



NEWSLETTER February 2015

[Editor: Brian Richardson]

Editor's Notes

By the time you read this the AGM will be in the past and a new committee will have been elected to run the Society's business. See the back of your new membership/programme cards issued with this newsletter to see the composition of the new committee. Carole Head has agreed to be Chairman thus filling a gap which was for a long time ably covered by Tom Moss in his capacity as Vice-chairman. Continuity is assured by Jenny Colquhoun remaining as Treasurer and John Stacey as Membership Secretary. We still lack a Secretary and, until one is appointed, the committee are sharing those duties.

Museum Exhibition

From 7th November to 23rd December, Camberley Museum generously hosted a second exhibition of Society members' paintings in what will hopefully be an annual event. A total of seven paintings was sold. The winning painting in the section on the theme of "40 Years of Surrey Heath" was "Camberley Winter 2014" by Tom Moss. Anna-Lisa Brett's "Heathland" won the Art Critic's Choice first prize and "River Anton" by Brian Richardson won the second prize.

Pastel Demonstration by Sue Ford, 2nd December

(Write up based on Sam Dauncey's report which can be seen in full on the website)

Sue has boundless energy: driving all the way from her home near Middlesbrough to demonstrate for us on top of arranging holidays in the UK and abroad; running courses; exhibiting her work, accepting commissions and presumably doing the odd bit of other painting too! Have a look at her website:

www.sueford.co.uk

Tonight Sue had chosen to work from a photo of a flamboyant Carnival dancer, so she used black "Colourfix" pastel paper by Art Spectrum, her favourite brand.



Colourfix is better than wet-and-dry sandpaper and comes in nice big sheets: 50cm x 70cm (nearly 20" x 28"), enough for one or two paintings. Art Spectrum also does a primer, which gives any paper or card a pastel-friendly surface, like the Colourfix papers, and in a similar range of colours.

Although pastels can be completely opaque, the colour of the paper will nearly always show through the pastel enough to affect the mood of the painting - hence tonight's black.

Pastel is very versatile: you can mix it with acrylic or (on smooth paper) with watercolour and it is particularly good for big paintings. For smaller ones, the much harder pastel pencils are recommended. Sue was using Unison soft pastels tonight.

She rattled through the usual guidelines for heads and how they are affected if they are not looking straight at you. But she immediately went straight into drawing, starting with the nose.

There were very few overt construction lines but Sue did, of course, repeatedly check that the features were all in the right relative positions: angles of nose and mouth, from mouth to ear-lobe and mouth to eye; distances between chin, lips, nose, eye and ear (correcting as needed).

Once she was happy with the basic outlines she started to block in patches of colour with the sides of the sticks: purple behind the shadowed dark skin and rough areas of strong bright colour.

The flat areas were done with the sides of broken pastel sticks (paper removed) which gave nice texture (as well as being quick).

Once she'd got the composition about right she started putting in more detail (still with the Unison sticks) and extending farther from the face itself.

Where the rough blocking-in had covered areas that needed to be black, touches of indigo did the job. She could extend areas of other colours, too, to cover existing flat areas. But, whenever Sue picked up a colour she made marks with it in several different places (to give cohesion).

She spent the final half-hour jumping around the picture making countless little marks. Where an edge was too sharp she tapped it with a finger or even blended it by rubbing gently across (she is not one who likes the effect of blending on any but the smallest areas - too much brightness is lost).

At the very end she quickly took colour out towards the sides of the paper and called it a day.

