



RGA Annual Review 2016

This year, our team of two discussed, edited and published the fifth issue of RGA Annual Review to inspire RGA members in attending, organizing and promoting all RGA events, to make Reading a cultural hub. Many RGA members took part in all sorts of activities and sent their articles and images to Ksenija Krotin for page make-up as usual, ready for printing and distribution, organised by John Pumfrey. We hope that you will enjoy our summary of the old year and will have fresh ideas for New 2017.

The View from the Chair Anthony Wilder

It's just over six months since I took over the hot seat from John Pumfrey and in trying to build on the huge progress RGA has made in the last few years, I feel very much like the proverbial dwarf sitting on the shoulders of giants! However, with the support of a brilliant Council and with the encouragement and wisdom of our new President, Clive Duncan, I can honestly say I have thoroughly enjoyed it. I suspect that most of the things I am going to mention will be covered in greater detail elsewhere in this review, but here are some of the highlights, together with plans we are exploring for the future.

The Summer Show, was again a great success and a huge credit to the exhibitions team as well as everyone who put work in, including the students from the University. Many people felt we achieved a higher standard this year, and some of the workshops broke new ground. However, we are never complacent, and there are always lessons to learn and put into practice next time. This exhibition was followed by our regular show at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, which has just been hung at the time of writing. Already it has brought a measure of colour and comfort to people using the hospital, many of whom are very much in need of it. David Cotton has been joined by a new Promotions Team and Therese Lawlor has really hit the ground running in getting this initiative under way. I am confident that this will result in a higher profile for RGA in the locality and will eventually result in increased footfall for our exhibitions and other activities.



A number of interesting ideas were floated at a 'Blue Sky' session held during the Summer Show and the Council has been busy evaluating these. Some have been put into practice already including Linda Saul's proposal for the website RGArtevents which is now up and running for a trial period of a year. Others include building closer links with the Museum and with other departments of the University including the Fine Art Department and the new Department of Architecture. Watch this space!

Summer painting days resumed this year and although we didn't manage to take part in the Big Draw this time, plans are afoot to work with the Museum on this in 2017. Meanwhile, Earley Painters and RGA Fridays are flourishing thanks to the hard work of all involved. One thing that did emerge from the blue sky event is that any new initiatives need to be accompanied by new people to implement them, backed up by a team of helpers. Therese and Linda were both co-opted onto the Council because of this and I am hoping this will be the start of a trend..!!?? It's been a busy time!

PS If anyone would like to respond visually to the 'Dwarfs and Giants' thought in the first sentence, I'm sure the results could be displayed somewhere!



Obituaries

Pauline Mercier October 1925 – March 2016 by Elizabeth Heydeman

Born in October 1925, Pauline was the only child of Ernest Heber Thompson, a professional artist from New Zealand whose printmaking practice included engravings used as book illustrations. She was brought up in London and in 1942 she attended the Harrow College of Art before joining the WRNS in 1943. After the war she went to the Central School of Art and Design to study textile design. In 1947 she married Paul Mercier, a lecturer in the Reading University Education Department. They had six children so family life was both demanding and fulfilling for her. Family life was central to Pauline's philosophy and a comfortable and attractive home essential to that. Domestic duties, family furniture and crockery, fruit and garden flowers formed a useful yet beautiful background. This led to her choice of subjects for sensitive oil paintings, often incorporating both still life and landscape. She joined the RGA, exhibiting for the first time in 1962. Her friendship with another University wife, Angela Jewell, who joined the RGA a few years later, supported her in making time to paint.



In the 1970s Pauline served on the Council of the RGA. She was then teaching painting and pottery for Berkshire adult education. She also set up her own pottery studio and collaborated with a group called Intermediate Technology, designing a pottery cooking stove that used minimal fuel.

When I joined the RGA in 1972 it was because of my friendship with Pauline Mercier and Angela Jewell. When my children started school Wednesdays became sacrosanct for the three of us, meeting in each other's houses or searching the local countryside for landscapes and buildings to paint. Both Angela and Pauline were trained artists, Angela a Fine Art graduate of Reading University who had studied under Professor Anthony Betts, so I enjoyed expert guidance.

