine stands in the studio. Elliot Sheppard



Looking out from the bathroom into the bedroom. A photograph of a young David Hockney taken by his dealer John Kasmin hangs on the left, while the neon dog above the door is by Suzy, taken from the Christmas tree she designed for The Connaught in London in 2022. Elliot Sheppard



Elliot Sheppard



Elliot Sheppard

A piece by Lucy Sparrow hangs on the wall in the bathroom. An internal window looks out over the studio below. Elliot Sheppard

The home where she raised her family, meanwhile, is a classic west London white stucco terraced house a 15-minute walk away. ‘I came from a very different background to this,’ she says of her upbringing in London’s East End, ‘but when I was a kid I used to come and buy my school uniforms at Peter Jones in Chelsea, and in my child’s mind this was the ideal place to live. I found these white houses very magical, and I always wanted to grow up and live in one.’ When she finally did buy one with her husband, she remembers that ‘it felt like a manifestation.’



A painting by Christopher Le Brun anchors the ground floor sitting room. Elliot Sheppard

The interiors of the house were already beautiful when Suzy bought it. A vast light well runs from the basement up beyond the ground floor, with internal windows from the front sitting room and the hallway overlooking a double height dining space below, where a huge painting by Suzy’s friend Harland Miller hangs on the wall. ‘It belonged to a well-known person – I won’t tell you who – with an incredible art collection. I fell in love with the art collection, and then when all the art went, I thought, “oh God, what have I done?”’ Refilling it with art was obviously not a problem, though Suzy prefers to hang pieces by other artists rather than her own work in the house. The real challenge was that ‘it was very much a bachelor pad when I got it, and then I had to make it into a family home.’



The kitchen in Suzy's house. Elliot Sheppard

Suzy resisted the urge to do the typical west London open plan basement kitchen, and instead went with more cocooning spaces on either side of the double height basement space – a smart kitchen at the front of the house and a sitting room at the back with a cheerful yellow lacquered ceiling. Understated bedrooms occupy the first and second floors, while at the very top of the house is another sitting room where light pours in from vast windows, and which her grown-up sons now use as a den. The garden is very much a part of the layout, since sight lines run all the way through the house from front to back on the lower floors. ‘I was always really influenced, as I’m sure most people were at art school, by Bauhaus and the idea that the garden and the green should be part of the structure. I love that when I open my front door, I can see the garden through the other side.’

For all that it represents a dream come true, the house in its particulars is more a backdrop to Suzy’s life, rather than a place of personal expression. ‘A house for me is a place where you feel safe, it gives you a refuge, it creates serenity.’ Many of Suzy’s paintings feature a tiny house at the centre of a vast landscape, a stylised depiction drawn from looking at dolls’ houses in the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood when she herself was a child. As she explains it, these houses are an image of having a secure place in the world. ‘For me, that feeling of security requires the house to be aesthetically beautiful. If it is not beautiful, I’m not going to feel peaceful. And so it is well decorated, and everything has its place, and when I see that I feel settled.’

Suzy Murphy's exhibition ‘[Distant Deeps or Skies](#)’ is on at Lyndsey Ingram, 20 Bourdon Street, London W1K 3PJ, 19 November - 23 December 2025.

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