

# Heroes: Hunter & Walford

Mother and daughter duo Anna Hunter and Laura Walford not only make a success of Belgravia Gallery but also raise millions for charity, discovers **Mary Gilleece**

There are so many stories to tell about Anna Hunter, Laura Walford and the Belgravia Gallery I'm unsure where to begin. How about Anna's global expertise in the art created by members of the royal family? Or how Laura sold 70 pieces on her first day at the gallery and later took naps among the Rembrandt etchings when she was pregnant and how her son took his first wobbly steps on the first floor past the pop art? Or how both women dined with Nelson Mandela on Robben Island, or the thousands raised for the Sebastian Hunter Memorial Trust to build schools in India? So much activity for one gallery: but then these are no two ordinary women.

"I was motivated by poverty to begin my first gallery," explains Hunter frankly, "I was a single mother and needed some money." She began by selling limited edition, lithographs of Royal Academician's work and in 1989 approached Prince Charles. "I

suggested that his watercolours made into handmade lithographs, signed by him could raise substantial funds for his charity. To date they have raised up to £5 million." She subsequently researched where the talent originated and saw a strong precedent in the Hanoverian line with both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert being convincing watercolourists. "Through the Prince Charles work, we were put in touch with Nelson Mandela 10 years ago and began a similar project. We took some of our clients for an incredibly moving dinner with him on Robben Island where he signed 400 works."

Belgravia Gallery opened on Ebury Street before moving to Albemarle Street in 2004, where the involvement of Laura has guaranteed a satisfying mix of artists. As Hunter explains, "We have our own specialities," with Walford bringing more contemporary and pop artists into the fold. "It was all very unplanned and



above:  
Laura Walford and Anna Hunter from Belgravia Gallery

unexpected," explains Laura. "I was 21 and had just finished my degree at Birmingham University and was about to begin a job. My brother suddenly died and everything stopped. As it happened one of my mother's colleagues had left the gallery and my mother needed someone to help and I agreed to start. We had a frank discussion that no family business would be aired at work and following a piece in a Scottish newspaper about Prince Charles' work I sold 70 pieces on my first day." From there she hasn't stopped. The Sebastian Hunter Memorial Trust was established and a wide range of fundraising activities ensure that hundreds of Indian children have been educated in its many primary school and one senior school. "It is heartbreaking," says Hunter, "We don't do enough." Somehow one suspects that's not true. ■

*Belgravia Gallery, 45 Albemarle Street,  
London, W1S 4JL, 020 7495 1010,  
[www.belgraviagallery.com](http://www.belgraviagallery.com)*



## BELGRAVIA GALLERY

Belgravia Gallery has a unique racking system where all its stock is available for browsing at leisure. Rembrandt etchings keep company with Jan Coutts, John Pasche and Richard Symonds for example. Lorraine Anderson-Sampson on the front desk helps ensure that the gallery not only runs smoothly but has a "homely environment".