

RGGA

Annual Review 2023–2024



READING GUILD OF ARTISTS



www.rga-artists.org.uk

Reading Guild of Artists CIO Founded 1930 Reg. Charity No. 1182221

View from the Chair

by Linda Saul

Firstly I'd like to welcome the many new members who have joined – 66 new members joined in 2023 and 20 in the first six weeks of the New Year. I encourage you to get involved and meet other members if you haven't already done so. RGA Fridays, Summer Painting Days, Earley Painters and Teatime Socials are all excellent opportunities to get to know other artists.

The monthly Teatime Socials are always on a Tuesday at The Narrowboat* (previously Bel and The Dragon) at Blake's Lock and we have a healthy core of regulars. The date is given in the Monthly Bulletin. Why not pop along and say hello, new faces are always welcome.

I'd like to thank Trish Roberts, our Exhibition Secretary, for her sterling work in delivering three successful exhibitions in 2023, and everyone else, including council members and the exhibition team, who contribute so much to making exhibitions happen. Particular thanks should be made to Jane Somner, our Publicity Officer, who is sadly standing down this year but exceeded her own usual high standards with an amazing PR campaign for our 92nd Annual Exhibition in 2023.

For 2024 we have another Small Works Exhibition at the Turbine House to look forward to, and the exciting prospect of having our 93rd Annual Exhibition at the University of Reading. It has been a very rare thing over recent years for us to have our Annual Exhibition in Reading but this year we return to the Institute of Education Art Building, a lovely space that we have used in the past for our Summer Shows. We are indebted to the University for inviting us again. At the time of writing our Reading Gaol Challenge, which was open to all members, has closed to entries and we are feverishly working on an online exhibition of the works – keep an eye on your email for more information.

The monthly email bulletin remains our main means of communication with members together with the new members' website or "wiki". Whenever we have an exhibition or challenge the entry details are on the wiki. Links are provided in the bulletins and other occasional emails. The wiki also includes information on how exhibiting members can request/update a gallery page on the website. We like to notify members of other members' events such as exhibitions and art



trails in the bulletins, but we can only do that if people let us know what they are doing.

Finally, thank you to our hard-working council members who keep the RGA show on the road throughout the year, planning event programmes, doing the less glamorous but necessary administration, communicating with members ... the list goes on. A case in point is the document you hold in your hands – the Annual Review – for which we are indebted to our Editors, Jane Somner, Martina Hildebrandt and Markus Hildebrandt, and to the many others who have contributed content.

* At the time of going to print with this Annual Review we have sadly learnt that The Narrowboat is closing, therefore we are looking for a new venue for our Teatime Socials. Please look out for the Monthly Bulletin for the latest news!

Monthly Bulletins – are you receiving us?

There are three **main sources of up-to-date information** and notifications for RGA Members:

Members' Wiki: <https://members.rga-artists.org.uk/wiki>

RGA website: <https://rga-artists.org.uk>

Monthly Bulletin (sent out to individual members by email at the start of each month)

Unfortunately, each month we receive a number of email 'bounce backs' which means that some members are not receiving their Bulletin. Typically these 'bounce backs' are from email addresses ending in domain names such as @waitrose.com, @talktalk.net, @rocketmail.com.

If you have not received an RGA Bulletin by email within the last three months please report this by emailing communications@rga-artists.org.uk (ideally providing an alternative email address if you have one), and we will look into alternative options.

Thanks, Kerry Webb (RGA Administrative Officer)

On the Back Cover: Picture of the Month artists, (left top to bottom) Carole Stephens, Sue Tait, Lou Jessop, Nina O'Connell, (middle top to bottom) Paul Woolley, Isaac Pascal, Richard Cave, Linda Graves, (right top to bottom) Robert Fitzmaurice, Helen Lunn, William Redman, Kate Ellison-Bourne.

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Introduction

A look back and to the future

The nature of an Annual Review is to look back at the year just gone, to report on what the RGA has been up to as a group, take stock and say well done and thank you. We also take a chance to look at what a few individual members have been doing beyond the RGA, which may inspire us all. One look at the Monthly Bulletin resulted in the exclamation "Gosh, what busy members we have!" So, be it a small project for one's own well-being, organizing a London exhibition or appearing on TV, we can all dream and plan for the future. And it is for that future we want to sow a few seeds in the minds of our members, to take another look at the environment and your recycling and how our practice is informed and changed by it. We don't have the answers but hope that through our workshops and in conversation we can all make a change. And it is for the future of the RGA, as Reading's oldest active art group, we make no apologies and remind you that volunteering is key to our continuation and indeed survival. Our membership has swelled over the last few years to figures perhaps never seen before. But, we say once again, **please volunteer, get involved and join in** (and not just in the fun glamorous jobs!). In our 94th year, let us have the next generation of members get the Reading Guild of Artists to that 100th Anniversary! It won't happen without you.



The RGA Annual Review was produced and edited by Jane Somner, Martina Hildebrandt and Markus Hildebrandt

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About Us

The Reading Guild of Artists (RGA), founded in 1930, is a diverse group of professional and amateur artists in the Berkshire area. Membership is open to all and new members are very welcome, from complete beginners to experienced professionals, or those just interested in art.

Run by our members for our members on a voluntary basis.

Your elected **RGA Council for 2023–2024** were:

Officers: President – Fiona Talkington; Chair – Linda Saul; Vice Chair – Mick McNicholas; Secretary – Shelagh Casebourne; Exhibitions Secretary – Trish Roberts; Treasurer – Clare Buchta; Membership Secretary – Lou Jessop; Publicity Officer – Jane Somner; Webmaster – *vacant* (acting Linda Saul); Administrative Officer – Kerry Webb; Education Secretary – Kate Ellison-Bourne. **Councillors:** Elizabeth Baldin, Liz Chaderton, Calina Lefter, Sally Castle, Paul Whitehouse, Martina Hildebrandt, Lesley Redmond, Connell McMenamin.

Non-council posts:

Exhibitions Team: Trish Roberts, Liz Real, Paul Woolley, Mick McNicholas, Heather McAteer, Ros Ingham, Calina Lefter, Carole Stephens

Archivist: Martina Hildebrandt

Upgrade Secretary: Paul Whitehouse

Earley Painters: Clare Buchta, Carole Stephens

RGA Fridays: *vacant*

Summer Painting Days:

Shelagh Casebourne, Kate Ellison-Bourne

For current information about the RGA Council, events and activities visit www.rga-artists.org.uk where you can also find previous Annual Reviews and CIO Constitution.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this Annual Review.

