



100 great faces of Liverpool

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Artist's 800th birthday tribute to the city

by Jessica Shaughnessy, Liverpool Daily Post

ONE nurtured his love of the arts and another saved his eyesight. They are among 100 people who have touched artist Tony Brown's life and have influenced his most ambitious project yet.

It's called 100 Heads Thinking As One, an exhibition celebrating Liverpool life, and will be launched next year to mark the city's 800th birthday.

Scores of portraits of people chosen for their individual strength and spirit will tour the most famous venues in Merseyside, including St George's Hall, the Metropolitan Cathedral and the Walker Art Gallery.

Some had a major impact on his life, like his wife Lorraine and four children, while others just crossed his path, but Mr Brown says each one is inspirational.

The 45-year-old from Wirral said: "My family suffered two bereavements and it inspired me to start a project which included those that were important to me.

"This was an ideal way to depict Liverpool people here and now that have made a contribution.

"It was also a great opportunity to thank people that in some way or other have made a difference."

Mr Brown has already painted 65 portraits, but needs to get the remaining 35 done by the New Year.

Among those already completed are actor and musician Andrew Schofield, Loyd Grossman and Mike McCartney.



He has also painted the Cains brothers, Ajmail and Sudarghara Dusanj, the men behind the renaissance of Liverpool's most successful brewery.

But perhaps the most poignant of all the portraits are the ones of surgeon Wai McWatt and teacher John Badger.

Dr McWatt performed an operation on Mr Brown after he lost the sight in one eye, preventing him from losing the other.

And Mr Badger, who now teaches Mr Brown's 11-year-old daughter Emily at Sir John Plessington School in Bebington, was the first person to actively encourage his artistic abilities.

Mr Brown said: "Wai is fantastic, she is a brilliant friend of mine. All I ever wanted to do was play music or paint and she made it possible for me to continue to do that.

"The same goes for John Badger. When I was at school, art was not encouraged.

"People were told to become plumbers or nurses, but he never did that."

Each picture tells the story of the subject's life.

The portraits are painted on a background of photographs, newspaper cuttings and images depicting everything that is important to them. Mr Brown said: "There are photographs of the subjects' children; their parents and loved ones. The exhibition really tells the story of 2,000 people."

One of the first portraits Mr Brown completed was of his friend David Charters, a Liverpool Daily Post journalist. Mr Charters said last night: "I was absolutely delighted and honoured to be chosen as one of Tony's subjects."

Running alongside the exhibition will be 9ft by 5ft canvases, featuring the faces of great Merseysiders past and present.

Portraits of the Beatles will go on show to coincide with next year's International Beatle Week.

Parts or all of the works will go on show at a variety of locations throughout the year, including the National Conservation Centre, the Maritime Museum and the Lady Lever Gallery.

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