When Paul retired the Merciers moved to live in the Lake District, where Pauline was active in the Kendal Art Society. When they later moved to Moreton-in-Marsh Pauline adapted the second floor of their small house as a studio and joined the North Cotswold Arts Association.

To settle down with Pauline and concentrate on form, colour, usefulness and charm was always inspiring and grounding. She was a lovable and admirable friend whom I shall never forget.





Subscription reminder

pay by day 1 January 2017

News from RGA Council

RGA Council warmly welcome all new members!

RGA Upgrading

Carole Pembroke, UpGrade Secretary

Being part of the UpGrade team enables us to see first hand the art work being submitted to the RGA. Yet again the quality and varied submissions were exciting to see, a fact that bodes well for our future exhibitions.

The number of people UpGrading during 2016 numbered 14 in total and congratulations have been extended to Susan Evans, Blinda Garner, Kate Ellison Bourne, Yu Takeuchi, Rosie Ellis-Unwin in January.

In May - Andrea White, Sian Rae, Philip Alexander, Lorna Webber, Michael Garaway, and Mick McNicholson all successfully Upgraded, and finally in October - Tracy Eisa, Ros Ingram, Carol Kettle all successfully UpGraded. I would also like to thank all those RGA Council Members who gave freely of their time to assist in forming the UpGrade panel.

Some of you may remember my Report from last year:

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

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

Promoting the RGA

David Cotton

It has taken a while but I am pleased that this has been done. I am grateful for the help of Therese Lawlor in achieving this. Therese was coopted onto Council and a small Promotions Team has been put together. Council felt that there was a need for a clear timetable of deadlines and that the Promotions Team need to be involved from the start when organising any RGA event. Very early in the year I suggested we should consider what our objectives are and the order of them with a view to establishing exactly what we are trying to achieve. A small group of the Committee did this and this is what they felt.

- 1. Promote the RGA
- 2. Encourage art participation /appreciation for members and the wider public
- 3. Provide an opportunity for members to sell work
- 4. Provide a forum for members to meet/work together through workshops

The Order is very important and has a huge impact. At the same time the group also accepted that publicity is only a part of the wider promotion of the Guild. It is hoped that we can discuss these Objectives at the AGM.

A variety of new banners has helped advertise our annual exhibition in Henley and the Summer Show. Some illness and a house move have restricted my involvement with the new plans and the promotion of the RBH exhibition. However Therese has worked very hard to crystalise these and find practical ways of achieving the clear objectives that have been established. With the help of a small Team, clear direction and early involvement in activities, I feel sure our promotion will improve in 2017.

How to promote your own event

Linda Saul

A new initiative that arose from the 'Blue Sky' session held during the Summer show was the idea that RGA could have a secondary website dedicated to members' events. The members' 'what's on' section of the main website is replaced with a link to this site: http://www.rgartevents.uk/

The idea is that this website helps promote our members and their events and can be promoted in its own right. At any point in time it will list current and future events, and help emphasise how active our members are. After discussions the council have decided to try this idea out.

The site can be used to list exhibitions, open studio events etc in which exhibiting members are participating. It will list the RGA exhibitions, but the primary source of information on RGA events will of course remain the main RGA website.

A key aspect of the website, one that I hope will enable us to get publicity for it in due course, is that there is a section where any of our exhibiting members who wishes to advertise that their studio is open to visits by appointment can have an entry and make this website something different.

Please if you have any events you want adding, email me the details. They don't need to be local events. Also if you are participating in one of the events already listed and your name isn't included let me know. Any event must have at least one image to display - preferably an example of your work.

I also welcome feedback on or questions about the site.

Please email me at info@rgartevents.uk - or you can use the form on the Contact page of the site if you prefer.

RGA Fridays

Carole Pembroke

At the 2016 AGM Lucy Jenkins, who ran the Friday's sessions for the past seven years, has stepped down. On behalf of the RGA and all those who have participated in Friday's over the years, many thanks are extended.

The Autumn 2016 workshops have been very successful and with numbers on the rise, of both RGA Members and visitors. RGA Fridays has consisted of some tutored sessions, when we were able to welcome Anthony Wilder, Jenny Halstead, Emily Gillmor and Richard Cave, and with the session content ranging from watercolour, printing, life drawing and themed informal sessions. The spring term promises to be as equally popular as tutors Carole Stephens, Clare Buchta, Sam Knight and Jean Aust will be heading up some of the sessions.

