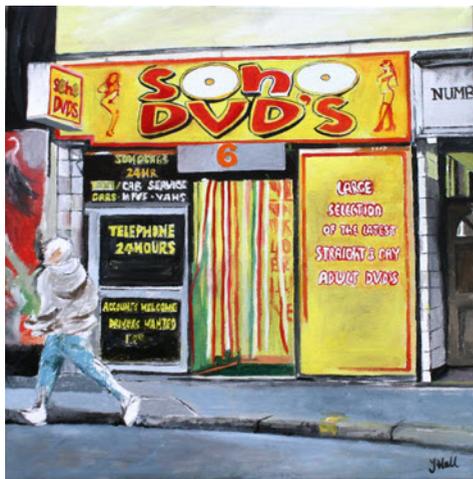


# EROTIC NEWS

## DIRTY PICTURES



With its sex shops, strip joints, lap dance clubs and massage parlours, the Soho area of London has always been at the heart of the capital's sex scene, and it's the gaudy neon-lit frontages of Soho's assorted adult venues that provide the inspiration for a new body of work by renowned Great Yarmouth-based artist, Jane Hall. She first shot to fame in 2009 thanks to her popular *Seaside Sensation* exhibition, with pictures capturing the tackiness and charm of the traditional British seaside holiday. But the Soho paintings see Jane's work take on a darker, sexier and more adult edge, so what explains this stark change of subject matter?

Jane says: "It might sound odd but I see this work as very much a continuation of what I started in *Seaside Sensation*. True, this time I'm painting sex shops and strip clubs instead of ice cream parlours and roller-coasters, but what attracts me

to them is essentially the same – and that's the colourful signage, the neon lights and also the faded glamour of these places. I'm very interested in disappearing cultures and, having lived by the sea for over 25 years, I know from first hand that the British seaside isn't quite what it used to be. And I fear for the future of sex shops, too, what with the threat posed by the Internet and the crippling license fees they're forced to pay."

While researching her subject, Jane spent many hours prowling round the streets of Soho both by day and night. "I'd take a camera and a sketchbook with me," she says, "and just wait till something really stood out to me. My first Soho painting was of the Super Mags shop on Brewer Street, where I got a really good, mysterious angle on the doorway, then round the corner on Rupert Street I fell in love with this seedy-looking DVD shop. And the thing I noticed was that all the customers just rushed in without really looking at the place. They seemed too nervous and embarrassed to take time to appreciate the neon lights and the amazing signage, so by painting these places, I want to give people the chance to take a long hard look at them and to enjoy them for what they are – fun, bright, sexy and dirty in the right way."

And Jane hopes to do it before it's too late. She explains: "I've spoken to several sex shop owners during the course of this project and most feel very much under threat. They've had so many things to fight against of late – the recession, the Internet and various clean up campaigns –



and there's a chance that many could go out of business, which would be a massive cultural blow to this country. A place like Amsterdam fully embraces the sexual side of its culture, and I don't see why Soho should be any different. Because we'll miss these places when they're gone. And they are disappearing! In fact, I just started work on a painting of the famous Janus store on Old Compton Street. It had been there for over 40 years, but was forced to close its doors in April."

The closure of these stores gives added poignancy to Jane's new work, but

what stands out more is how they capture something very familiar – the outside of a sex shop – but without giving any indication of what goes on beyond the facade. It gives the paintings an element of mystery that many will recognise – after all, who among us hasn't lingered outside a sex shop for an hour desperately trying to pluck up the courage to go inside? "The truth is most people never go in these places," Jane admits, "and I was the same until I started these paintings, and because the licensing laws demand that sex shops keep their windows boarded up,

there is this real sense of intrigue, mystery and even fear about what might happen when you walk through the door. That's one of the things I want to capture in these paintings – that sense of not knowing what's inside. And the more you stare at the paintings, the more your imagination runs wild, just like it would if you were standing outside and wondering whether you dare go in."

But Jane *does* dare go in – and hopes to make sex shop interiors the subject of some future works. "I find the colours and shapes of sex toys really interesting," she says, "in much the same way as I find the colours and shapes of ice creams interesting. But what really excites me is the thought of breaking through the facade and making art out of what most people never see. And why don't they see it? Because we still have this peculiar attitude to sex in this country. It's something we feel should be hidden away and not discussed in public, but I'm hoping my work will challenge that."



To view the Soho Paintings online and get a full list of exhibition dates, visit [jane-hall.co.uk](http://jane-hall.co.uk).

## DRESSING FOR PLEASURE

If you're wondering what's hot to wear in the bedroom these days, then look no further than the Kiss Me Deadly Longline Vargas Girdle. Made of thick black control mesh, it clings in all the right places to create the most incredible and dynamic hourglass curves. The six black garters give a retro feel, but the materials are ultra-modern, meaning it's comfortable enough to wear for long periods. And the high-cut rear makes it perfect for flaunting a well-toned pair of buttocks, making it ideal for prolonged spanking sessions, anal sex or whatever you fancy.



In fact, the best thing about this incredibly sensual garment is the multitude of role-play opportunity it suggests. You can be the spectacled secretary whose sensible blouse and skirt combination hides the red-hot undies of a true temptress; the Hollywood starlet who will do anything to get the leading role; or the