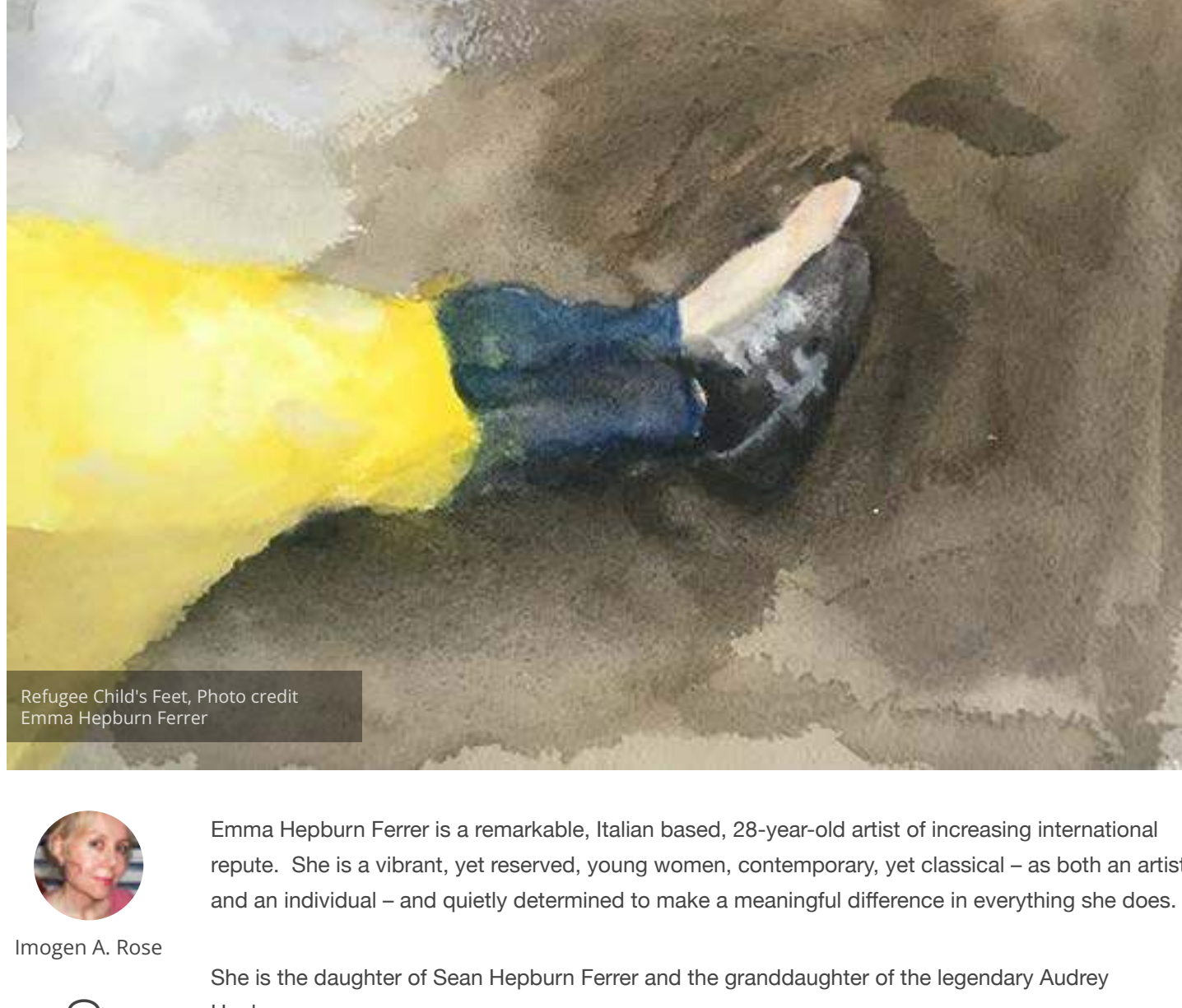


# Emma Hepburn Ferrer, the hand of the Artist upon time, space and destiny!

3 days ago Imogen A. Rose 10 Min Read



Refugee Child's Feet, Photo credit Emma Hepburn Ferrer



Imogen A. Rose



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Emma Hepburn Ferrer is a remarkable, Italian based, 28-year-old artist of increasing international repute. She is a vibrant, yet reserved, young woman, contemporary, yet classical – as both an artist and an individual – and quietly determined to make a meaningful difference in everything she does.