The full programme can be seen at www.rga-artists.org.uk I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Fridays team, and in particular Clare Buchta and Sam Knight.

Winter/ Spring Programme 2017

20 Jan	Experimenting with Acrylics with Carole Stephens
3 Feb	Sea & Sky with Clare Buchta
17 Feb	Printing with Karen Carter
3 Mar	Layers & Masks mixed medium with Sam Knight
17 Mar	Life Drawing - untutored
31 Mar	Mark Making in Black & White with

Jean Aust & Carole Pembrooke



Summer postcards, first session on memories of the summer break



Life drawing with Jenny Halstead



Water colour with Richard Cave



Print and draw with Emily Gillmor

Fish with Anthony Wilder

RGA Tuesdays, Earley Painters

Clare Buchta









Well, what an interesting Autumn programme so far this term. We have had quite a few new people trying out the workshops this season. The subjects for the programme have been developed from suggestions from the participants, plus some extra novel ideas thought up by the organising group. The topics are many and varied, never quite what you expect, but certainly stimulating. Everyone is inspired by each other's way of working so although we are not tutored as such, there is plenty of encouragement. Illustrations by other artists and ideas are suggested for ways of working at the start of each session just in case anyone needs a bit of impetus.

I have just come home from this afternoon's workshop titled "Holey, Holey Holey". Now, this could be take as a typo and as its getting near Christmas, we might have been painting a seasonal scene! But no, we are looking at holes! Holes in colanders, lace, grids, sieves, graters, fruit baskets, all set against a dark ground. This is typically the different view of things that is taken on these afternoons, pushing us to look differently at sometimes ordinary items. The work produced is always stunning, varied and creative, produced using collage, print, watercolour, gouache, pastel, acrylic, pencil



There was a figure drawing session,

this was an equestrienne character, with riding attire and all the horse equipment, alas the horse was not allowed in as not house trained! Collage was used with a twist, cutting up postcards and scenes to reinvent our memories from the Summer break.

"Posh and Shiny" gave us a chance to study colour in reflections using items of serving ware that were in regular use in days gone by, dug out from cupboards and display cabinets and discovered in charity shops.

With thanks to Hilary and Jean for all their support to make this such a lively and popular workshop.

Look on the RGA website for details.

Winter / Spring Programme 2017



10 Jan	Feathers and Gardening
24 Jan	Chairs
14 Feb	Looking Through Window
28 Feb	Landscapes
14 Mar	Everything Wood
28 Mar	Veg Talk
11 Apr	Spring/Summer Buds & Flowers
25 Apr	Spring Cleaning
9 May	Garage Tools
23 May	Baking Day

RGA

Annua

Small Works Sale

Reading Museum, 6th February 2016

Our grateful thanks to the Reading Museum Curator Elaine Blake, for once again hosting our Sale, in the splendid setting of the Atrium Gallery. A wide selection of small paintings, prints, sculptures and artists's greetings cards were 'for sale'. Plenty of footfall and a good atmosphere! More buying visitors would have been appreciated but we were still able to make a small donation to the Reading Museum.

We are now looking to our 2017 'Small Works Sale' on February 11th.

Work for this next sale must be based on the theme specified by Elaine Blake. Thus paintings, prints, and sculptures must, however loosely, reference 'Reading'. This is because our 'Small Works Sale 2017' is to be held in conjunction with the 2017 exhibition featuring the work of Ray Atkins. Atkins was an artist who taught at the University of Reading and painted the changing face of the town of Reading.

Spring into Action - RGA 86th Annual Exhibition 2016

The Old Fire Station Gallery, 66 Market Place, Henley - on - Thames, 19 - 29 March 2016



'Shetland I' by Clare Buchta Monotype

'Freddie' by Martin Andrews Etching



'Into the blue' by Nina O'Connell Batik collage



We must thank Martina Hildebrandt for the evocative poster image for 'Spring into Action'. A difficult title to work to, but it seemed a suitable one for the springtime!

