

This year, our team discussed, edited and published the fourth issue of RGA Annual Review with an additional initiative to inspire and move RGA members to contribute more time, energy and effort to continue all RGA activities, to take part in organizing and promoting RGA events and to join RGA Council and help us to make Reading a cultural hub. Many RGA members took part in all sorts of activities and sent their articles and images to Ksenija for page make-up as usual, ready for printing and distribution, organised by John Pumfrey and David Cotton. We hope that you will enjoy our summary of the old year and will have fresh ideas for Reading Year of Culture 2016.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER 2015

This is my last outing on the Review front page and as it has become customary to have a portrait, the adjacent image is a self portrait in the style of Lichtenstein (made during an amusing workshop).

Now to a more serious matter: Reading Year of Culture 2016.

The visual arts, it seems, have for too long been treated less seriously than the performing arts by the powers-that-be in Reading. Pop and Rock, Football, Theatre and Heritage all are promoted and reported before Art. In spite of all the art activity in the studios and halls of our town the work itself is rarely headline news.



Although our profile has been raised by the last two shows at the University we have missed two of our annual opportunities for public involvement – The Big Draw and Summer Painting ... both occasions when RGA **can be seen in action by the public** (our activities in school classrooms and village halls are not exactly 'out there').

Our involvement in the Reading Year of Culture 2016 is an invitation to not only revive these two activities, but use the publicity machinery of the town's team (we will be in competition with those other 'cultural' events mentioned before). So please respond to my requests on page 5 and take seriously David Cotton's plea on promotion. We have so far received only one offer of leadership in painting in public. In past years dozens of members have stepped forward to participate – and the public has responded in hundreds.

Original Guilds in the Renaissance were a mix of Professional self-interest protection groups and Secret Societies. Let us not revert!! The modern ethos is "Outreach".

End of sermon Happy New Year!

Merry Christmas
and a most creative New Year

Obituaries

A tribute to Summer Painting Days organiser Daphne Walker

Anne Viner

I was very sad to hear of the recent death of Daphne Walker who was a Reading Guild member for so many years. Coming from a background of professional illustration and photography, Daphne was highly skilled in drawing and painting, and particularly enjoyed working out of doors in the landscape. Her paintings conveyed a gentle, quiet enjoyment and celebration of the world around her, based on loving observation of particular places. Often she would produce a water colour on location and then work up an oil painting in the studio, returning perhaps a year later at the same season to complete the painting in its original setting. One of her favourite subjects was the magnificent view of the Thames valley from the Hartslock nature reserve, up on the hill above Goring, which she painted in oils, including the figures of herself and her husband, David, in the scene.

When she produced a mural for her local Emmer Green doctors' surgery, on the theme of The Teddy Bears' Picnic, the background was based on her studies of the local woodland at Clayfield Copse and the picture incorporated portraits of individual teddy bears owned by members of the staff.

Daphne gave her time and expertise generously to the RGA over many years, serving on the Council, taking part in workshops, and contributing regularly to RGA exhibitions. She was always a most efficient and reliable helper with the preparatory work and for a long time she also edited the RGA Newsletter, keeping all the members informed of events in the Guild.

For twenty-three years she organised the programme of Summer Painting Days for the RGA with her characteristic meticulous attention to all the arrangements, issuing precise directions and information for all venues. She was always welcoming and helpful to all the artists and at the end of each day's painting she would encourage everyone to assemble, with the work they had produced, so that she could take photographs, to be included in scrapbooks of such RGA events.

In 2005, Daphne arranged a special celebration of the Guild's 75th anniversary in the form of a picnic at Rushall Manor Farm, where painting days had been held many times to coincide with the bluebells and open the summer season.

In recent years, Daphne was increasingly hampered by ill health but continued with great determination to come out and paint whenever she could.

All of us who knew Daphne will remember and greatly miss her friendly generosity and encouragement.



