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Summer Term 2025 Update

Painting with Pride: how art and music can bring our community together

Art has always been my voice – the way I express what words sometimes can't. Over the past few years, I've had the incredible opportunity to combine my love for painting with my deep belief in equality, to support the LGBTQ+ community. During Pride Month, I've used windows, walls, and gallery spaces as a canvas for hope, love, and solidarity, creating artwork that not only celebrates diversity but encourages conversation, understanding and unity.

What started as a small personal project has grown into something far bigger than I could have imagined. Through partnerships with Chelmsford For You, Essex Pride, and national brands like John Lewis and Toni & Guy, I've been creating public window murals that shine a light on the LGBTQ+ community and the beauty of being unapologetically yourself.

Art Inspired by Icons

My murals are inspired by gay icons in music – artists who used their platforms to bring people together and challenge stereotypes through the universal language of song. These musicians didn't just entertain; they made people feel seen, accepted, and loved. I wanted my art to echo that same spirit.

2023 - "Your Song" and Elton John

In 2023, I was selected by John Lewis to create a mural for their Chelmsford store. The theme of the mural was celebrating love and self-expression, and I immediately knew I wanted to honour Elton John – a legend who has used his music and voice to champion LGBTQ+ rights for decades. I built his portrait using hundreds of tiny rainbow-coloured

hearts, symbolising not only the LGBTQ+ flag but the idea that love comes in many forms, and each one is valid.

Next to his portrait, I added the iconic line from “Your Song”:

“How wonderful life is, now you’re in the world.”

That lyric, to me, says everything. It’s a celebration of each individual’s worth, a reminder that the world is better, brighter, and more complete when we embrace everyone, no matter who they love. Painting those hearts—one by one—became a meditative, emotional process. Each heart represented someone who might need to hear that they matter.

2024 - Freddie Mercury: “As Gay As a Daffodil”

The following year, in 2024, I was honoured once again by John Lewis and chose to pay tribute to Freddie Mercury, the electrifying frontman of Queen and one of the most iconic LGBTQ+ figures in music history. His life and legacy have always inspired me—not just because of his incredible talent, but because of his courage. Even though he wasn’t publicly open about his sexuality during most of his life, his death brought a wave of awareness to AIDS, a disease surrounded by misinformation and fear at the time.

For the mural, I painted Freddie in his famous pose—fist raised high in victory, wearing his vibrant yellow jacket. But inside the jacket, I added a subtle detail: the LGBTQ+ flag, folded into the fabric, almost like a secret inner strength. Surrounding him were bright yellow daffodils, in reference to his cheeky and endearing quote:

“As gay as a daffodil, dear.”

It was my way of blending humour, resilience, and symbolism. Daffodils, which bloom in spring, also represent new beginnings—a fitting symbol for the ongoing journey of LGBTQ+ acceptance and rights.

2025 - Lady Gaga: “Born This Way”

In 2025, I was chosen by Toni & Guy to design a mural centred on hair as a form of identity. Naturally, I thought of Lady Gaga, a fierce and fearless ally of the LGBTQ+ community whose music is deeply rooted in messages of empowerment and acceptance. I painted her with flowing rainbow-coloured hair, which symbolised the many members within the LGBTQ+ community, blending together to form something bold and beautiful.

The background was filled with my signature rainbow hearts, and next to her, I added the words:

"Baby, I was born this way."

That lyric is more than just a song – it's a declaration of pride. It speaks to the truth that being a member of the LGBTQ+ community isn't a phase or a choice. It's who you are, and that's something to be celebrated, not hidden. Painting this mural felt deeply emotional. I thought about all the young people who might walk past it – people who might still be figuring out who they are – and I hoped they'd see themselves in it, and know they weren't alone.

Building Change Within the School Walls

Outside of my community projects, I've been working hard to bring that same message of love and inclusion into our school. I founded an annual LGBTQ+ Art Competition and Exhibition, open to all students. Whether it's painting, drawing, sculpture, or digital art – every form is welcomed.

Each year, the entries blow me away. Students from across year groups come together to create work that speaks from the heart – pieces that explore empathy and pride. From intricate collages and powerful slogans to delicate portraits and symbolic patterns, the exhibition has become a month-long celebration of diversity.

Why It Matters

Art can do more than decorate a space – it can change hearts and minds. Through these murals and school projects, I've seen firsthand how creativity can open people up to new perspectives. When you see a mural of Freddie Mercury with daffodils blooming around him, or a rainbow of hearts forming Elton John's smile, it does something quietly powerful: it reminds you that being different is something to celebrate, not fear.

I've had people stop and thank me, strangers telling me the murals made them feel seen. I've had people approach me to say they're proud to be part of a school that supports the LGBTQ+ community. Those moments mean everything to me. They tell me that this work matters. That even one piece of art can make a person feel less alone.

Looking Ahead

I'm excited to keep using art as a tool for change – to keep celebrating voices that need to be heard, and stories that deserve to be told. There's still so much to do when it comes to acceptance and equality, but I believe that if we keep showing up for each other – with kindness, creativity, and love – we can build a world where everyone feels at home.

So, during Pride Month and beyond, I'll keep painting. I'll keep filling the world with colour. And I'll keep reminding people that every heart matters, and everyone is beautiful.

Mr Harvey, Subject Leader of Art, School Development Leader & Associate SLT
