

MARK SHEEKY ARTWORKS

The sí, in Irish folklore, is the world of magic, the parallel domain of elves and supernatural beings. The name Sheeky derives from this, meaning 'otherworldly' in its mother tongue, made all the more powerful by the addition of the word Key in English, a change made by my grandfather, signifying locking, unlocking, access. My father, also an artist battled with visions, whispers from the sí, whereas I had sufficient logical prowess to view these irrational images, sounds, desires from a distance. I am a rational being with an I.Q. 157 on my last test, an atheist Catholic and a true advocate of science - for science is knowledge proven by experiment and who could disagree with such a concept? Yet, magic is also everywhere too. Such powers are now seen as irrelevant relics of a lawless society long past, yet deep within all of us beats the memory of those forces, those times when invisible links of image and emotion held us together, connected like a web to the natural world and its delicate tendrils, memories of a time when once all things, even the rocks, were living and part of us.

An artist is a communicator. A sender of flows of energy and information, receiver, and conduit. An art gallery is not a place of frivolity, but a temple of doorways to alternative realities, gateways to unlock minds and forge new paths and destinies for humanity.

I was born in Crewe in 1972 and had a conventional normal young childhood. As I approached ten, my parents purchased a home computer and I quickly became obsessed and fascinated by the machine, mapping my mind to it, and integrating myself its world and it into mine. I withdrew from human contact and learned to program. The world became a frightening place of ghosts and android enemies, the computer world became an escape.

Game programming became my solitary obsession, focused on this activity for about 24 years from the age of around 12. I struggled alone making games, searching for a success that was far beyond me and my abilities. Very slowly, I began to create games worthy of sale, and in the year 2002, I decided I sell my games on the still-new Internet. I founded a game review website, and in the same year, a sound effect library.

For my game work I needed music, so I began to create and release music, initially influenced by the music from Commodore 64 computer games. In 2002 I entered A Song For Europe and music and poetry became an early creative escape from game development.

My first small success as a programmer came in 2004 with a game called Flatspace, which took me 18 months to develop. By this stage, I was very technically adept, and had designed an advanced music synthesizer and sequencer to create music, as well as a 3D game engine named Hector. I spent another 18 months working on a second game but this did not sell, and I realised that with Flatspace I had reached a high water-mark, that I could never make a living as a game developer.

I started painting, by chance, in 2004 with no knowledge or interest in art. I painted occasional paintings with an online group for a year or two, then joined a local art group. That represented my first social contact since school. Gradually, art became a love that eclipsed programming, and I realised that I programmed as an artist, for the technical challenge rather than aiming for specific success.

People compared my work to surrealist artists, although I painted initially without any influence or knowledge of art. Surrealism is the integration of reality with dreams and the subconscious without rationalisation. What we see ourselves is reality, whether it's called by others our conscious or subconscious or unconscious. Our images are our reality no matter what society thinks, thus surrealism is a rebellion against society, against social views of what is real or normal, therefore one must be partly 'surreal' to be non-conformist. Only a bad artist would conform with society. The mark of a good artist is rebellion against social conformity exactly because conformity is mass acceptance of the median, and creativity must be, at least, not-average! The less average the better. I accepted that people called my art surrealist and had no objection to the label or the term.



Life and death in new book

I embraced the art world and won the important Grosvenor Open Art Award in 2012. My painting Two Roman Legionaries Discovering The God-King Albion Turned Into Stone was acquired by the Grosvenor Museum in Chester. In the same year I completed my first novel, The Many Beautiful Worlds of Death, which was subsequently published in 2015.

I work with supreme energy and focus, I have catalogued my work extensively from an early stage and as of 2017 am nearing my 1000th artwork. I exhibit many times each year and I've dramatically staged over a dozen solo exhibitions, including The Phenomenology of Love in central London in 2014 and a three stage six-week show in Chester.

After a live improvised piano performance in London in July 2015, I began extensively performing on piano, often collaborating with visual artist Sabine Kussmaul. I quickly grasped the basics of this instrument and performed a first piano sonata in Crewe in 2015, and my third piano work, Cycles, in Chester Cathedral in September 2016. In 2017 this was recorded as a piano concerto for synthetic orchestra, becoming my 23rd album release since 1999.



I hosted my first radio programme in October 2015 for community radio station, Red Shift Radio, and each week I try to push new frontiers in that medium as producer and presenter of ArtsLab, an experimental arts programme that features 100% new content each week.

Oil painting is my love. Images form the language of the mind. Paintings have a far higher visual resolution and complexity than photographs. Paint glows in a far greater electromagnetic spectrum than the crude phosphors of an electric screen. Magic spells must be written by hand, and paintings cast their spell only in actual, not virtual, reality.

My techniques are extensively practised and researched, self-taught with discipline and focus. I paint in the style of past masters, using several layers of paint and the most stable pigments. One secret of the magical lustre of my work is my use of amber, the fossilised tree resin which encapsulates pure pigment in a glass-like jewel. Amber fluoresces in ultraviolet light, and it was a key ingredient in 16th century art. Amber is highly chemically stable, lasting millions of years, and is a key ingredient of many of the wonderful Elizabethan works visible in the National Portrait Gallery.