Geoff Green and the Reading Guild of Artists

Elizabeth Heydeman

Geoff was accepted into the Reading Guild of Artists as a full exhibiting member in the summer of 1984. Within a couple of years he was already serving on the Council of the Guild. He came to painting when he was nearly fifty. He had no formal training as an artist apart from attending a few Local Authority short courses. He also joined some of the workshops provided by the Guild. His style was recognizably his own, bold and strong yet subtle oil paintings, sensitive depictions of landscapes that he loved and of still lifes that spoke of his love of domestic life.

From 2000-2003 he took on the responsible office of chairman, a job which he performed with flair and with good humour which encouraged those about him to feel useful, respected and therefore willing to work hard for the Guild. Until you actually take part in setting up exhibitions you have little idea of how much hard work, time and dedication is required. Geoff continued for many years to contribute to this, for example collecting and recording entry fees and sales of work, physically hanging works on the corridor walls of the Royal Berkshire Hospital and labelling each one. He continued to claim Gift Aid on RGA subscriptions for many years.

We celebrated 75 years of the Guild in 2005 with both a carefully researched booklet, Then and Now, and also an exhibition of the same title at the Museum of Reading, which included works by earlier members of the Guild as well as some recent and current. I remember happy meetings held at Geoff's home for those of us involved in deciding, planning and selecting.

He was always cheerful and good-humoured, practical and encouraging, a serious amateur painter. We were fortunate to have him and he will be remembered with gratitude and with affection by many people.

Subscription reminder

pay by day
1 January 2016

RGA Upgrading Carole Pembroke

During the first five months of 2015 and prior to the Reading Guild of Artists Summer show, two Upgrade Meetings were held and the following affiliate RGA members were Upgraded:

Sheila Caseborne, Carolyn Beale, Lyn Ebbett, Judith Fletcher, Janet Fisher, Christine Howell, Mary Law, Rosemary Harper, Andy Noyes, Michael Norcross, Rahel Takle Peirce, Natasha Rossell, Jane Somner, Annie Welch and Helen Westhrop.

The Upgrade Committee never cease to be amazed by the variety of art work presented to us on the night. The subject matter included mandala like patterns, still life, portraits, imaginary subject matter, flower, countryside and sea compositions. Not only were traditional painting techniques used but other were created by printing, sculpting, stitching or using ceramics. Many of these submissions were exhibited at the Summer Show which contributed to a vibrant and interesting display.

Confirmed RGA dates for 2016:

Small Works Sale

Sat 6th February 2016, 10:30 - 15:30, Reading Museum

86th Annual Exhibition "Spring into Action"

Sat 19th - Tue 29th March 2016, 10:00 -16:00, The Old Fire Station Gallery, 66 Market Place, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2AG

Summer Show

Thu 16th - Sun 26th June 2016, 10:00 -16:00, Art Building L04, University of Reading, London Road Campus, RG1 5AQ

As webmaster and archivist for the RGA, I deal with both the new and the old, and the two roles go together amazingly well. Our former archivist, Jackie James, handed over the reins earlier in the year, and I must thank her for all the work she did on our behalf. So what does that involve? One part is compiling items ready for deposit at the Berkshire Record Office. Here we keep all our records, going back to our founding year of 1930, such as catalogues, newspaper cuttings, photos and minutes. These records are in turn invaluable when it comes to answering queries from the general public about works of art they have perhaps inherited or stumbled upon in a charity shop, antiques fairs etc.

I am always interested in new material for the archive and am happy to receive donations. One such donation lead me to a new venture, when I realised we didn't have a visual record of our Marie Dyson Award winners. Visit our website, www.rga-artists.org.uk and you can find a link from the Marie Dyson page to our past winners and see how it's going. I still have gaps, so any help would be appreciated.

Visitor numbers to the RGA website are still increasing year on year, and the "Picture of the Month" section chosen from the Online Art Gallery, remain popular. However, some Gallery pages are now 3 years old. Please take time in the new year to send me your gallery entries to Martina at webmaster@rga-artists.org.uk.