Christmas Lecture given by Dr Hannah Lyons

by Paul Whitehouse

Print and Prejudice – Women Printers, 1700–1930

On Friday 1st December 2023, RGA members were treated to an excellent presentation by Hannah, recently appointed to the post of Curator at The University of Reading Art Collections. Hannah drew on her PhD research, showing us how women had contributed to printmaking over the past three hundred years.

The earliest recorded woman printmaker to feature in Hannah's talk was Elizabeth Blackwell (1699–1758) who illustrated *A Curious Herbal*, published in 1737, at a time when scientific interest in the medicinal uses of plants was growing. Other printmakers followed (including Jeanne-Antionette Poisson, Anne Allen and the sisters Letitia and Elizabeth Byrne), often fighting for recognition as artists, or working as part of the family enterprise producing etchings and engravings. Hannah showed us some images of engravings done by Queen Victoria – evidently a competent engraver – though her interest in the medium was probably not to support her family!



Portrait of Jeanne-Antionette Poisson in her atelier with etching needle by Claude-Henri Watelet c. 1756–64 (printed) V&A Collection

Moving into the twentieth century, the work of Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) included prints like *La Toilette* and *The Coiffure* (printed 1890–91) that clearly showed the influence of Japanese prints that were popular at the time. Some exquisite examples were made by Ethel Kirkpatrick (1869–1966), based in Cornwall, at a time when various artist colonies were becoming active in that region. Hannah completed her presentation with some intriguing woodcuts and engravings by Clare Leighton (1898–1989) suggesting a clear role of the medium in fine art in the early part of the century, that continues to this day.

After questions from the audience we enjoyed refreshments, organised by Clare Buchta, in preparation for Mick McNicholas' art quiz. Always enjoyable and often quite hilarious, Mick managed to keep control of the teams and everyone learned a lot about art! Hopefully we will all remember the facts in case the same questions crop up in the future.



“An apple a day ...”

by Martina Hildebrandt

You'll often hear advice to “draw every day”, “always carry a sketchbook”, “experiment” – all things you *should* or *must* do to be an artist. Even just the thought of this could actually make you feel less productive, stressed, blank, in fear of your sketchbook.

What if all you want is a little something creative to do! Without the exhibiting, or displaying online, or needing to think of what to create. None of this you *should* or *must*. Perhaps even use some of those forgotten art materials bought long ago and never really used.

And so began “An apple a day ...” in an old unused sketchbook, not needing to think what the subject would be, I used whatever materials I found sat around me. No pressure, no extra money spent, no need to show anyone. Have fun! 5 mins or several hours. If I missed a day, ho hum, never mind, do two or more the next or not.

That it was the 1st January was just a coincidence, not a New Year's resolution or challenge. And I did then show some to friends, or popped a few online. For me by the end of the year and well over the 365 “apples a day”, it remained that little something creative to do, still just for fun, and that it will (and did) lead to finished artworks, that's a bonus.



Funny, it seems to be “a thing” at the moment, to create one new thing every day. See artists such as Emma Carlow, Janice McDonald and Margo in Margate for more daily art inspiration, and how each of us can make it our own.

Reconnaissance at Islington Arts Centre

by Connell McMenamain

At the beginning of 2023 (probably in a pub where all the best ideas happen), fellow RGA member Mick McNicholas and I discussed the idea of having a group show at Islington Arts Factory. At that point we didn't know with whom we would be exhibiting, what the name or subject matter would be or really what was involved or how we'd make it happen. All we did know was that we had to book the venue fairly early. So we booked and trusted that, with a bit of commitment, the universe might conspire to help us and the rest would somehow fall into place.

The result was "Reconnaissance", a group exhibition of figurative art and portraiture by seven artists, which took place at Islington Arts Centre at the beginning of November 2023.

The exhibiting artists were RGA members Connell McMenamain and Mick McNicholas, as well as Simon Davis, Andrew Hitchcock, Andy Norris, Anastasia Pollard and William Savage.

The name "Reconnaissance" came from exploring the double meaning of the word and the fact that it contains two contradictory ideas. The English meaning is 'to explore the unknown' (before taking action) which can be contrasted with the French meaning, 'to re-discover or recognise what we already know'. As applied to figurative subject matter, this

invited the artists to discover from observation what had been previously unknown about their subjects whilst at the same time perhaps rediscovering or recognising something that had been previously known. It also invited the viewer to apply that same idea to both the subject matter and to the artists themselves.



The venue for this magnificent show was an old, converted church with the stereotypical leaking roof (which presented a few challenges for the hang, especially during a wet week in November). Leaks notwithstanding, it provided a great space with nice high ceilings and plenty of character!

The hang itself was reasonably straightforward. It was great to have experienced artists with previous exhibition hanging/curation experience to provide useful advice, guidance, tools



and cups of tea! I for one had never thought about the rhythm and flow of the work and how the size and format of the pieces related to each other within a space. We also considered colour relationships, framing choices and balancing subject matter – for example avoiding a run of all female nudes or all male portraits.

The private view was held on the Friday and, given it was a cold November evening, was well attended. There were some sales on the night, lots of positive feedback and a good opportunity to network and meet new people. The main point for me though, was to show the work, in real life, to real people. Social media is all well and good (and an invaluable tool), but perhaps we can all discover something new or re-discover or recognise what we already know, by seeing more work and artists in person.



Exhibition Secretary's Report

by Trish Roberts

It's been another busy year, with our exhibiting artists taking the opportunity to enter their work across three significant exhibitions. Congratulations and thank you to all who took part, maintaining the RGA's high standard across a wide range of subject matter and disciplines.

RBH Corridor Exhibition No.28: Mon 6 Mar – Sat 29 Apr 2023

As well as sales at the Royal Berkshire Hospital, which generate much-needed funds for their Volunteer Services, it is also rewarding to receive compliments from visitors, patients and staff alike at the hospital. Often the art works are still being hung when we receive very positive comments. Similarly, while taking down the work we're frequently told, by staff members, how sad they'll be to see the work taken away. It was logistically more challenging in 2023 as the boards allocated were located in 3 disparate areas of the building. Nevertheless, we presented a coherent and well-balanced exhibition of members' work.



