

Artist Francoise Nielly is a portrait painter who uses a knife instead of a paint brush. Francoise Nielly's artworks are vibrant, vivid and striking portraits of very famous people. Even though Nielly's technique is to use a knife to make her paintings, the faces are still very intricate and detailed.

Who is Francoise Nielly?

Francoise Nielly is a French artist who was born in Marseille in 1960. Her father was an architect so she has been drawing since she was a child and her artworks can sell for over £10,000! She often paints faces of celebrities and some of her favourite artists are Jean-Michel Basquiat, Hans Hartung, Giovanni Boldini, Lucian Freud, Paul Klee, Willem de Kooning, Philippe Pasqua, Jenny Saville, Damien Hirst and Maurizio Cattelan.

How does Francoise Nielly paint?

Francoise Nielly uses a palette knife to paint her portraits with. This technique means the famous faces have a range of textures and marks on them, almost looking like parts have been cut away to reveal other colours below.

When you look at Francoise Nielly's portrait paintings, the first thing we see is the vibrant use of colour. We also notice the composition, or layout, of her paintings; the faces Nielly paints are a huge scale (size) and the artist often uses a close-up angle to paint from. The large, colourful and confident use of her palette knife make her paintings very dynamic, energetic and active.

How would you describe the marks you can see on Francoise Nielly's paintings? Do you think she uses fast, quick motions with her knife or works slowly? Why? Can you see where the edge of the palette knife has been put on the canvas? Why do you think Francoise Nielly uses such bright and bold colours in her paintings of famous celebrities?

In her paintings, Francoise Nielly builds her portraits with layers and layers of oil paint (a bit like building a cake!) As you look closer, you can start to see how all of the layers of paint have been slashed and scraped, allowing the colours below to show through. In her paintings of famous faces, Nielly makes use of contrasting (complementary) colours. When colours opposite each other on the colour wheel are placed next to each other, the brightness intensifies and makes a strong contrast. Neilly uses fluorescent paints which glow in the dark, as well as using oil paints also helps to achieve a rich, intense finish.

Have a look at the portrait painting above, Neilly has made use of both warm and cool colours to enhance the highlights and shadows of the face. This means the facial features have an element of realism, even though her painting is expressive. As well as using cool colours for shadows, and warm colours for highlights, Neilly mixes a range of tones. This means her 'dark' areas on the faces are usually just as colourful as the light parts - clever!

What do you think of Francois Nielly's artwork? How could you describe it? Complete your own version of her work or copy a piece carefully.



Untitled 648. Oil on canvas

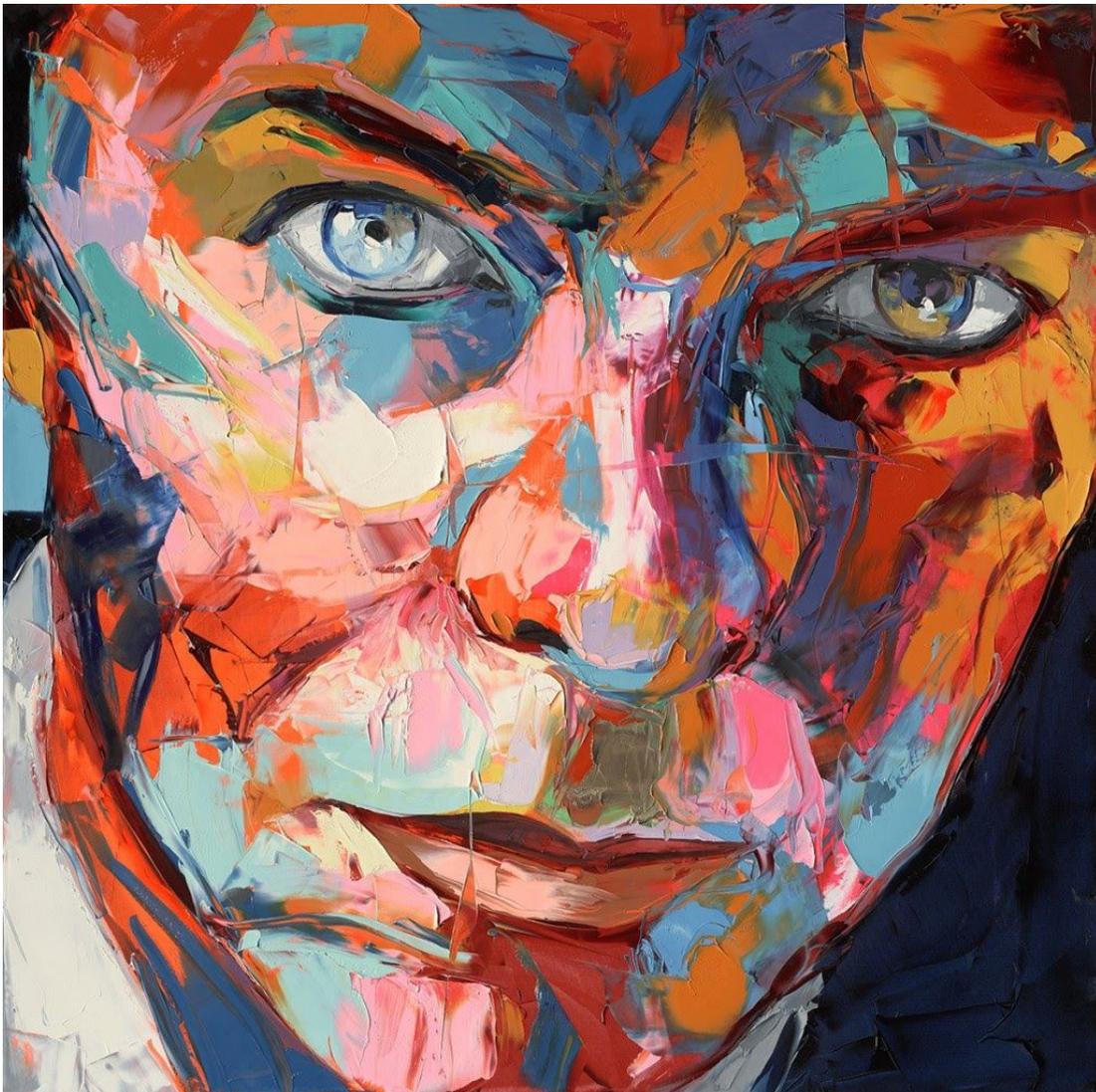


Untitled 741. Oil on canvas



Untitled 938. Oil on canvas





David Bowie. Oil on canvas.



Solène. Oil on canvas.



Solène [detail]. Oil on canvas.