News from RGA Council

RGA Council warmly welcome all new members who have joined us since the last issue:

Natasha Rossell, David Rees, Andy Noyes, Lyn Ebbett, Marilyn Prewett, Teresa Davenport, Liz Kerry, Annie Welch, Monica Vera, Orla Desmond, Roger Bonnett, Judith Fletcher, Caroline King, Alex Boon, Susan Evans and Rosie Ellis-Unwin.



RGA 86th Annual Exhibition 2016



Art Building L04
The Institute of Education
University of Reading
London Road Campus
RG1 5AQ

University of Reading
READING

Your Website and archive

Martina Hildebrandt



RGA Fridays

Therese Lawlor

I really enjoy the Friday night sessions at Maiden Earley. Sometimes they come along at just the right time to influence a project. Clare Buchta's Seed Heads was one such 'light bulb' moment for me. I got stuck in and did 3 examples on the night. I thought it would be a great technique to illustrate what can be made with allotment produce. My first attempt concentrated on seeds like squashes and figs, followed by allotment salads and what to do with a glut of carrots! I'm working with my allotment friends to develop recipes and hope to produce an illustrated allotment book within a year.

Thanks very much RGA!



Winter Programme 2016

15 Jan - Monochrome Heads
with Carole Stephens

29 Jan - Painting Jazz
with John Pumfrey

12 Feb - Life Drawing with
Jenny Halstead



RGA Tuesdays, Earley Painters

Clare Buchta



The first session of the Earley Painters Autumn term bore the title "Weights and Measures ... and Flowers" What would you expect from that title ? You would have been surprised at the two colourful displays conjured up by the "team". What a delight to return after the Summer break to this interesting combination of old weighing machines, callipers, tape measures and delicate colourful flowers.

This was just the first session of an imaginative programme running through to May 2016.

Past sessions have included experimental and abstract themes to working in the style of a named artist or movement as well as still life, collage, printing and three dimensional work.

Look at the RGA website for the programme.



Winter Programme 2016

5 Jan - On the Kitchen Table
Artist's own choice of materials

19 Jan - Interiors from a different perspective, Mixed media

2 Feb - 3x3 (three linked)

16 Feb - 3x3
(experimental sessions)

1 Mar - 3x3 (various media)

15 March - Black & White
Mixed media including print

Mar-May - Other sessions to come:
Sea and Sky
Hall of Mirrors
Across the Land
and a dressed model.



The Big Draw and Summer Painting

John Pumfrey

They did not happen! Our activities hitherto serving to take our art en plein air and in public view were not on the RGA calendar because nobody came forward to continue our annual forays into the Great Outdoors. Daphne would have been so disappointed and I and my previous Big Draw helpers were puzzled.

Next year we must do better. The town and countryside of Reading have much to offer and if any claim that an artist's place is only in the studio I defy you to name a Master who never ventured outside with easel and paint. From caveman to Rousseau for wildlife; from Egyptians to J.M.W Turner for seascapes; from Da Vinci to Nash for landscapes and Breughel to Lowry for townscapes – and RGA's equivalents for those subjects? Robert Gillmor; Donald Hamilton-Fraser; Jenny Halstead; Sam Knight **and indeed all of you , probably**, if for no other reason than because the subject is out there waiting for you.

You are part of it and it is part of you. And most of the time it stays still!

So please read again my summaries of what is involved. Hilary Penrose has offered to front a team for Summer Painting and I will help a group set up another Big Draw next Autumn, but some volunteers are needed to form the nuclei. See our Website for my notes and contact details..... and those of you who have participated before, just recall the pleasure it gave to all.