92nd Annual Exhibition 'Continuum': Fri 21 Jul – Tue 1 Aug

Saw us return to the Old Fire Station Gallery, Henley-on-Thames. In all, 69 of our exhibiting artists produced work for 'Continuum', with a record number of works, for recent times, to display. It can be a challenge to hang everything in a limited space, and this bumper crop necessitated some editing. On these occasions, the RGA Council takes on the selection process via a 'blind' voting system. It is always with regret when artworks can't be hung, and so we found ourselves seeking out extra space and spare nails in every corner and square inch of the gallery. We even considered hanging some in the kitchen area! In all, just 10 pieces didn't find a place, while over 150 were hung or displayed, with every artist having at least one work on show. The Private View attracted a huge crowd of members, guests and media representatives – so many in fact that at times they spilled out onto the pavement outside. This may have had partly something to do with 'AR' – a virtual display outside in augmented reality! Thanks to whizwall.com for setting this up, it presented a different way of seeing our exhibited art works via your mobile phone!

Small Works '23: Fri 22 Sep – Sun 1 Oct

The Turbine House at the Riverside Museum is proving to be a very popular venue and many of our artists embraced 'going small' for this historic site. This, our second foray into this fascinating old building, saw 54 artists coming forward with their 'small works'. As there were so many artists taking part we limited submissions to one per artist. However, in future we plan to give our artists the opportunity to submit two smaller-sized works each. Look out for notices via our Monthly Bulletin. Once again, the Private View was well attended by enthusiastic guests, members and representatives of the Press.

It takes a great deal of time and teamwork to plan and bring to fruition a successful exhibition. Over recent years we have

taken bold steps into unknown territories such as South Hill Park Arts Centre and the Turbine House. As a guild we have continued to develop and present high quality exhibitions. I would like to thank all those who helped during the year, especially the Exhibition Team members: Liz Real, Ros Ingham, Paul Woolley, Heather McAteer, Mick McNicholas, Calina Lefter and Carole Stephens. I am also grateful to our Chair, Linda Saul, who attended our team meetings and pitched in with all aspects of exhibition organisation. Don't forget, if you would like to help, please come forward and let us know; just a small contribution can make a big difference to the organisation and smooth running of our exhibitions. It is a great way to meet and get to know other artists and also to participate in helping to showcase art works produced by members of the Reading Guild of Artists.

As ever, the lack of exhibition space in our own town of Reading has presented us with challenges. But looking forward, we are 'back in town' with our 93rd Annual Exhibition taking place at the University of Reading in the summer of 2024 and the Small Works '24 Exhibition due in the autumn - down by the riverside where Reading's rivers meet.

Marie Dyson & Pauline Mercier Awards 2023

by Jane Somner

Dr Hannah Lyons, Curator of Art Collections at the University of Reading, was "delighted to be the assessor at this year's event". The awards were presented during a packed preview party at the Old Fire Station Gallery in Henley-on-Thames for the 92nd Annual Exhibition 'Continuum'. Dr Lyons said the number of works on show and the variety and high standard of RGA members' artistic output was quite extraordinary. Jenny Halstead won the Marie Dyson Award for her beautiful pastel painting *Savaged Olive Grove: Sicily*. Hannah said of the winning work "A perfect marriage of colour and line – I loved this work. I was immediately drawn to the luminosity, the texture, and the subject matter. I felt like I could stand in front of it for hours, close my eyes, and feel the heat of the sun on my face!"



Savaged Olive Grove: Sicily
by Jenny Halstead

Hannah also gave a special mention to Ros Ingham and Trish Roberts whose works were highly commended. Of Ros' *Ghost Tree* she said "It would be easy to walk past this very small artwork, and sometimes small things do receive less critical attention, but I was captivated by the intimacy of this exquisite etching". With reference to Trish's works she said "I have a soft spot for printmaking, and Trish Roberts' linocuts are technically sophisticated and beautiful!"

This was the second year of the Pauline Mercier Award for a 3D work and Hannah said she found it really hard to choose but was pleased to present Shirley Smith with the award for her two ceramic vases *Scoria Oranje & Scoria Turkoois*. Hannah said about the winning 3D artworks "Although I love the line-up of *Pecking Order* (also by Shirley) it was the almost volcanic, ceramic vases that really did it for me. Despite



Scoria Oranje & Scoria Turkoois
by Shirley Smith

their fragility, I felt these ceramics had a strong presence in the exhibition space, and I was immediately drawn towards them. All of Smith's work is original and exciting – as evidenced by the three pieces in the exhibition – but I wanted to touch these vases, feel the clay beneath my fingers and pop them in my bag and walk out of the door!"

Hannah also gave a special mention to Roger Smalley, Carole Stephens, and Paul Whitehouse, whose works were highly commended saying "I felt it was an exceptionally strong category and it was really difficult to choose!"



Shirley Smith and Dr Hannah Lyons

Farewells – Obituaries

Memories of Jacqueline Brown by Clare Buchta

I knew Jackie for a long time. Her husband Tony is a good friend of my husband, having met through their love of the art of Karate back in the days when we were all just married. She decided to join the karate club too and achieved her brown belt. An enthusiastic and bubbly person who had always loved art, Jackie took early retirement (to spend more time with her husband who worked night shifts) and she decided to take her art more seriously. Jackie enrolled on an Open Access art course at Bracknell College as a stepping stone to develop her skills. Daytime sleeping was a problem for Tony however as during the Sculpture and 3D sections of her course, Jackie would be in the garden with various power tools enthusiastically creating a sculpture piece! She finally found her niche painting large expressive abstract paintings, certainly a lot quieter than the sculpture! Jackie exhibited at shows in the south of England and I encouraged her to join the RGA but she did not get around to upgrading due to the pandemic. Jackie was very ill with Covid a few times and, not recovering very well after the last bout, she was finally diagnosed with a brain tumour and she died within a few months. Jackie's passing has left a big gap in the lives of her husband, family and friends and she is much missed. Equipment from her studio has been kindly donated to the RGA to raise funds for us and the Brain Tumour Charity.



A tale of family history, a block of alabaster and unexploded bombs

by Paul Whitehouse

Artists often take a keen interest in the materials they use but, when investigating the source of some stone I'd inherited, I uncovered quite a saga...

After my father died in 2017, we discovered two large pieces of pink alabaster in his shed. I knew he'd attended Stafford Art School in the 1940s where he'd studied sculpture, but these pieces were untouched. I took one along to a stone mason who excitedly suggested it might be 'Fauld' alabaster, an important source of English alabaster.

