

Journey Into Fallowmoor

An Interview With Nom Kinnear King

by Kambriel

The painted world of artist Nom Kinnear King is one where the soft linen of a gown can bloom forth into an abundance of living flowers, and voluminous sleeves may take flight aided by the wings of clever birds. Walls here are gateways to more bewitching realms. Lamps cast warm light from the fiery glow within ourselves. A remote landscape is dotted with labyrinthine, centuries-old country estates, where the women within revel in somber solitude, carry a sense of wistful wisdom, and are imbued with capabilities that transcend the everyday to reach a more whimsical place—a place hidden away from time somewhere just beyond the verdant hedge maze.

Kambriel: When was the first time you remember deciding to sit down and begin to paint a world of your own?

Nom Kinnear King: I used to draw and plan out a world of my own when I was a child. I'd fill notebooks with drawings of characters, with lists of their siblings, pets, languages they would speak. These grew throughout the years. It was after art school that I began putting them into paintings, creating portraits—the world around them growing over time.

K: Are there any favorite tales you read in youth that worked their way into your psyche and remained inspirational through the years?

NKK: Most definitely. Many of them still play in the works now: *The Secret Garden*, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, *I Capture the Castle*, *The Enchanted Wood*—they all bring back that magic when you think of them that opened the door to another world. Books still are such a wonderful source of inspiration. I'm reading a Brontë book at the moment, and it's perfect after a day of painting.

K: The vignettes you paint tend to be very much a celebration of our natural world. What are some of the comforts you treasure most in nature?

NKK: I always feel more at ease in the countryside, finding new spots to paint, also going back to those familiar paths I've walked since a child—seeing the familiar trees, knowing you mostly have it to yourself, that you're far away from the everyday world and able to gaze up at the light through the trees without your worries. Even when I paint a scene set inside, nature finds its way to creep in at the edges, as if my imagination is like an old estate that's become overgrown.

K: You seem quite inspired by place while still managing to filter this inspiration into a world purely of your own imagination. Are there particular parts of the landscape where you live, in Norwich, you find most enchanting?

NKK: I've revisited local spots here over and over again, mostly outside of the city. My favorites are Blickling and Felbrigg. This Christmas at Felbrigg they had on an event called *The Wolves of Wildwood Hall*. They decorated the house with foliage and the sound of wolves resounded throughout the rooms. One room was entirely covered in plants, which made me think of my painting *All Fallows* come to life.

K: Where are some other favorite places you've spent time in—ones that left an impression on your mind's eye and perhaps even managed to weave their way into the atmosphere of your art?

NKK: We visit France every year to see my folks, and I've always loved the art and landscape there, so French trees pop into paintings. Places I've been have become scenes and settings for characters. Whenever we're en route to somewhere in the U.K., we try to stop somewhere new, and that often becomes a painting. Last year we went to the Peak District, which was beautiful, and places we found there grew into ideas. *Verdure* was a Norfolk holiday memory of me and my eldest rowing a boat across a lake. This year we're going to Cornwall and the Lake District for the first time, so I'm looking forward to seeing what ideas they bring.

K: The women in your work often have quite a pensive feel about them—as if they're somehow lost to the world at large yet belong perfectly within their own painted realms. Do you feel as if your work delves into places that are inspired by yet disconnected from the modern world?

NKK: I do think so, yes. Those figures have stepped away to a place where they can be with their thoughts undisturbed in another place and time, able to roam and play. When I think about the world in *Fallowmoor*, I see it as this area of countryside with grand old houses and secret gardens, a place that has been forgotten and somehow protected itself from the world.

K: Your paintings provide such a feeling of refuge. Do you also enjoy decorating your own personal corner of the world at home with a more romantically eccentric feel?

NKK: I do. My husband and I have the same love for old curios, and our house is filled with objects that appear in my paintings—dried hanging flowers, lots of candlesticks, and pictures everywhere. I would love to paint the stairs and create an old landscape mural on the wall of the bathroom with hidden creatures. I keep waiting till more time appears to start all these plans.

K: Are there any of your paintings in particular that you would most enjoy being able to walk into and explore, or simply get lost in for a while?

NKK: I would say *All Fallow*. I would love to step inside and join



the party for a while, chat amongst the dinner guests, sample their strange cuisine, then take a wander up to the house to explore. I imagine the festivities would go into the small hours—everyone running around the grounds in the moonlight.

K: There’s an air of quiet solitude in much of your art but also a sense of real abundance within that solitude—whether it be a crowd of fauna familiars or lushly overgrown flora. Do you personally find a sense of luxury in time spent alone, or in those moments spent alone amongst the natural world?

NKK: I do treasure those moments I find myself alone, because usually I’m surrounded by the kids. When I get to sneak off to the attic for even a small amount of time with a book or go for a walk by myself, it feels so precious and, yes, like a luxury. Last year I had a swim in the sea at the end of the summer when everyone else had gotten out. I stayed for a while just enjoying the moment immensely, bobbing along the sea.

K: The subjects of your paintings often have closely integrated relationships with the wild animals surrounding them. Do you ever imagine they might have a dialogue with one another somehow, or share a deeper understanding?

NKK: I think they make good company for each other, that the people and animals can converse perhaps more in gestures than words, and feel contented around each other. They feel safe and secure in the fact that they belong to the same world.

K: What are some ways you believe humanity and the rest of the natural world can co-exist in a more benevolent, sustainable, and connected way?

NKK: We need to be aware at every age of how important it is to help, and to see that we are a part of the natural world. We must not see it as something separate. Teaching children from a young age to look after it, see the magic in it—we try to take our kids out to the countryside every weekend, and they have such a love for it. I hope that when they are older they will continue to see the importance of caring for nature.



View more of Nom Kinnear King’s work at nomkinnearking.com.



Kambriel’s fantastical array of couture and curios can be found at kambriel.com and etsy.com/shop/kambriel.