Small Works Sale

Reading Museum

As exhibition secretary for the RGA, I am so lucky to have such a dedicated band of helpers, but we should not forget to thank those people outside the Guild, who generously invite us to make use of their respective buildings as sale and exhibition spaces. Firstly Elaine Blake at Reading Museum, who regularly invites us to hold a 'Small Works Sale' in one of the Museum Galleries. This year, our Small Works Sale in January was held in conjunction with the Allen Seaby Exhibition. The sale of small prints, paintings and sculpture, as in previous years, was a great success.



Annual

RGA 85th Annual Exhibition

The Old Fire Station Gallery, Henley-on-Thames



Martina Hildebrandt's vivid collage poster for the RGA 85th Annual Exhibition 2015 'Take Reality by Surprise' encouraged us to produce work a little 'out of the ordinary'! Here in Henley, 129 pieces of work were on display.

Lou Jessop's 'The Orange Cat' won the Marie Dyson Award. Judged by noted artist John Buckley, who chose Lou's work as stand-out winner, four other artists were highly commended: Nigel Butcher's 'dramatic' Marsh Harrier over Avecon Marshes, Dave Fletcher's subtle pastel 'Fell Farm, Cumbria', Hilary Parkinson's witty image in print and stitch, contrasting with Liz Baldin's painting 'The House on the Hill'.

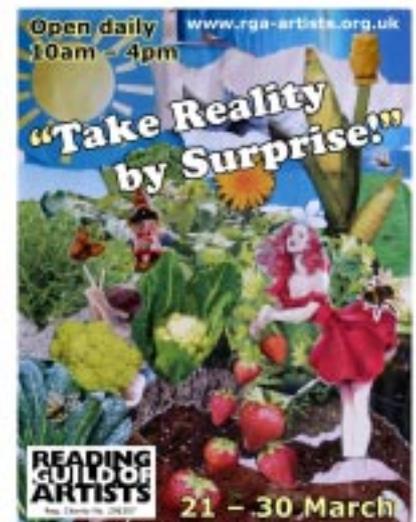


Yuliya Lennon, an RGA member who specialises in academic painting and drawing, gave two very popular Workshops: 'Renaissance Underpainting Techniques' and 'Drawing Light', a drawing session in which participants used solely pencils and erasers.



Marie Dyson Award

Marie Dyson led a group of members to expand the range of Guild activities in the early 1960s with long-lasting contributions and influence. After her untimely death in 1967, the generosity of her husband, Dr J. Dyson FRS and of her friends created this award which is given for a work of outstanding merit.



RGA 85th Annual Exhibition 2015

Summer Show

Report by Exhibition Secretary

University of Reading, London Road Campus

Carole Stephens



The exhibition went well and I am happy to report that the decision to group the works of each artist together, individually was much commented on! So thus hanging the works gave space between each artist and allowed the pictures on show to 'breathe'!

There were 224 art works submitted by 66 artists. Amongst these were 10 newly upgraded members, a few of whom had already shown at Henley. It is pleasing to have new RGA members appreciating the chance to show off their work. There was a good mix of paintings and prints, collage and stitch, even wallpaper and tiles. There was very little sculpture, but an innovative assemblage of woollen figures by Lou Jessop.



Art Building 100
The Institute of Education
University of Reading
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The Private View was not as well attended as was our September Show 2014, but it was a treat to be able to welcome to the Private View many of the students from the 'BA Primary Teachers Education with Art Specialism' students, who joined with the RGA artists in their London Road studios to show works from their 'finals' exhibition. The exhibition was opened by Dr Cathie Tissot, the incoming Head of The Institute of Education at The University of Reading. She was accompanied by Dr Gill Hopper, course leader for the Primary Teachers taking Art Specialism. Gill herself was most accommodating, of all our various needs during and after the Summer Show. These included making use of the excellent facilities at London Road, for which several workshops were planned, and happily filled!

Our Stewards were great value, with thirty plus members volunteering, several stewarding more than once. Three stewards were on duty at each morning and afternoon session, plus a Council member to oversee proceeding and give continuity. This allowed for the opportunity for each to have a detailed look at the Summer Show, to introduce the work of artists to visitors, and to get to know each other. It made for a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere. Sales were not as dramatic as in our two previous exhibitions, but many people were pleased to buy cards, or to purchase Browser Works. From the walls, small paintings sold, rather than expensive pieces.