Intrigued, I started some enquiries and found the Fauld mine was near Tutbury in Staffordshire, on the Chellaston seam, close to where my father would have been an art student. The mine is now run by British Gypsum, who stopped alabaster extraction in the 1940s but continues to mine gypsum for building materials. The only alabaster to have emerged from Fauld since that time was James Elliott's new altar at Leicester Cathedral to coincide with Richard III's reburial in 2015.

The local museum at Tutbury was so helpful. They tracked down documents and photographs of alabaster mining at Fauld and invited me to compare 'my' alabaster with pieces in the museum. I took up the offer and found a good match – the alabaster has a salmon-pink colour with distinctive streaks of brown marl running through it.

We also discovered a fascinating but less-than-glorious history of the Fauld mine. In WWII, the mine was used to store high explosive munitions for the RAF but an accident in November 1944 led to one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history and the largest to occur on UK soil. 3522 tons of munitions exploded, resulting in the deaths of 70 people including many Italian workers who, until Italy's surrender, had been prisoners-of-war. It also created a huge crater, 90m deep and 230m wide that we were able to walk around. Now tree-lined and full of wildlife, the heavily protected crater is a distinctive feature in the Staffordshire countryside, with pieces of alabaster scattered over the paths and tall fences protecting visitors from the risk of unexploded bombs.

So, an unassuming piece of stone in a shed has unearthed quite a story, linking family history, stone carving, Staffordshire geology and an horrific but little-known wartime accident. I'm reminded of the history of the stone every time I pick up a chisel.



James Elliott's new altar at Leicester Cathedral

Alabaster piece by Paul Whitehouse



Lectures & Projectors

by Jane Somner

Several years have passed since our first Christmas Lecture, delivered by Clive Duncan in 2019. It had been Clive's idea to establish a

'lecture series' over the course of the year, both for members' enjoyment in a social setting as well as for our education! We have managed to organise a few lectures since then on various art related subjects and we hope to develop the series in the future. With that in mind, the RGA Council decided to purchase a projector to make life easier for visiting lecturers.

With advice from various sources, Paul Whitehouse went shopping and we are now the proud owners of a Viewsonic Digital Projector. (Its first outing was for our Christmas Lecture in 2023). This purchase was made possible with funds raised from the sale of Carole Pembroke's art materials which her family kindly donated to us. Members of the Pembroke family have been updated and wish us all the best with our new projector. We are now planning for the coming year and we would be really happy to hear from anyone who would like to deliver a lecture to RGA members using the most up-to-date equipment.

Summer Painting Days

by Shelagh Casebourne

If you have a suitable garden and would be prepared to host a painting day next year, or if you can suggest a good painting and sketching location, please let me know at secretary@rga-artists.org.uk as we are always looking for new places to paint.

Our 2023 summer painting days started in April at Monks Pond Cottage in Binfield. Eight hardy souls braved the chilly weather and the setting of Kate Ellison-Bourne's beautiful walled garden resulted in some lovely outcomes.



The month of May saw us taking part in a special painting day on the University of Reading Campus, where the RGA was invited to join in the University's Community Festival, hosting a paint-out which was open to the wider community. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Robert van der Noort, selected RGA council member Liz Chaderton's image of the library as his favourite artwork of the day.



Our June painting day took place at the Abbey Ruins in Reading, where we had been invited to paint and sketch the Rabble Theatre group's technical rehearsals for their production of Henry I. Tiered seating gave us a clear view of the actors and the stage and the setting was incredible!



In July a group of us spent the day at the National Trust garden at Cliveden, just outside Maidenhead. It was beautifully sunny and we picnicked in the water garden, gathering for our throw-down at the end of the day by the outdoor café.



Dinton Pastures was the setting for a showery August painting day. Although it's a good location, we have decided that the £8 parking fee is rather steep, so this might be our last visit there for a while.



The last meeting for the summer was at St James Church in Finchampstead. The churchyard was surprisingly busy with lots of interested dog-walkers and a junior football practice providing a steady stream of passers-by. A wedding was taking place in the afternoon, so we started and finished early, but this worked well, with some folks adjourning to the nearby pub at lunchtime!



There's something about painting or sketching outside which fixes the experience so clearly in your mind; you only have to see your artwork to be transported back to the sights and sounds of the day. Kate, Tizzy and I have been busy planning our 2024 programme, so keep an eye out for the monthly bulletins and also see information on the website. We look forward to painting with you somewhere this summer!



Mary Law, a regular at Summer Painting Days, with her painting of Monks Pond Cottage

Acrylic Wastewater Disposal

by Linda Saul

When I began using acrylic paint on a regular basis, David Attenborough's *Blue Planet II* series was raising awareness of plastic pollution in the oceans, so I decided to research what I should do with wastewater containing acrylic residue.

The only paint manufacturer I could find who provided advice on this was Golden. Their instructions "*Removing Water-Based Paint Solids from Rinse Water*" at <https://justpaint.org/removing-water-based-paint-solids-from-rinse-water/> describe how to filter the solids out of the water, leaving clear water that can be poured down the drain. The instructions were simple to follow once I had sourced the necessary kit. I now have a system that works well. I collect my wastewater in a 5L bottle and process it once the bottle is full. I am not going to describe the details of the process – I recommend you follow Golden's instructions – but hopefully my advice might help you avoid a couple of pitfalls.

The process involves using Aluminium Sulfate to cause **flocculation*** – the paint particles clinging together forming larger clumps that can then be filtered out. Hydrated Lime is then used to neutralise the mixture. Both chemicals are available in powder form. The chemicals are fairly easy to get hold of, but check how much you are buying and how you are going to store it. Hydrated lime is often sold in 25kg packs. The Golden method requires about 10g of each chemical per gallon of wastewater, so 25kg might be overdoing it!

You need to be careful when handling the chemicals – don't breathe the dust and try not to get it on your skin – so gloves, safety goggles and possibly a mask are recommended.

The Golden diagram shows a funnel hovering conveniently above a bucket – but not how to hold it in place. I advise that you don't use a funnel. A colander that just sits on your bucket and is the right size to hold your filters is so much simpler. A colander also has more than one hole for the water to run through.

The filtering process is quite slow so you need large filters that you can fill and leave for a couple of hours. 4 or 6 cup coffee filters aren't big enough. I use Bunn brand (part number 20138.1000) commercial basket filters bought from eBay. Laid out flat they are 35cm diameter with a 13cm base and are sold in packs of 500.