She is the daughter of Sean Hepburn Ferrer and the granddaughter of the legendary Audrey Hepburn.

Familial heritage, in vastly varying ways, influences the lives of all. For some, it is a source of light, a constant warmth that comforts, creates and inspires, whilst for others it is a debilitating darkness that clouds perception. The power and relevance of this import can be as great for the sons and daughters of Kings and Queens as it is for the descendants of more humble origins for it is arguably one's *perception*, one's vision, that frames one's view and ultimately, either contracts, or expands, the panorama.

Emma is an extraordinary example of an individual for whom familial legacy has particular pertinence. She is also a beautiful realization of how the life of a grandparent can create, challenge and ultimately bind a boundless bond – even through memory alone – that forever shapes life and growth in extraordinary and wonderful ways.

Her heritage has made it both "harder" and "easier" to discover her identity. She says the constant "comparisons" to her grandmother have reinforced a "non-negotiable" need "to be seen as my own person".

***There is an authenticity about Emma – as a person and a professional. She is deeply reflective about life and humanity. Her ability to create art is an extension of her ability to understand life and a desire to communicate truth and meaning through this means.***

As a consequence, her art demonstrates a convergence of intellect and emotion. There is a maturity and a depth to the pieces. There is also a darkness, even a searching sorrow. The sense of human pain pervades many of her paintings. Indeed, even within her use of the lighter shades of the palette, darkness juxtaposes and somehow threatens the depiction of light and beauty. One is reminded of the fragility and uncertainty of life.

Emma says, "To me my work isn't interesting if it's not dark. Something that's just beautiful, is not interesting to me". She relates to motifs of an "unsettledness and disquiet" and says that it is perhaps "a way for me to process my own feelings".



After the Party is Over (Still Life with Roses and Biscuits) - Photo credit Emma Hepburn Ferrer

There may be a somber tone to much of her work but there is an unmistakable brightness to Emma herself. By her own admission, she is intensely curious, eager to learn as much as possible about the world and the people in it.

She lives within the serene foothills of Tuscany

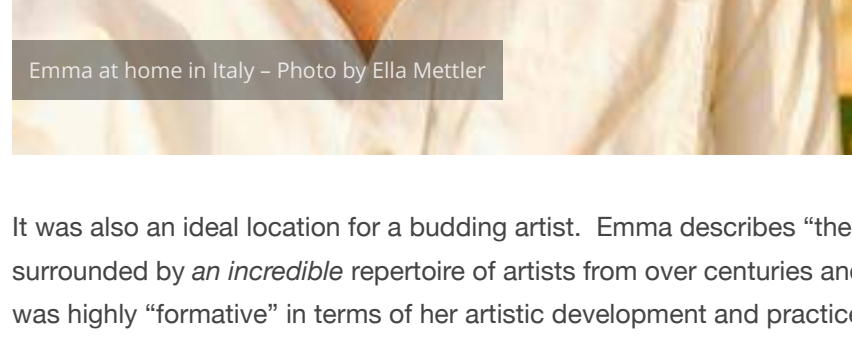
where she is close to family and maintains a broad range of pursuits. Interestingly, despite her clear affinity and affection for Italy, a place that feels "most like home", Emma maintains that "not feeling like I pertain to a specific place is more part of my identity, something that I feel defines me more, in how I present myself to the world and how I feel inside". She believes this extends from having lived and worked in so many different countries.

One wonders if perhaps this sense of the ephemeral contributes to the transient nature of much of her work where beauty, freedom, indeed life, seem constantly under the veil of the shadows of sorrow and night.