Particular thanks to all Council Members who helped with the Summer Show in so many ways, as well as RGA members who regularly help out with hand-in, hanging and hand-back. Thanks especially to Martina Hildebrandt and to Markus Hildebrandt for the design of the flyers and invitations and the design, printing and collation of the catalogues.



RGA 22nd Royal Berkshire Hospital Corridor Exhibition

9 November-18 December 2015

The exhibition was hung with speed and efficiency by an enthusiastic team from RGA Council: Nikki Carr, Nina O'Connell, Ksenija Krotin, Carole Pembroke, Helen Westhrop and Anthony Wilder, plus loyal RGA members Hilary Parkinson, Richard Cave and Martin Andrews. To them all, many thanks.

Thanks too to Clare Buchta, RGA Treasurer, for making sure the money was all present and correct. Lucy Jenkins kindly typed up the name labels, assisted by her husband, and these were attached to the pictures along the RBH corridors, from The South Wing entrance through to the Eye Clinic. 73 drawings, prints and paintings were hung, an interesting and varied selection.

Workshops at the RGA Summer Show

Ksenija Krotin

A series of workshops ran during our RGA Summer Show 2015 : The Drawn Figure with Jenny Halstead, Silkscreen Techniques with Chris Mercier & Emily Gillmor (utilising the University's well-equipped printmaking room), Watercolour Painting with Richard Cave, and Print without a Press with Karen Carter.

Silk screen printing was always on my agenda, so I booked two days printing session, starting from scratch. Chris and Emily opened a whole new area to me to be explored, but I was happy with my first attempts, framed it and exhibited two prints at The Reading Charity Art Fair at St Joseph College. And, the most exciting event of this year followed: my first print *Somewhere in Between* was Highly Commended and sold ! I hope that next year you will join the club. Highly recommended!



Publicity matters

David Cotton

Publicity...or is it Promotion or maybe Advertising?

Do we need to take a fresh look at how we do this?

Quote ... if the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign saying 'Circus Coming to the Fairground Saturday', that's advertising. If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk it into town, that's promotion. If the elephant walks through the mayor's flower bed and the press pick it up, that's publicity. And if you get the mayor to laugh about it, that's public relations." If the town's people go the circus, you explain how much fun they'll have on the attractions there, answer their questions and ultimately, they spend a lot at the circus, that's sales.

So what should we be doing? How does everyone get to know what is going on? Beyond the freebee Get Reading there is no local paper now so the other media are more important – local Radio reaches many thousands and John has exploited this well. The Internet is now a first stop for many and we have a great website but did you know that we now also have a twitter account? Should we also be on Facebook? What's On sites like Alt Reading and the Borough Council site are increasingly popular and these include email Newsletters, which for many is the best way to keep abreast of what is happening in the Art world. Is this your source of Arts information?

Then there is the direct approach though emails and flyers distributed by members and through shops and libraries.

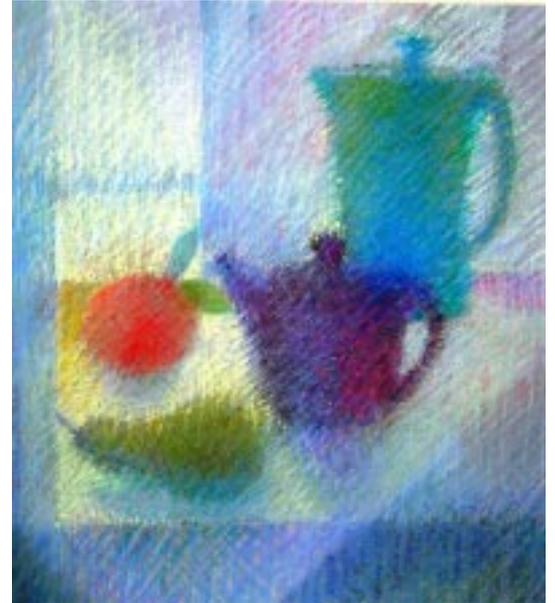
Should we invest more in this? We have recently added a couple of really large and colourful banners to promote the Summer Show. Did you see them? We have an extensive membership – is there a way in which we could use it better to promote our events? How much information do we have about previous visitors and buyers from us? Where do we get our new members from? And how do our events look to non-members? Should we consider catalogues which can be taken away and kept? Should they include advertising and information about the guild and possibly our artists? Should we charge for them? Provocative thoughts? – some feedback would be welcome.

