

Andy Murray meets his match in Maggi Hambling as he dabbles with art

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Andy Murray

Tennis

Wimbledon



Sir Andy Murray at the unveiling of his portrait by Maggi Hambling yesterday
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Sir Andy Murray may not be the first person to think he could paint like Jackson Pollock. Nor the first whose partner has hit the roof after finding, well, paint all over it.

Murray has revealed how his “dabbling” in painting came to a swift end after his attempts at replicating Pollock’s “splashing” style resulted in “paint on the ceiling, all over the floors . . . and horrendous paintings”.



Hambling made Murray pose for preliminary sketches in charcoal
PA

“It was horrific,” [the double Wimbledon champion](#) and Olympic gold medallist said. “One of my friends really liked Jackson Pollock and I thought ‘oh I can do that’. I was in the house by myself and my wife came back from dinner and there was paint everywhere. She was like ‘what the hell have you done’.

“I realised very very quickly that this was something I should try and understand and appreciate a bit more.”

So Murray, 32, who was recuperating from injury at the time, decided to learn about art which led to a perhaps unlikely friendship with the chain-smoking painter and sculptor Maggi Hambling as well as a burgeoning art collection including seven of her works.

An art collecting friend of Murray's knew that Hambling liked tennis and after being put in touch the two bonded so much that Murray visited her studio in Suffolk last September where — with Wimbledon whites on — he allowed Hambling to put him into “impossible poses” for preparatory charcoal drawings.

“It was a physical morning which I wasn't expecting when I arrived there,” Murray said yesterday as the finished portrait was unveiled at the National Portrait Gallery. “I thought I would be sitting in something like this [chair] but I was posing in these positions for what felt like quite a long time. But it was fun.”

Murray has taken advantage of his access to Hambling to, in her words, “pepper me with good questions” about art practice.

After the pair had joked and winked at each other during the unveiling of the portrait, which will be on display until May 3, Hambling confessed her adoration for the tennis player she described as “God”.

“I have been a great fan of Andy's for ever really. When I was a child Americans always won Wimbledon, always won everything. What I admired about Andy is that he is his own person. He is no corny idea of a tennis player because of he feels about things.

“The first time you came to my studio,” she told Murray. “I was really impressed with the way you naturally looked at paintings. Not many people go up very close and look at all the detail of the paintwork and then go back again.



His wife Kim Sears was unimpressed when he tried painting
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“I think tennis is very close to painting. It is all hand and eye but mostly heart. Because you have to be completely obsessed. Andy is obviously a complete lunatic giving his life to tennis just as I am giving my life to art.”

Murray agreed there were crossovers: “When you start to overthink things it doesn't work. It is the same in sport; when you start overthinking that is when mistakes and problems start.”

So perhaps that is what went wrong when the tennis player tried to replicate the abstract expressionism of Pollock in a studio his wife and amateur artist [Kim Sears](#), set up in the family

home.

“I tried a little bit and realised how difficult it was,” he said, adding that the current whereabouts of his “artworks” was unknown.

“I'm not sure if she has thrown them out or not. They were in her studio in the house for six to eight months. They were horrendous though. They were really really bad.”

There is perhaps hope yet though, with further tuition from Hambling, to whom he has given a tennis racket.

“It is too heavy,” Hambling complained of the racket. “I have very tiny hands and I am an appalling amateur tennis player on Sunday mornings compared with God.

“But possibly my paintings are better than his,” she added.

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