Emma has provided one-on-one artistic therapy and guidance to children from low-income families and traumatic backgrounds. It's something with which she initially became involved as a child through the influence of her father. She remembers helping Sean on various projects, including assisting the Californian, Hollygrove Foundation. She subsequently worked at a Refugee Camp in Greece as part of her first mission trip with the UNHCR in 2016. Such experiences enabled her to gain first-hand insight into the powerful and healing benefits of art, particularly the wonderful sense of freedom art can provide to people in physical, emotional, psychological and/or spiritual confines. She continues to collaborate with her father and work on projects that focus on utilising art therapy in helping traumatized communities.

She has also provided counselling to women prisoners at New York's Rikers Island. The theme of freedom recurs in her life and is something she connects with personally and professionally. She says, "I'm interested in spaces where people can act with a freedom that they can't otherwise".

Emma knows the oppressive and debilitating impact of an unhealthy environment. As a child she attended school in Los Angeles where the prevalence of bullying, cliques and superficial preoccupations created what she describes as a "toxic" environment. Within this atmosphere, she was unhappy, struggling with her school work and felt a sense of betrayal by some of her peers.



Emma at home in Italy - Photo by Ella Mettler

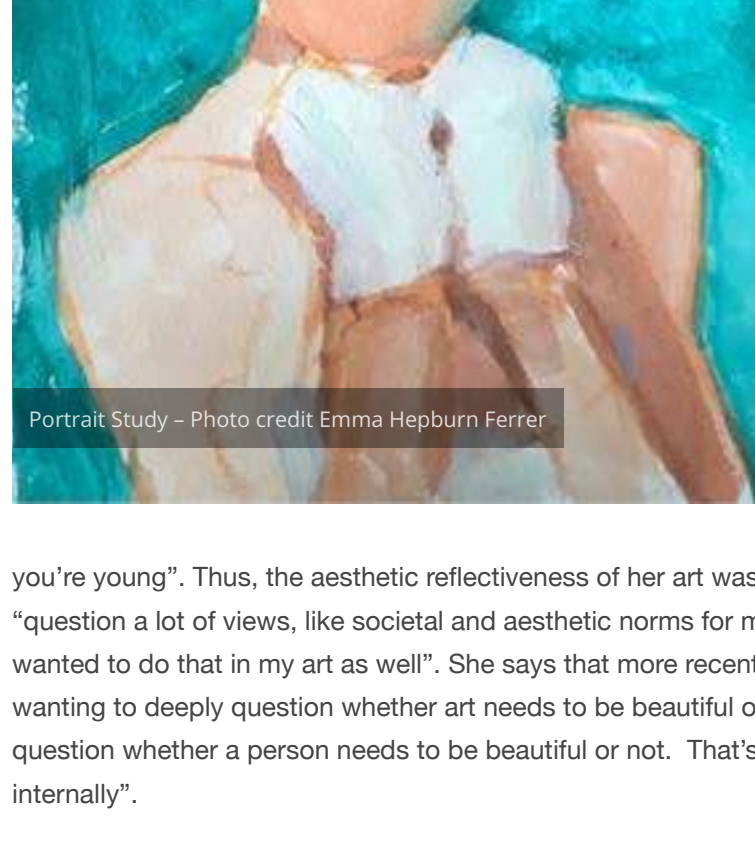
When the opportunity came to live in Italy, it was like experiencing her very own renaissance. She explains, "All of a sudden I was in this school and there were no cliques". She describes the ability to finally be herself as "the most incredible thing ever". This sense of liberation was coupled with the magic of Florence, of "being in such a beautiful place". She flourished and felt like she had arrived "home".

It was also an ideal location for a budding artist. Emma describes "the privilege of growing up surrounded by an *incredible* repertoire of artists from over centuries and centuries", something that was highly "formative" in terms of her artistic development and practice.

Her decision to attend the Florence Academy of Art in 2012 as one of the youngest students accepted into the Academy at the time, was largely due to what she believed was a "lack of technical know-how in training and control". She describes it as the "best and worst thing I could have done as an artist". She recognizes the exceptional technical expertise she acquired through this institution. However, she believes the School was also "very closed in its own idea of beauty and its own idea of art". It stifled her sense of individual creativity to the extent that whilst she felt technically confident, she was unsure of who she was "as an artist" and "what I wanted to be doing with my art". Her artistic self-awareness is something she believes has only really transpired over the last year or so.

