Former PR guru opens exhibition at city's Victorian Quarter

LAUNCH: Arist Tess Barnes, *left*, with Lynne Franks at the exhibition in the Victoria Quarter, Leeds,

Art tribute to 50 famous women

BY CHARLES HESLETT

AT her peak she was one of the most powerful figures in English PR.

She was also rumoured to be the inspiration for one of the characters in Jennifer Saunders's hit comedy *Absolutely Fabulous*.

But former PR guru and TV personality Lynne Franks showed her caring side in Leeds on Tuesday when she unveiled 50 paintings of the country's most successful women in the city's Victoria Quarter shopping centre.

Ms Franks, who recently appeared in ITV's *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!* show, met artist Tess Barnes who created all the works for the 'first direct 50 Women of Substance' exhibition.

The show runs until Saturday, March 15, and aims to inspire the females of the future and highlight the fact that woman are still struggling to break into the professions.

Tess Barnes picked her subjects for their outstanding contributions to society, arts, literature and the sciences.

Support

They include some of Britain's most recognisable personalities including Yorkshire-born actress Maureen Lipman and *Countdown's* Carol Vorderman.

Cook Sophie Grigson, athlete Tanni Grey Thompson, singer Beverley Knight and former leader of the House of Lords, Baroness Valerie Amos are also in the show.

The exhibition will also support the charity Breast Cancer Haven who need to raise £2.2m to open a centre in Leeds later this year.

Sara Davenport, Founder of Breast Cancer Haven, said: "50 Women of Substance is an inspirational exhibition and we are thrilled that Breast Cancer Haven has been chosen as the benefiting charity.

"We need £2.2m to open a Haven in Leeds. The centre will provide free support, information and complementary therapies to anyone affected by breast cancer in Yorkshire."

Ms Barnes painted the 50 works to coincide with the fact that she turns 50 this year and the show also falls during International Women's Week which ends on Saturday.

Mark Mullen, first direct's head of marketing, said: "This is the first major sponsorship we have undertaken in our 18-year history and we are very excited to be supporting Tess and her celebration of these great women of achievement.

"Not only does it provide incredibly important support to cancer sufferers but this year the charity will also open the doors of its new centre in our home city, Leeds, bringing vital care to women with breast cancer in Yorkshire."

Tess Barnes studied at the Chelsea College of Art and Goldsmith College and has exhibited widely both in the UK and Europe, including the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal College of Art, Mall Galleries and France.

Opening times are: 7.30pm to 9pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday; 7.30pm to 10pm Thursday, Friday, Saturday; and 10am to 6pm on Sunday.

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