All evening Sue had been making helpful comments. Here are a few of them:

- a. The more expensive soft pastels (like Unison or Sennelier) are softer and richer than the cheaper ones, like Inscribe, although both are sold as "soft". But you need some of the less soft ones too: for linear marks and finer detail.
- b. Paint pastels with your paper vertical, so dust falls down into a little paper trough. This way dust does not rest on the surface (where it would have dulled all the colours), you don't have to blow it off (unhealthy) and it does not fall onto your carpet
- d. Once you've used a colour keep it with you in a separate container until you've finished
- e. Keep your pastels clean by tossing them around in some ground rice before putting them away in the box
- f. Use spray fixative only during a painting, where you want to make sure you don't pick up the original colour when you work over it. It dulls the finish if you use it at the end
- g. Glassine is good for protecting pastel paintings
- h. Clothes reflect their colour into skin tone.
- i. Don't do individual teeth - they'll look like tombstones



So ended a most interesting and informative evening. Comparison of the photo with the painting showed both impressive accuracy (colour and shape) and the way a painting (even a quick one produced in demo conditions) can look better than the original photo. Thank you very much, Sue.

Christmas Party, December 12th

This was another very successful event thanks to John Stacey and his small party of helpers who converted the studio into a cosy space for the party-goers and to Jenny Colquhoun whose enormous enthusiasm kept spirits high and whose ingenious quiz taxed their brains. As usual, food in great variety and quantity was provided and enjoyed by the attendees. The customary raffle raised £95 for the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice.
[Brian Richardson]

Critique, 17 January

Overseen by Brian Richardson and John Stacey, these are most enjoyable evenings. We admire and criticise each other's paintings, constructively, of course.

Members' attitudes vary: some are apprehensive; some can't wait for their turn to come up; some say nothing; some give nothing but praise; some are full of bright suggestions.

I've certainly got some useful pointers from these evenings:

Don't labour your work: spontaneous paintings are often best

Watercolour can be pale and ethereal if that's what you want, but thicker paint or very many glazes will give you much richer results

Careful attention to framing can make or mar a painting

You may find that some of your much earlier work can remind you, and others, of forgotten skills - worth bringing in.
[Sam Dauncey]

London Exhibitions 2015

I must admit that I get an enormous buzz out of going to an art exhibition. The Late Turner exhibition was indeed wonderful. To see so much of his work collected together at the Tate was very special and when I realised that all the delightful watercolours had been painted when he was in his sixties it gave me fresh hope and inspiration.

The Late Turner exhibition is over now but there is still time to go to A Victorian Obsession at Leighton House if you were interested. It continues until 29th March and I thought it was great. It will not appeal to everyone as it is full of very Victorian paintings of idealised female beauty inspired by Greco-Roman art and sculpture. Leighton House as a setting could not be more appropriate. It was the home and studio of Frederic Lord Leighton and it was designed to house and exhibit his collection of paintings. It is situated near Holland Park, a short walk from Kensington High Street tube station and the house itself is well worth a visit even if you cannot get to this particular exhibition.

I am now planning my next treat and I have discovered a website that recommends the Top Ten London Art Exhibitions to see in 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/victoria-sadler/london-art-exhibitions_b_6403740.html. The next one for my diary will be John Singer Sargent at the National Portrait Gallery from February 12 – May 25. Which would you chose?

[Carole Head]

Grayson Perry at The Royal Festival Hall, 16 September 2014

How many artists could fill the Festival Hall and hold the assembled audience spellbound for over an hour as did Grayson Perry on Tuesday, 16 September? Alone on a bare stage and in spite of being heavily made-up and wearing a blonde wig with two plaits and an outfit which looked as if he had raided a clown's laundry basket there was no doubting the seriousness of his message. It built on his extremely popular Reith Lectures for the BBC and with great good humour developed his theme of 'what is art and how do you know it when you see it'. It was a *tour de force*. On leaving the hall each ticket holder was given a copy of Grayson Perry's new book: 'Playing to the Gallery' which is a very good read.

[Brian Richardson]

Brush with Art Group

This is a small group of artists who meet at the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice on Monday afternoons from 1pm to 4.30pm to help, show (but not teach) and encourage out-patients in the Day Care Centre. The group is seeking additional volunteers to join them in this enjoyable and rewarding occupation. If you are interested please phone Jenny Reynolds on 01252 72183, Maureen Hayward on 01276 29246 or Hazel Steel on 01252 729431.

Any contributions for the newsletter, preferably on an art-related theme, should be submitted to:

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or by email to: bricha3691@aol.com.

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