This joking of a contemporary mind and traditional expertise is also reflective of Emma in other ways.

Her work challenges and questions conventional notions and depictions of beauty and indeed, its origins. It's an approach heavily influenced by her own unusual circumstances, heritage and environment. She recognizes that being the granddaughter of Audrey Hepburn – whilst providing abundant blessings – also meant that the astonishing scale of the iconic status of Audrey Hepburn and in particular, its concomitant association with beauty and elegance, placed a heavy weight upon a female heir to such an image. She says that as a consequence, "I have questioned deeply what beauty is just because I've always had this sort of feeling, especially when I was younger, of how do I fit into this, the magnitude of what came before me".



Portrait Study - Photo credit Emma Hepburn Ferrer

It may be difficult for many to appreciate the degree of the impact of such a reality upon the emotional, physical and psychological development of a child, especially a female child.

Emma has long endured what can only be described as non-sensical physical comparisons to her grandmother. It's a peculiar, even ludicrous thought. Indeed, how many people in everyday life are frequently analysed, scrutinized, examined and compared for their supposed physiognomic and bodily likenesses, or perceived lack thereof, to a particular grandparent! Moreover, despite the necessarily subjective nature of such comparisons, it hardly seems rational or logical.

Emma says "things like that can really get in your head when

you're young". Thus, the aesthetic reflectiveness of her art was in many ways a need to "question a lot of views, like societal and aesthetic norms for myself, and I think as a result, I've wanted to do that in my art as well". She says that more recently she has "connected to the idea of wanting to deeply question whether art needs to be beautiful or not" in the same way that "I want to question whether a person needs to be beautiful or not. That's really something that I've done a lot internally".

It's this ability to marry reason and emotion that really distinguishes Emma's body of work and reveals a gifted artist with an exciting, fresh and originative future. Her focus upon the role and interplay of subject and context poses many questions about the extent to which individuals are indeed governed by environment. For instance, how much does reality, or one's perception of such, influence the development, the growth, the health and the *beauty* of an individual? Similarly, how do these factors inhibit, stunt or thwart the physical and intellectual state of an individual? Emma has used art to explore the power of familial and societal environments to influence the shape, health and mood of the human form. In doing so, her art invites the viewer into a world of thought and wonder and into a place of questioning and searching.



And the Tops of the Cypress Trees Seemed to Answer Him - Photo credit Emma Hepburn Ferrer

Emma glows when she

discusses her grandmother, as a grandmother.

Within any family there are generally varying likenesses to be found between generations. Emma shares many resemblances to her paternal grandmother, as no doubt she does to her maternal grandmother. Particularly striking, however, are the similarities that exist at a deeper and more meaningful level. Indeed, Emma presents the

same dignity, intellect, compassion, humility and humour that Audrey Hepburn epitomized. Significantly, these are also some of the many qualities held by her father Sean Hepburn Ferrer. Sean is Audrey's older son from her first marriage to the actor and director Mel Ferrer. He shared a rare, close and beautiful bond with his mother and has dedicated much of his adult life to honouring and celebrating the extraordinary humanitarian legacy, light and joy of Audrey Hepburn. It's a legacy that continues to make a real and often life-changing difference in the world for many, particularly to the lives of those in most need.

Indeed, it's a legacy that highlights one of the most memorable qualities of Audrey Hepburn which was the rare *goodness* she radiated. One finds this same spirit in both Sean and Emma. Thus, the dedication to her grandmother's legacy is a natural part of her life – something she has always known and honours with genuine commitment and contribution.

Emma has the passion and purpose of an artist who understands the creative power of the canvas. She knows too that the hand of destiny is ultimately unknown. The light of her grandmother is a two-fold source of strength within her life. It will always be a part of her public life. However, the memory of love and joy that exists between generations – even without physically meeting – is a precious and pure bond that can only be felt by those involved. Emma has the grace and presence to approach the many facets of her life with understanding and sincerity. Here is a dynamic artist defying expectation and defining her own compelling name in the process!

To view Emma's impressive portfolio visit: [www.emmaferrer.com](http://www.emmaferrer.com)

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