I fill the filter with wastewater then leave it for a couple of hours or so before finishing off with a second pour.

I don't have an environmentally friendly solution for disposing of the solid residue left in the filter. My best suggestion is landfill – surely better than the ocean or your drains.

Golden now have a product, *Crash* at <https://www.goldenpaints.com/crashpaintsolids>, which provides the chemicals in liquid form. This must be more convenient than handling them as powders, but is much more expensive.



***flocculation** – one of my favourite words as it is also the cause of watercolour granulation!

The Artist and the Environment – discuss

by Martina Hildebrandt

We probably all try to do "our bit" to be more environmentally friendly in our daily lives. Use less energy, reduce plastic packaging, think about how we travel.

But it's much harder to know what you can do to be more environmentally sound as an artist. Conflicting advice and an array of "eco" products make this sometimes hard to reconcile. As artists we often use a ton of art materials, definitely loads of paper and can create a lot of waste. And, we use chemicals that often get washed down the drain!

Ideas that float around include: using old rags instead of wet wipes; are oil based inks and paints better than water-washables and acrylic; a glue stick rather than spray adhesive; traditional hessian-backed lino (which can be composted?)

rather than plastic softcut; use plain mount board rather than foam board; gum tape over masking tape. And, can paper that has been drawn and painted on be recycled? All are open to debate.

There are increasingly many more products marketed as being more "eco friendly" such as paper made from bamboo, recycled papers, starch greeting card wraps, pencils and easels made from sustainable wood sources.

Whatever your practice, like Linda, we can all be a bit more proactive about how as artists we interact with our planet. After all, it's not just our home, but very often the source of our inspiration!

Life in Liverpool

by Paul Whitehouse

Painting course organised by RGA Vice Chair, Mick McNicholas

It's always a pleasure to spend time in the company of Mick McNicholas but in September I enjoyed four days on a life painting course that Mick had organised in his home city of Liverpool. Tutored by James Bland NEAC (www.jamesblandpaintings.com) the course was at The Bluecoat in the centre of the city. Originally a charity school built in the 1700s, The Bluecoat (www.thebluecoat.org.uk) is now a contemporary arts centre running exhibitions, art classes and an outstanding gallery shop.

James led a group of twelve artists in a series of figure and portrait studies, with two models – Philip and Victoria – in a day-long pose for the last day. James is easily the most athletic tutor I've experienced, almost leaping over and around easels to *really* look at the subject. At one point the model was taken ill but was enthusiastically replaced by a staff member from the neighbouring Cass Art shop – she was very good!

Sound drawing always underpins a decent figure painting (as I know to my cost) but James emphasised the application of paint to do a lot of the drawing for you, focussing on tone (where are the darks, the lightest lights and the mid-tones?) and – more tricky – identifying the cool and warm areas. This gives licence to introduce colours that you might not normally reach for when figure painting – blues and greens for cool areas, reds and yellows in warm areas.

The fellow artists were from all over the UK and all enthusiastic and remarkably talented (you'll have seen one in a recent episode of Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year). We also enjoyed a full social programme in which Mick took us to pubs in parts of Liverpool that only a true scouser would know and, of course, a good deal of pub scrawling along the way. A great week and, for me, a refreshing return to figure painting after a long gap.



Earley Painters

by Clare Buchta

The Early Painters' workshops offer our participants artistic inspiration during the darker autumn and winter months of the year. All are made welcome on the Tuesday afternoons at Maiden Place Community Centre in Earley to paint, draw, collage and socialise. We have tea as well! Clare and Carole come up with some unusual ideas for displays, subjects and techniques which can be interpreted in any way in any safe medium.



The autumn term kicked off with seaside memories – just to keep the holiday mood going. Working from a nautical display of sailing boats and lighthouses interspersed with shells and fishing floats, the room was soon filled with sailing exploits and rough seas! Using gouache or gum Arabic we decided to have a go at ink resist techniques. With a good display of seed heads the results were good even if the process was a bit of a challenge.

The October set-up provided an abundance of fruit, vegetables and flowers, a fantastic display from which to work! Everyone enthusiastically painted or collaged the colourful scene, such a variety of interpretations.

Back to childhood for the next challenge, a collection of vintage cars, buses and lorries, a crane or two, with the patina of age and children's play.

The end of October's session fell on Halloween, and a pumpkin seller and a scary local werewolf turned up to pose for us!

Next we had the challenge of making a '3D Advent Calendar', which was great fun but finishing at home was necessary. Coinciding with a very wet autumn week a collection of colourful umbrellas uplifted spirits and proved an interesting subject for November. The last session of the year in December, Myths and Tales of the winter season was the subject. This was a great eye opener to learn of different stories and traditions from other countries.

And so to 2024 and the spring programme so far has been really interesting and well attended.

The dark January days were cheered with an idea using negative spaces over a brightly painted background. Well loved old teddies and dolls joined us for the next session and this week as I write we had some fantastic shoes and rugged boots to inspire. We are looking forward to our costumed model session and the remainder of the workshops during the spring term. Do check out the RGA website for further details and come along and join us at Earley Painters.



Honorary Degree

Guild member and past President of the RGA, Martin Andrews, has recently been awarded an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters by the University of Reading. The ceremony took place on 7 December 2023 in the Great Hall on the London Road campus and the degree was awarded in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the University and town. After graduating from the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at Reading in 1976, he joined the staff at Reading Museum and Art Gallery and pursued a career in museum and exhibition design. In 1990 he returned to his old department in the University as a lecturer in graphic design and later specialised in printing history.

He has lectured in this country and abroad and published a number of books including a biography of the artist Robert Gibbings and a book on the work of Allen Seaby (both past members of the Guild). He has always taken an active part in developing the arts in Reading and is a painter and printmaker and has recently begun working in ceramics. Since retiring he has redesigned the University's Ure Museum of Greek archaeology, and the medical museum at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and has recently been a set consultant for television period dramas. Martin continues to exhibit his work and has written and illustrated books for Reading's Two Rivers Press. Martin has expressed his gratitude for the award: 'I feel both humble and honoured to receive the degree which came entirely out of the blue'.



Upgrading

Everyone joining the RGA does so as an Affiliate Member who may then 'upgrade' to Exhibiting Member by submitting a dossier of their work, with a statement and description of their practice, to an upgrading panel. The panel members review each application and vote on the outcome after detailed discussion. At this time, the upgrading process is still completed online via zoom.

