



NEWSLETTER February 2012

Editor's Note

Your new Programme/Membership Card is included with this first newsletter of 2012. Details of the new committee are on the back of the card. Please give them your support as they work on your behalf to keep the spirit of the Society strong.

You will see that, along with the regular events such as the Surrey Heath Show at the early May Bank Holiday, and the Exhibition in July, the committee has devised an interesting programme of demonstrations. There is another painting day on 19 May at Annalisa Brett's lovely garden at Mayfield, Finchampstead to look forward to. And in October, Graham Scandrett is presenting another of his very popular workshops, the subject to be revealed nearer the time.

I hope it will be a successful year artistically (and otherwise) for you. [Brian Richardson]

Reviews

As usual the reviews are based on Sam Dauncey's brilliant reports for the website unless otherwise attributed. Any errors are the editor's.

Fine Art Paper Making by Jim Patterson of Two Rivers Paper, 25 November 2011

This evening proved to be very memorable.

Jim has been working his water and solar-powered paper mill near Watchett in Somerset for years (see his website: www.tworiverspaper.co.uk). It is a working mill more than a museum but visitors are welcome (you are advised to phone first).

If it is a museum experience you want, Jim is also heavily involved in developing the The Paper Trail's Frogmore Paper Mill & Visitor Centre at the [Apsley centre](#) outside Hemel Hempstead (near the junctions of the M25, M1 and A41).

The evening was in three parts:

- 1 - A demonstration of making paper by hand
- 2 - A short DVD illustrating the process.
- 3 - Some discussion of different types of paper.

Jim had brought basic paper-making 'kit' with him, too:

- a plastic tub;
- a bag of soggy pink paper pulp;
- a mould (or screen), which carried lettering etc. for a watermark;
- a deckle (a frame which fits the mould like a picture frame fits a canvas) and
- some pieces of felt or woollen blanket.

He also had some sample paintings and a few pads and loose sheets for sale. Although you couldn't have asked for a softer sell, people were certainly busy buying them in the interval and afterwards.

Paper is made from plant fibre, normally from waste cotton or linen cloth, beaten with water until it is a uniform textured pulp. If you use animal fibre you get a felt, which has nothing like the texture of paper

because it lacks cellulose.

The magic of cellulose is that when it is beaten the fibres stick to each other and continue to do so as long as 2% or 3% water remains (completely desiccated paper falls to bits). This paper can be pressed until it has a smooth surface, suitable for writing or painting.

This discovery is lost in the mists of time. The Chinese were using it over 2000 years ago and by a couple of hundred years AD a mandarin realised that it was enough of a challenge to silk to seize for himself a monopoly of paper-making.

The slurry in the tub is about 99% water: less water makes thicker paper. Size (a subject of its own) stops the paper from being too absorbent.

A frame ("deckle") is put round the screen ("mould") and the pair held together horizontal, agitated in the slurry and then lifted out, still horizontal, allowing water to drain through the mesh. When it has stopped dripping the screen can be turned over ("couched") onto a woollen (or felt) blanket which gives the characteristic texture. A pile of such couched sheets is then squeezed until only about 50% water is left. It can then be dried.

Frogmore was the first (1803) UK mill for machine-made paper. The continuous process had the disadvantage of aligning the fibres - resulting in a paper that cockles if it gets wet.

A cylinder mould mimics hand-manufacture by lifting the sheet slowly out of the slurry as the mould turns. This makes the fibres more random but it has to run slowly, the slower the better, increasing cost but being necessary for watercolour paper. Quality costs!

Jim gave us more fascinating details about the history of sizing and surface treatments than I could possibly include in a write-up like this.

These details were all woven into his description of how the watercolour paper maker has to consider texture, colour, and absorbency:

- Heavy paper is inherently more textured
- Pure cellulose stays white
- Linen bleaches with age, cotton yellows
- Permanent pigments (developed by the motor industry) can be added. Dyes are less permanent (cheaper).
- You can add titanium dioxide (white) but the eye is very forgiving, interpreting a coloured background as a warm or cold white.

Jim told us so much that I've not really been able to do him justice.

I must visit the mill at Watchett or Apsley when I am next in either of those areas.

He was suffering from a nasty cold and faced a long drive home, but he hid it very well and kept us all very interested. Thank you, Jim,

Christmas Party, 16 December

On an evening of balmy weather (compared to last year's icy conditions!), a festive crowd of members gathered in the studio for a fun filled evening. A variety of delicious food provided by the participants ensured something for all tastes and a table quiz kept brains working flat-out. The Van Dyck team won the quiz. The raffle raised £74 which was donated to the NSPCC. (Brian Richardson)

Critique, 20 January 2012

This was a most enjoyable evening. Over 30 members were there, many of whom had brought examples

of finished and unfinished work for us to study. Brian Richardson and John Stacey did a great job of putting the paintings up on the easel and we all got useful feedback on how our work might be improved.

Gallery Visits

On Saturday 28 January I naively thought I would visit, without pre-booking, the David Hockney exhibition, "A Bigger Picture", which is at the Royal Academy until 19 April. As a precaution, I did look at the RA website for an indication of the likelihood of queues and found that it had crashed. A phone call to the RA was answered by a recorded message that they "were experiencing a high volume of calls" and to call back later. This did not bode well for the chance of easy access to the exhibition so I changed plan and went to Chichester instead for the "Edward Burra" exhibition at the Pallant House Gallery. A recent TV programme had looked at the life of this fascinating 20th century painter (b.1905 d.1976) and I had been struck by the amazing large scale watercolours he had painted in spite of having hands badly crippled by rheumatoid arthritis. His physical frailty also meant that he favoured watercolour because he could sit and paint on a horizontal surface where standing at an easel painting in oils would have caused him a lot of pain. The density of colour that he achieved, which was quite unlike the transparency one associates with the medium, seems to have been due to his use of body colour.

Serendipitously, when I arrived home I had an email from a friend who had two tickets for the David Hockney exhibition and inviting me along. I thought it was one of the most enjoyable exhibitions I had seen and I can't recommend it too highly. Hockney's use of any technology that will enable him to achieve his vision is well illustrated. His latest passion is "painting" on an iPad using a "Brushes" app. One large room at the RA exhibition has 51 prints of his iPad paintings covering three walls. The prints are 144.1 by 108 cm. On the fourth wall of this room is a single very large painting comprising 32 canvases each 91.4 by 121.9 cm. The total of 52 images form a wonderfully unified concept called "The Arrival of Spring in Woldgate".

He has given a great deal of thought to photography in relation to painting and makes the point that photographing a landscape with a single exposure, depicts the scene from a unique point of view and at a specific moment, whereas a painter's eye wanders over the scene, with different vanishing points wherever the eye rests, and encompasses a passage of time. His multiple exposure pictures ("joiners") are an attempt to realise this aspect of an artist's painting through photography.

David Hockney really is one of the most thoughtful and thought provoking artists of today.

On the back page of this newsletter is a reproduction of one of Hockney's simpler iPad drawings. If you look at the website: www.thamesandhudson.com and click on the link to Hockney drawing animation you will see the process by which he did it. Fascinating. [Brian Richardson]

The next newsletter will be issued in June along with the documents for the Exhibition. Any contributions, preferably on an art-related theme, should be submitted to:

Brian Richardson, 6 Spring Woods, Sandhurst, Berks, GU47 8PX,
or by email to: bricha3691@aol.com.

Your views on any exhibitions you visit would be especially welcome.



Untitled, 20 November 2010, No. 2, iPad drawing