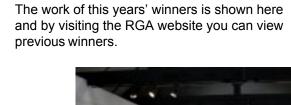
The Annual Exhibition was opened for us, with great aplomb, by our new President, Clive Duncan. Clive is a highly regarded sculptor with years of experience as a practitioner, and an educationalist, and we are delighted to welcome him to the Reading Guild of Artists. Clive's first task, prior to the official opening, was to visit, and assess, the whole exhibition in order to chose the winner/s for The Marie Dyson Award. As it turned out, Clive was quickly drawn to the etching of 'Freddie' by Martin Andrews, and the monotype 'Shetland I' by Clare Buchta. For the work of these artists he jointly gave The Marie Dyson Award. Clive then went on to chose 'Solva Harbour, Winter Sunshine' (watercolour) by Richard Cave and 'Into the blue' by Nina O'Connell (batik collage) for joint second place. It was an exciting and diverse selection of pieces, highlighting the wide range of work currently being made by Reading Guild artists.



'Solva Harbour, Winter Sunshine' by Richard Cave Watercolour

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.





Exhibitions 2016

Report by Exhibition Secretary Carole Stephens

This year, RGA Summer Show at the University of Reading London Road Campus was absolutely stunning, presenting all aspects of RGA activities in that amazing environment of the Art Education Department, where it all began 86 years ago.

The Summer Show was opened by Dr Cathie Tissot, the head of the Institute of Education of the University of Reading, Dr Gill Hopper, the head of the Art Department and by new RGA President Clive Duncan FRBS RBA SPS NDD in front of his sculpture "The fall to Earth, Icarus IV"



University of Reading, London Road Campus



65 artists filled the long main gallery with nearly 300 pieces, including a great variety of new works from bold oil and acrylic paintings to delicate ceramics, pastels, sculpture, watercolours and every style of printing technique. In the second gallery BA Ed Art students of the Art department at the Institute of Education showed a selection of their degree work.

We introduced two new awards for the favourite work of the exhibition;; one chosen by RGA members and the other by the public. See RGA website for details and winners.



Well attended workshops ran throughout the Summer Show including Silkscreen Printing with Chris Mercier and Emily Gillmor, Costume Figure Drawing with Jenny Halstead, Watercolour Painting with Richard Cave, a taster session of our Earley Painters Workshop, Batik Workshop with Claire Drew and The Art of Architecture – capturing space and delighting in detail with John Pumfrey and Sam Knight. Although 'RGA Summer Show' ran at a loss, due to the cost of holding 'Workshops' in the venue during the exhibition, I feel very strongly that these workshops are part of RGA remit to educate. Apart from this, they draw an enthusiastic crowd to our venue, and spread the word about the exhibition. Plus I was particularly pleased that we were able to hold the workshop for 'Young People with Dementia' and have two days of school 'workshop visits'.

Two Special Events took place Sat 25 June 2016:

An Illustrated Talk "Being the Artist in Residence at Silchester – The Final Dig" by Jenny Halstead, followed by RGA Members' Discussion "Blue Sky Thinking" hosted by RGA Chairman Anthony Wilder.



RGA 23rd Royal Berkshire Hospital Corridor Exhibition

6 November-18 December 2016

Our RGA amazing team of volunteers assembled yet another splendid exhibition and all 77 works handed in for the exhibition were up on the boards on the walls by the Eye Clinic and South Entrance corridors in record time of one Sunday afternoon, to cheer the patients and visitors with our display.

Summer Painting Days

Hilary Penrose and Nina O'Connell

As I had only once or twice been on a RGA Painting Days in the past, I was unfamiliar with the format, so perhaps should not have let myself be persuaded to take this on. So, 2016 was a difficult one for us all, but I am still happy to continue into 2017 and hope to talk to Nina very soon and discuss our next year's programme.

We had three sessions in conjunction with my garden club; at The Priory in May, which I believe the RGA members that came on this did enjoy, and another one at Beale Park which Nina very kindly ran.

The Beale Park event was very interesting with lots of families present and a challenge to find animals that would stay still long enough to capture. It was an exceptionally hot day, so we had to chase the shade. Rather expensive entry price, but worth it if we find less popular times to go. Lots of refreshment and loo places!