We had two upgrading 'rounds' in 2023-2024; twenty-nine members submitted applications. Eighteen were successful. Congratulations to all of the following: Fred Bennett, Andi Gallagher, Jo Lillywhite, Antoine de Bronac, Lynda Tolworthy, Qin Yue, Martin Rolfe, Susan Cunningham, Georgia Jackson, Ruth Gavin, Paul Nemeth, Gareth Jones, Marion Smallbones, Damien Draven, Kay Medaglia, Ewan Ashley, Samar Zeeshan and Paola Minekov.

Becoming an Exhibiting Member allows you to submit work to any of the RGA exhibitions and include examples of your work in the online gallery on the RGA website. If you're interested in upgrading, look out for application deadlines in the Monthly Bulletin. We normally have two calls each year, timed so that successful applicants can submit work to the Annual Exhibition as well as to other exhibitions that may be scheduled in that year.

Paul Whitehouse, the Upgrading Secretary, says "We appreciate the work that goes into each application and we provide feedback to all applicants, both successful and unsuccessful. At present, we are putting plans in place to offer more detailed feedback to invited members through group critiques of their work".

Upgraded

by Georgia Jackson

I was inspired to join the RGA after enjoying exhibitions in the corridors of the Royal Berkshire Hospital over the years. When I left my career as a doctor, I felt a strong need to rekindle my long-buried love of drawing and painting. Covid and the resulting lockdowns provided space and more time to create, but the thought of exhibiting was daunting and frankly terrifying! I met Jane (Somner) through the lovely community of the Beenham Art Group, where I get my weekly 'art fix' amidst life and work. I was encouraged to submit for upgrading, and I'm so grateful for the opportunity. My next step – to exhibit at the 93rd Annual Exhibition or 'Small Works' 24' – or both! They do say that committing publicly to a goal makes it real, so there we go!



Suspended, pastel by Georgia Jackson

Sky Arts LAOTY

by Rebecca Howard

It was a hot June day last year when I was invited to be one of the 'pod artists' for this year's Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year programme. The film crew asked me to be on site at Hever Castle by 7.30am and to bring all necessary equipment with me. I was to meet the crew at their converted bus, ready for action. It was a real mixture of nerves and excitement when I drew up in my car. I met the other (very talented) artists straight away and we set about trying to calm each other by talking about our own disciplines. Soon enough it was time to walk down to the pods where we had our first glimpse of the view we would be painting.

We were all 'miked-up' and shown to our own pod and the filming began! It was a nail-biting day for me as I was positioned between two extremely talented artists, one of whom managed to fill most of his canvas after the first hour! But we were all encouraged so much by both the judges and the film crew that I was put at ease which enabled me to get my head into the task in hand.

By the time the first hour was completed I had a good idea of what I wanted to achieve. If only I had several days in which to accomplish it! That said, I adopted a faster way to apply the paint on the canvas and managed to get some features down in between being filmed and the judges asking me questions. We also had the added issue of Hever Castle being located on the flight path – so each time a plane flew overhead we were asked by the camera crew to do a re-take!

Once the final hour came I was furiously trying to finish my painting whilst hearing the comments of the growing crowd around me; it was a fast and furious race to finish. Thankfully I managed to do enough to almost finish my piece and then it was the delightful moment when I got to see what my fellow artists had achieved. I was amazed at the standard of the pieces that had been produced, I felt very honoured to be part of such a talented bunch.

So to round up, I had a brilliant day filming with LAOTY. The crew and judges were incredibly supportive and helpful, we had glorious weather and I came up with a piece of work that was passable considering the time limitations. So would I do it again? Yes in a heartbeat – but maybe not for a few years!



Sky Arts LAOTY – ‘Wildcard Artist’ at Hever Lake

by Amanda Paradine

I was lucky enough to get the chance to paint as a ‘wildcard artist’ at beautiful Hever Lake in one of the heats of series 9 of Sky Arts LAOTY, filmed in 2023. It was a fantastic day which started early at 7am – queuing to register in thunder, lightning and pouring rain! I was one of the 50 wildcards undeterred by the weather and, thankfully, as the day went on the weather improved and by judging time the sun came out.

It was fabulous to get the chance to paint in such a beautiful setting and fascinating to see how they make the programme. Everyone involved was really friendly and amongst the wildcard artists there was a great sense of camaraderie and fun. Definitely a grand day out!



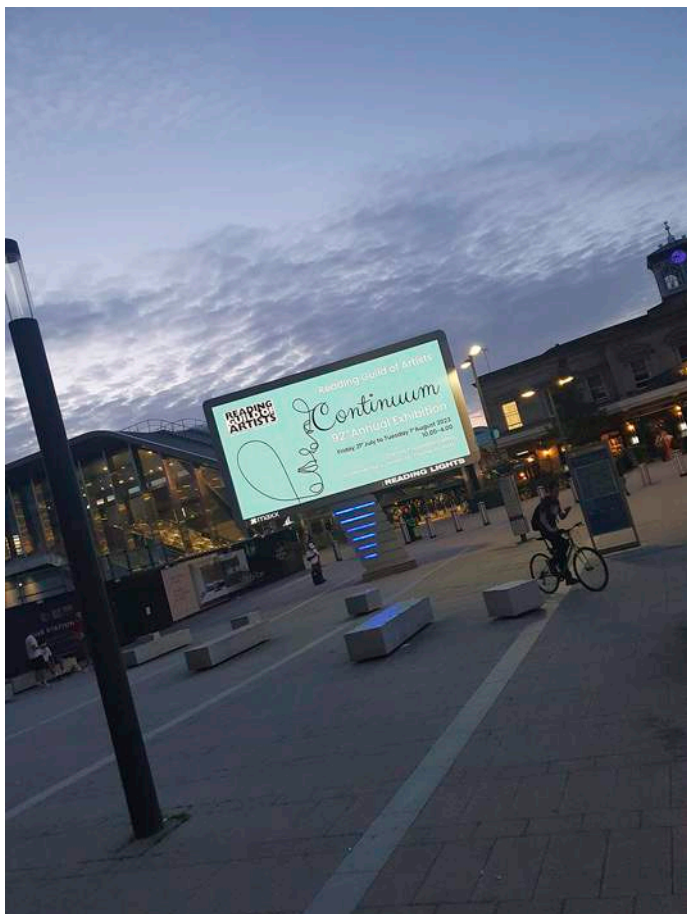
Publicity Report

by Jane Somner

We have enjoyed a great year on the publicity front – especially with the showcasing of the 92nd Annual Exhibition ‘Continuum’, by press and media. All our exhibitions during the year have been promoted by the press and we are, as ever, grateful to all the journalists and editors who have supported the RGA.

