

I've heard about art good enough to eat before but try resisting these latest paintings by local artist Suzy Abrahams.

Following her Barcelona-inspired debut last September, Abrahams returns to the Fountain Gallery this week with a new collection of still-lives based on the exotic fruit she tasted on a recent trip to Cape Town.

The jump from Gaudi to gooseberries is a big one but Abrahams' main concern was whether she would find the fruit she wanted to paint in her local shops back in Croydon.

"Luckily for me, supermarkets are better stocked than they used to be," she says. "I spent a great deal of time looking at different species, their colours and shapes, then slicing, halving, quartering and peeling them to discover the secret colours and textures inside."

"Take passion fruit. They have this very uninteresting, even ugly exterior. But when you cut one open - wow, what a surprise! I ended up painting it twice, first from the outside, all wrinkly and shrivelled, and then inside to show the liquidy juiciness."

Realistic and mouth-watering have been words used to describe Abrahams' latest work but she stresses that her aim is not necessarily to

Exotica The Fountain Gallery

By Paul Fleckney

achieve a photographic likeness.

"After the Barcelona paintings, I wasn't sure if something this representational would be enough of a challenge," she says. "But these new paintings are all two or three times larger than life, which lends them quite a surreal look. I even planned on incorporating real pomegranate seeds into one painting but by the time I had boiled

them up and got covered in this red, sticky mess, I realised it wasn't going to work!"

Instead, the final paintings are a range of acrylic and mixed-media pieces that bring out the contrasts of texture and colour that have made fruit such a popular subject with artists through the ages. They will be complemented in the gallery space by some beautiful bowls and etched glassware by sculptor Joanne Gardner, filled with the real deal.

A former graphic designer, Abrahams admits to being on a continual learning curve with her art. When painting the hairy outer skin of kiwi fruit, she even made a trip up to the National Gallery to pick up tips from the famous horse paintings of George Stubbs.

"I'm always going to exhibitions and visiting galleries," she says. "There's so much to learn but that's the exciting part of being an artist. You can never know it all."

Exotica, The Fountain Gallery, 26 Bridge Road, Hampton Court, East Molesey, Tuesday, July 24 - Sunday, August 5, Tues-Thur/Sun, 11-5.30pm, Fri/Sat 10-5.30pm. Free. Call 020 8941 5865 or visit suzyabrahams.com for more information.

Feeling fruity



Four of your five-a-day: Suzy Abrahams' study of exotic fruits.