A chat with Jean Aust

John Pumfrey

Talking to Jean about her skills and experience should be daunting but she is, in RGA, a 'family' member in a sort of maternal way. This could be because, whilst her own parents were not particularly enthusiastic about her artistic ambition, teachers, mentors, colleagues and husband have recognised and encouraged her abilities and, it seems to me that she has repaid by becoming not just a very talented artist but a wise and respected Guild figurehead ... and consequently one of our very few Life Members.

"I left school at 15 and took myself to Maidenhead Art College for two years of weekly evening classes. Just two hours and with no diploma at the end ... simply a conviction that I must continue to explore art. My tutor was equally convinced and his support was such that, after raising a family, I applied my training to everything from painting scenery for operatic productions in Barkham, teaching at Bracknell College adult education sessions, recording with illustrations the progress of refurbishment projects at South Hill Park and Reading Museum, setting up the Earley Painters, tutoring at amateur art groups and, of course, painting for myself".



This not a verbatim account and that last phrase should be 'making art', for Jean creates her own media as well as images. When I remarked that she had a very individual view of subjects (and I really meant composition) she showed me her collection of coloured theatre lighting 'gels' (celluloid sheets) and her current works in which she paints her ground with oil pastel, obliterates it with gouache-and-acrylic mix over-painting and then scratches her subject by her version of scraperboard drawing. So impressed was I that I asked if I might try this and such was her generosity that she handed me a precis of her method! A natural communicator as well as enthusiast. These images of her work show a collage of old artwork sliced, a monoprint and an unconventional pastel. Very individual views indeed.

As we parted she said she was off to a brand-new local class of folk with memory loss having neither materials nor money. "So would I have any surplus media, please"?

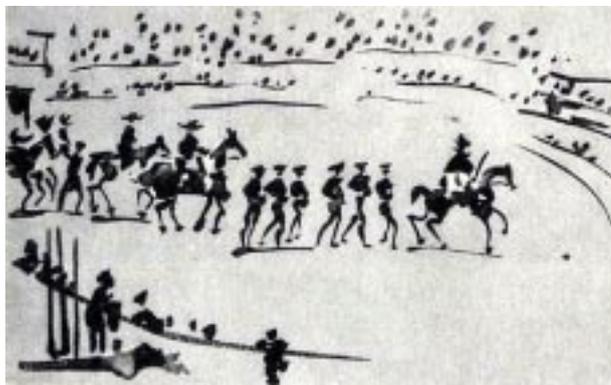
Jean just cannot resist promoting art and long may she continue. I have made a small contribution and perhaps you can, too?



Unexpected Delight

Hilary Parkinson

We have been visiting Sicily for several years now. It is a wonderful place, full of antiquity, intriguing sea and landscapes, and not forgetting its food and wines, which compete with the best in the world. But most of this goes by quietly. Imagine our surprise then, when our friends announced a Picasso exhibition was in town.