There was also a very successful day's painting at Shiplake Church and by the river, people enjoyed this because of the variety of scenes to paint from: the riverside, golden corn field and of course the beautiful church and grounds, it was a lovely sunny day which was a bonus.



During the summer holidays the Tuesday's group continued to meet once a month to paint together. For those who were able to attend these informal gatherings took place in their gardens or allotments, followed by delicious cakes and tea!

It was certainly productive and fun way to spend sunny afternoons. Many thanks to all those who were able to provide these painting locations.













Studio Talk with Nina O'Connell

John Pumfrey



I have used this slot for a few years now, recording conversations with eminent RGA members, summarizing an interview. Not all the conversations have been so "site specific" but to sit in Nina's studio is to know Nina. I took a photograph of it but, in spite of the mounds of creativity could not capture the full breadth of her interests.

From winning the Mabel Lucy Atwell prize as a girl to exhibiting at the Royal Society of Marine Arts at the Mall Gallery, Nina in her teens studied window display (at a College of Distributive Trades), a foundation course at Croydon Art College, vocational fine art with John Hoyland, gained Dip A.D at West of England College of Art and a B.A.Hons (2/1 in Fine Art at Reading).

Nina says she is now a painter but much of her work has been in illustration and with and without a London agent she has been published by MacMillan, M&S, NewWay, and the Guardian among others. The work has ranged through storybooks for children, educational series natural history and political publications.



'Painting', for Nina, involves brush occasionally! Batik wax resist, woodblock, dyes, spatulas, fine cotton, sized board, collage tissue, ink dribble, ceramic clay and glaze are added to conventional acrylic, watercolour and oil. 'Added' not just as items on a list but added literally in mixed-media productions. Throughout, the hand of an illustrator shows a natural love of line. Always, fluid. Her current work comprises, therefore, collages and collagraphs, watercolour and oil landscapes, vibrantly coloured ceramic fantasies, batik abstract and figurative work. Textile work is her latest passion with light and colour her inspiration.



Returning to a previous role of Art Therapist and also a Classroom Assistant at a Special Needs School in the past, Nina's latest work in this realm is at a Reading primary school.





Experience of exhibiting with the Royal Society of Marine Artists

Richard Cave

Some years ago I decided that I needed to reach a bigger audience if I intended to produce art on more than a casual basis. As a first step to this I decided to submit some works to the Royal Society of Marine Artists for their annual show, on the basis that I have always enjoyed marine painting and had some works that I thought might be suitable. In this first submission I had one work selected and one rejected. This first work was sold and I was enthused to try in subsequent years. In my next submission I had two works accepted, both of which sold but the following year I had no paintings accepted.





This year I again had two works accepted, which are illustrated here, and again both were sold. Over the years I have been doing this, I have gleaned a few facts which may be useful to anyone who might care to make a submission to the RSMA or other national art organization.

- 1. Every artists' society has members and these members have an automatic right to submit and exhibit in their annual show. Number of works may vary but is generally at least three. This will take up the majority of space in an exhibition and in the case of the RSMA leaves around 200 spaces for non-members this used to be less but the recent works at the Mall Gallery have increased the number of works that can be accommodated. Given that the number of works submitted by non-members is generally between one and two thousand you will realize that competition is significant.
- 2. The issue for me was how to produce work which was not just competent but had an appeal which would make it stand out in some way. From the first work which was accepted (a detail of a buoy being craned onto a Trinity House boat in Harwich) and analysis of the non-member works that were accepted, I determined that an element of detail and a relatively realistic approach might suit my way of working. It was evident that many people submit small boats in harbours, on beaches etc. and to succeed with such images as a non-member one has to be very good.
- 3. The approach outlined above proved successful in my second annual submission but not the following year. Although I cannot be dispassionate about the quality of work submitted, I do not believe it was significantly different. From conversations with current members it would appear that the judging committee, whilst often comprising members from preceding years, is always chaired by a different member who has the deciding vote. The works selected in any year are likely to reflect the preferences of the chair of the judging committee, and regrettably this is an obstacle that one can do nothing to avoid. It should not, however, put anyone off from submitting in successive years.