Our ‘exhibition year’ began with the RBH Corridor Exhibition No. 28 – which actually started in March 2023 and was covered by Phil Creighton in the *Reading Today* paper (in print and online) featuring Kerry Webb with her painting *Archirondel Tower, Jersey*. The *Caversham Bridge* community paper is a loyal supporter of the RGA and we always feature in the diary pages – ‘What’s On’ – and we were thrilled with the article published on RGA member Phil Alexander featuring his submissions for the 92nd Annual Exhibition. So with a ‘trio of Phils’ in the spotlight – thank you to editor Phil Chatfield as well as reporter Elestr Lee at the *Caversham Bridge*.

The media coverage of the 92nd Annual Exhibition ‘Continuum’ was exceptional. From listings in the *Artist and Illustrator*, articles in the *Leisure Painter* and *The Artist* magazines to the Big Screen at Reading Station we were ‘headline news!’ We were even featured in a broadcast on ‘That’s TV Thames Valley’ in July. Local papers, *The Henley Herald* and *Henley Standard*, were generous with their coverage. Thank you to Natalie Aldred of the Standard and Michaela Clarke from the Herald for the time spent in interviewing us and finding out all about our annual event; and for the wonderful articles published in print and online. Thanks also to RGA Council Member Liz Baldin for designing our ‘poster’ for the exhibition – it was a revelation to see it up



Mixed media: Jane Somner's High Speed Hunter has been created using ink, paint and chalk and, right, Low Tide uses scrunched up tissue paper

Guild shows life in art is never ending story

By NATALIE ALDRED
naldred@henleystandard.co.uk

FOR its next exhibition in Henley, Reading Guild of Artists is celebrating its longevity and the ever-evolving world of art.

“Continuum: Art in the Flow”, which opens today (Friday) at the Old Fire Station Gallery in Upper Market Place, looks at how people continue to make art throughout their lives, no matter what is going on in the world.

Publicity officer Jane Somner, from Calcot, will be showing three of her paintings and visitors can look at more of her work and others in the form of “broswers”.

Jane says: “A broswer looks like a deckchair, it’s made of wood and it’s like a catalogue that opens up. People can flip through it and it contains up to 15 paintings. It’s a very good way for people to buy original artworks.”

There will be 69 artists taking part, with more than 150 works on display, including paintings, original prints, sculptures, ceramics and more. It is hoped that the annual showcase of members’ work will encourage others to begin their own artistic journeys.

For Jane’s own works, she uses various techniques. She says: “I mainly work in water-based materials such as watercolour for painting and acrylic, which I tend to use more for printmaking.”

“Some of the pieces I’m putting into the exhibition, such as *Low Tide*, are on what I call prepared paper. It’s a very high-quality watercolour paper to which I put on an adhesive.”

“On top of that I put tissue paper that’s wet strength, so it doesn’t tear, and is scrunched up randomly and forms a bond with the acrylic.”

Paul, who retired from his role as a scientist at the Environment Agency a few years ago, says: “I actually did some painting when I went to America about 40 years ago and I started getting interested again in 2016.”

“I signed up for some life classes and I went to a part-time course at the Art Academy in London. I also did a year-long course in Newlyn in Cornwall, so I used to go there every two months and had about seven holidays there.”

The Caversham Gifford artist usually takes drawings or photographs at his starting point. Somebody described me as a

“fanciar” and I had to look that up,” says Paul.

“I think it’s basically somebody who just sort of wanders around and notices things. I’d think, ‘That’s an interesting image. I just like the way the light catches that, the lights and the darks and the shapes.’”

“I paint in oil on canvas or board, so fairly conventional and I’ve spent most of my time using oils because I think they’re very forgiving. They’re more practical than acrylics, because when things go wrong you can always scrape it off and start again.”

“I don’t know why, but I have a natural palette to go to, which tends to be warm brownish-green things.”

Paul’s submission for *Landscape Artist of the Year* was a painting of two figures at a railway station.

He says: “It had those diagonal bands of light and dark and it was quite a dramatic image out of something that’s very mundane, so that’s the sort of thing that appeals.”

This year’s judge for the Pauline Mercer award for 3D work is Dr Hannah Lyons, curator of art collections for the University of Reading, who will also pick the winner of the Marie Perle Award for 2D work, which has been awarded every year since 1968.

Guild members will be on hand throughout the exhibition on weekends to discuss their work each day and there will be different artists for morning and afternoon sessions.

The guild will update social media daily so that visitors can meet the artists and see their sketch books, painting blocks and other creative materials.

“Continuum: Art in the Flow,” Reading Guild of Artists runs until Tuesday, August 1, from 10am to 4pm daily. For more information, or search for Reading Guild of Artists’ Instagram or Facebook or visit www.rga-artists.org.uk

on the Big Screen. We also launched a social media campaign – posting images and videos daily leading up to the exhibition. And we delved into the realm of augmented reality – with the use of a QR code and a mobile phone our art works seem to float around in the air outside the Old Fire station Gallery in Henley-on-Thames.

And then it was time to work on the publicity for the Small Works '23 Exhibition at the Turbine House at the Riverside Museum. Liz once again weaved her magic and using photos taken by Trish Roberts created a really beautiful image for our printed publicity. This time we decided to go the ‘postcard’ route – a really attractive and convenient way to spread the news, and thank you to those who distributed these and shared the news. The *Round and About* magazine chose the RGA as ‘Stars of the Month’ in their September publication with the spotlight on Mick McNicholas and the Small Works '23 Exhibition. Marion Vaughan was featured in the *Caversham Bridge’s* September edition where she talked about her artistic life and her submission for the Small Works. In the January 2024 edition of the *Caversham Bridge* community paper, RGA member Adeline Breton was featured on page 12.

Thank you to everyone who has supported me in my role as Publicity Officer for the RGA, it has been 3 years ‘at the helm’ preceded by 4 years as Publicity Assistant. Martina Hildebrandt has been my mainstay and enthusiastic support. Thank you to all you ‘Social Media posters’ for help getting the word out. Thank you to all of you for allowing me, once again, to use images of your work and also agreeing to be interviewed by journalists. Don’t forget to look at the Press page on the website and see how we are seen!