“Picasso and his Passions” (Oct. to Dec. 2015) was an eye-opening exhibition because it featured lesser works set against Picasso’s life-line of his major works and world events. And the “Passions”? Women obviously featured, in print rather than paint form, intimate and personal in scale, as well as theatre designs and interpretations, circus scenes, ceramics and graphic works. His internationally renowned works highlighting his political views were also represented. For me the graphic works representing Picasso’s Spanish/Catalan passion of Bullfighting were the real highlight. I was not enamoured with the subject matter, but the beautifully free and expressive interpretations of men and animals in quick but meaningful marks was inspiring, all created by aquatint etching methods. I have always thought that etchings are rather stiff compared to drawings. How wrong I was.

The other works I enjoyed were the ceramics. These were displayed alongside a few ceramic pieces from the Museum’s permanent collection, questioning our views on modernity, shape and colour. In particular, a flamboyant earthenware jug which Picasso had boldly painted with black decoration was placed alongside a Greek earthenware piece also decorated with black decoration.....centuries between them but many similarities and which looked the more ‘Modern’? A modern installation cube brought us an interpretation of Picasso’s passionate political pleas against the crimes of war, including his “Guernica” (1937) and “Massacre in Korea” (1951).

A six euro ticket took us to another world for a couple of hours. Thank you Museo Pepoli, Trapani for showing us some very interesting works, demonstrating a wider, complex artistic world to Picasso than we are generally able to see.



An experience at West Dean College

Jean Aust

Just imagine standing poised ready to make a large A2 charcoal drawing of the standing life model posed ready and then hearing the tutor say “now I want you to look at the model and draw her upside down” then continued by saying “remember that the right and left hand sides stay exactly as you see them”

So I dutifully wrote ‘R’ and ‘L’ at the top of my page and began by drawing her feet; trying hard to visualise that my model is standing on a mirror! For me a new experience which I found difficult and exhausting!

Artists' Inbox

Maria Teresa Molner

At the end of this summer I had a solo art exhibition with 37 pictures in Spain; it went ok I guess. I have learned some valuable information. We artists take for granted things, the appreciation of the light, colours and change of our surroundings. My display was mostly of outdoor subjects, including some very dramatic sunsets. The press coverage was very good.

The visitors in general were surprised to see so much colour, some of the comments where 'Are these really real?' and 'Does nature produce this?'

People these days are drawn to electronic devices, where they spend most of their time - they don't look around. The public were transported to a happier feeling at the end of the visit. We artists can make changes in society with the tools that we have.



Nina O'Connell

About 18 months ago I joined the Art group in Emmer Green and because it was impossible to take all my Batik paraphernalia I decided to use my old oils that I hadn't touched for about 35 years. Experimenting with painting using pieces of card and any flexible "thingy" I could find that made interesting marks, I found this extraordinarily enjoyable and finished the paintings, which were all sea scapes, in my own studio later.

When I received an email from the Mall Galleries asking for entries to the Royal Society for Marine Artists exhibition I was just about to delete it when I thought I might try submitting 4 of my oil seascapes.

Imagine my amazement when one was accepted.

The Private view was only two days after I returned from Peru, still suffering from altitude sickness and jet lagged I managed to thoroughly enjoy the extremely crowded Private view opened by Sir Robin Knox Johnston.

My joy was topped off when during the last week end of the exhibition I received an email from a friend who'd visited it, telling me my pic had sold! I fairly whooped for joy!



A Sense of Place

Elizabeth Heydeman

The current exhibition in the Madejski Art Gallery at Reading Museum, A Sense of Place, displays some splendid 20th century landscape paintings brought up from the bowels of the Museum. These include works by artists as diverse as Paul Nash and Elizabeth Blackadder as well as one by former RGA member Malcolm Hitchcock. The brochure description of the exhibition says it also “includes high quality work by local craftspeople and makers in response to the paintings.” In late August Lou Jessop and I and a few other Reading makers were invited to see in the Museum’s basement the paintings that Elaine Blake, the curator, had already chosen for the exhibition. Other craftspeople invited included ceramicists, knitters and a basket maker. Each of us chose a picture to which we would respond with a created piece by early October – not much time! I chose the painting Dry Landscape