4. Finally, the issue of pricing and selling work. The Mall Gallery impose a minimum price of £300.00 and take a commission of 40% plus VAT which equates to 48% - nearly half the proposed price. My attitude has always been to sell the works that I submit and I have always priced them at a level which is likely to sell. Setting a price level that I might get when exhibiting with RGA I have made an allowance for the commission, the submission costs and travelling to deliver (and possibly collect) the works, which gives me a price somewhere between £300.00 and £400.00. On querying the purchaser of the first work sold from the RSMA exhibition, he admitted that it was one of the few works within his budget and this, rather than a good financial return, has always influenced my approach. I have a medium to long term view about submissions to such societies which involves becoming a member, but this cannot be achieved without having works accepted in at least six exhibitions. Outside of this there is an element of recognition of ones work at a national level which gives some reassurance to the work that we produce and I would encourage anybody to submit for this reason alone. If some of the comments made above seem rather cynical this would be to misread my intentions. Knowing the circumstances surrounding any exhibition will give you a better chance of success and an understanding if you get a rejection, as it should encourage you to try again.

Artists' Inbox Maria Teresa Molner

The mobile media stops people looking around at the real world of colour and light and that is then we, with our gifts, bring the attention of our audiences to it. I came to this conclusion after having a successful exhibition in Spain this year. Artists. We communicate with our tools and when someone looks at our works of art they can read our thoughts, we have an international language which does not need translation and speaks for itself. For my experience of talking to people, I have come to this point.







Picture of the Month

Martina Hildebrandt

What a fantastic year of choices it has been, showing a wide range of RGA artists in a broad range of styles and media. "Picture of the Month" is a way for members to get involved, stay in touch and see what other members are producing, by choosing a work from the RGA "Online Art Gallery".

It's great also for those who may not be able to join in other activities due to busy lives or living further afield. For me it's a joy to email the current months artist with the news that their work has been chosen, and then the anticipation, as I wait for the next choice to be made. I know that everyone feels such an honour to have been chosen and I can feel the great care and thought that is given to the next choice. Thank you to all those who kept the "baton" going this year. If you are an exhibiting member, why not take the opportunity submit 4 works to the RGA "Online Art Gallery", it's a treat to see something new.

For all you need to know on how to submit, go to the "Online Art Gallery" at www.rga-artists.org.uk and click on Gallery Submissions! Or email Martina at webmaster@rga-artists.org.uk























Prices Formula

With thanks to the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, here is their formula: (amount you want x100) divided by 58 = retail price

Note from Tom Heydeman

The 'Prices Formula' seems to be calculated for a commision rate of about 42%. Where the commision rate is only 25% the relevant formula would be close to this: (amount you want x100) divided by 75 = retail price

Word by RGA President Clive Duncan



Although the Small Western Room at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition is famous for traditionally cramming in as many small paintings as the walls can hold, most small galleries are forced to do the same in order to show as much work as possible. The Fire Station Gallery is a case in point.

The RGA Summer Exhibition however housed at the University of Reading's Department of Education was an opportunity for art to breathe. Not only was it a shared space with the University student work but it was designed and hung with imagination and displayed in such a way that each artist had his or her own space.

Although we are conditioned to look at art in isolation, it can be remarkably revealing to see a collection of works placed together by each individual artist thereby involving the viewer in the artist's personal creative journey. Such was the success of the Summer Show.

I was concerned that my first contribution to the RGA newsletter is too brief and isn't paying enough attention to the individual artists or their work.

After only two shows, one in Henley and one at Reading University I am getting a feel for the work produced but I can't as yet, remember names. My overview is that the Guild has some remarkably talented members. The work as a whole is vibrant and distinctive both in approach and medium.

The presentation in the Summer Show gave each artist a personal space displaying work in progress and finished pieces, a combination which really engages the viewer. The opportunity to place individual

studio environments in a gallery setting is not only an exciting way of looking at art, it reveals the mind, eye and hand of the artist. When such space is available, the use of larger canvases ought to be encouraged as many subjects cry out for larger formats. Larger works tend to be made with ones whole body, smaller works with the hand and wrist.

I would very much like to see some life size drawings in the next show as one learns so much about form and shape on that scale. We forget that the convention that most of us use miniaturises everything we see.

I look forward to the next show and thank you to all the members.