(<http://bit.ly/Dry-Land>), by Michael Ayrton, fairly abstract in warm yellows, buffs and browns. Back at home I picked out 14 yarns of natural fibres from my store. I wove samples of them to discover the effects of different warps, settings and wefts. I then wove a warp 4 metres long, having fun with planning the textured bands and varied stripes, which referred to what might be paths or hedgerows or fields in the painting. I imagined the length of cloth lightly folded and swirled to echo the painting. I then wove over 2 metres with a fine weft of mercerized cotton in a delicious old gold colour, which gave the cloth a warm glow without obscuring the colours of the warp stripes. The cloth was then hand washed, machine rinsed and spun dry. As I gently steam-ironed it I was excited by the stripes and the areas where I had used a fancy linen thread, which had not full as had the woollen yarns; I was pleased by the slight cockling texture like oil paint on canvas.

Lou Jessop writes “I chose to create a response to Alan Reynolds wonderful dark Kent landscape, The Copse at Dusk II (<http://bit.ly/C-a-D-II>), painted in 1952. My work is generally figurative but there was no difficulty in transforming the slightly surreal trees into a group of figures - dusk makes things shadowy and in the shadows trees can quite readily be perceived as human forms! Using recycled knitwear as fabric and woollen hand stitching I made five figures in varying sizes, the tallest about 35 cm. Each one is supported by a simple internal armature of wire. Their poses and body shapes reflect some aspects of the trees; though not quite Dryads they have the essence of trees. This was a very enjoyable project for me and there is an excellent selection of responses to various other paintings by invited local artists and craftspeople. The exhibition is well worth a visit; it showcases the best of Reading’s collection of Twentieth Century landscapes and also displays the wonderful Reading Tapestries (1974) designed by John Piper.”

The private view on 22 October was a very unusual and moving event. All the made items looked wonderfully assorted arranged in glass cases. Poets, most local, some nationally known, read poems each had written in response to their choice of painting. Each poem is printed on a wooden board hung on a peg below the relevant picture so visitors can lift it off to read it for themselves. The whole exhibition is a brilliant conjunction of creativity. Do go to see it before 10 April 2016.

Great artists in Reading
Martin Andrews

We always seem to be fighting for the arts in Reading yet the town has a long and distinguished association with many of the great figures of British culture – in the world of literature we have Oscar Wilde and looser links to Jane Austin, Wilfred Owen, Charles Dickens; in music we have Gustav Holst and don’t forget that centuries before the monks of the Abbey sang ‘Sumer Is Icumen In’. In the visual arts, the Reading Guild of Artists can point to many notable members, but Reading can also claim associations with internationally important artists – John Piper designed the tapestry for the town, Sir Terry Frost taught for many years at the University, Walter Sickert was given an Honorary degree by the University, Constable drew a sketch of the Abbey ruins and William Morris gave a lecture at a temperance coffee-house in Abbey Square. But it is always exciting to find a new figure to add to the list.

A few months ago I visited an exhibition of the work of John Singer Sargent at the National Portrait Gallery in London. It was a rewarding experience and I marvelled at the Sargent’s confident brush strokes that instantly evoked the subtle textures of the fabrics of the clothes in which the subjects of his portraits were dressed and his ability to bring his figures to life. So I was reminded of this experience when I bumped into Keith Marples at the Guild’s summer show. Tucked under his arm was a book about Sargent and I asked him if he had seen the London exhibition. What he told me delighted and surprised me – for a few years John Singer Sargent lived in a lovely Georgian country house in Mill Lane in Calcot. Even more exciting is the fact that Sargent was a friend of Claude Monet, who visited him in Reading. One can speculate that perhaps one of Monet’s ladies depicted in a garden dappled with sunlight shaded by a parasol might have been painted during his stay. What an interesting project it would be to research and produce a book on great artists associated with the town – do members have other names to add to the list?