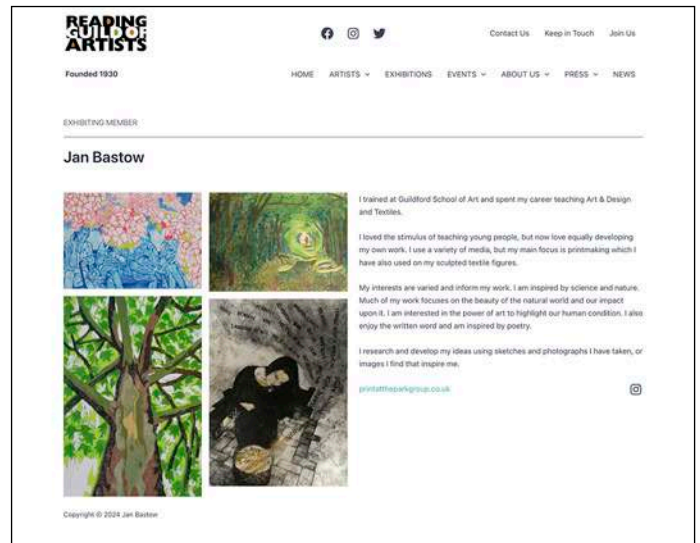
New RGA website

by Linda Saul

When Martina Hildebrandt stood down last year, after 10 years as RGA Webmaster, we agreed that it was time for a technology upgrade – we wanted to make the website easier to maintain. A new website was built by my partner Adrian and me, building on the foundations laid down by Martina. We are indebted to Martina who also continued to maintain the old website until we were ready to switch over.

The website has now been rebuilt with WordPress and a new look. It retains the rich content and features introduced by Martina, including the Picture of the Month, and in her role as Archivist Martina is still contributing to the Museum Highlights. New features include (hopefully) simpler navigation and a facility for new members to join online. The exhibiting members' galleries are now listed in a randomised order – so the same few entries don't always appear at the top of the page. We encourage you to take a look at the new website if you haven't already done so.

The public website no longer includes 'Information for Members' – instead we have a dedicated members' website or "wiki", to which links are provided in the monthly members' email bulletins. The wiki is work in progress. It is intended to



provide information that members need or may find useful such as upgrading guidelines, exhibition requirements and online submission.



RGAs Fridays

by Kate Ellison-Bourne, Clare Buchta and Jane Somner

RGAs Fridays continued to take place at the roomy and well lit setting of Earley St Peter's Church Hall, where creative appetites have been whetted through the 2023-24 season by media ranging from watercolours to dry-point etching.

We finished off last season in April '23 with a sell-out workshop led by Mick McNicholas. He introduced a number of techniques on how to approach drawing a portrait from life. Participants were shown how to use a 'mass' drawing as well as a more measured approach. Two models were required on the night and the results spoke for themselves!

Our 2023-4 season began in September, with Clare Buchta setting the scene with dry-point etching. Using the intaglio technique – in which the image is produced by cutting into the printing plate and where the incised areas hold the ink – Clare showed us how to create magical effects such as autumn trees lit by moonlight.

Christine Rogers warmed up the October workshop by introducing participants to the animals of the African Savannah! Using loose acrylic washes, resist and lifting out techniques, Cheetah and Zebra appeared to be 'on the move' on canvas.

Another sell-out workshop in November heralded the return of Liz Chaderton – this time with line and wash portraiture using the 'transfer method' utilising light pads. Rather than using a white background students worked on toned backgrounds whilst lively and colourful watercolour washes brought out the character and likeness of the subjects portrayed.

In January, Anthony Wilder asked us to consider our experiences of living through, as well as making art during and after Covid lockdowns in his session entitled 'A hybrid world or back to normalcy?' We were encouraged to think about space and form and the work included drawn and painted figures isolated from each other. We were asked to consider how they could be brought together in 'one place'.

Liz Baldin's mixed media portraits provided an opportunity to portray dark skin tones on a grey-tinted background, using an expressive approach, creating colourful contours with the aid of ink, neocolour and pastel pencils. This was again a sell-out session and although challenging there were some rather splendid results.

Printmaker Cath Baldwin likes to use things twice! So recycling was the name of the game with her fully subscribed workshop, 'Kitchen Table Etching'. She showed us how to create etching plates from recycled 'Tetra Pak' packaging (commonly used as milk and juice cartons) – from which students produced a wide range of varied and beautiful prints.

We still have Janina Maher's print making workshop to look forward to in April. Like Cath, Janina is keen to encourage

recycling in art and will show how dry leaves, grasses and other natural materials such as feathers can be used to make fabulous prints on a gel plate. This workshop is full but for those who have a booking make sure you bring plenty of paper – you will make lots of prints!

Once again we have enjoyed a varied and inspirational season of RGA Friday workshops. Thank you to all our tutors and to everyone who came along to share in the making of art, to meet new people and to enjoy each other's company. If you haven't tried an RGA Friday workshop then do come along and give it a go – our first date in the autumn is 27th September 2024. Keep an eye on the website and Monthly Bulletin for further details. We look forward to seeing you.



Volunteering!

by Martina Hildebrandt

A cautionary tale... and thank you!

Did you know that the RGA is run entirely by volunteers?! Members who use their own time, and desire to get stuck in, make possible all that the RGA offers! Exhibitions, workshops, resources and the general business of everything that needs to be done.

Any member can volunteer – help out, take on a role, sit on the RGA Council, have an idea, get involved, make the tea, do the paperwork, run a workshop ... The benefits to the individual volunteer is varied and infinite. Read on for my own volunteer's tale, but do not worry, you don't have to get *this* involved to benefit from volunteering for the RGA!



Although I'd lived in Reading for several years, it was difficult to navigate what creative bodies were available in the area. Having found a life drawing course at the then TVU (Reading College), I heard about the RGA from a fellow student and joined in 2009.

Initially, I went along to the RGA Friday workshops, giving me a chance to try different things and meet a few new "arty" types. It took a few years before I became an exhibiting member and then in 2012 took the opportunity to exhibit at one of the alternative RGA exhibitions "Buckets and Spades and Summer Days" at the Old Fire Station Gallery, Henley-on-Thames. It was there, at the hand-back, I was asked by Anthony Wilder, then Secretary, if I wanted to join the RGA Council.

Well, why not, it would be another way of getting involved with the Reading art scene. Very soon I volunteered myself (and the services of my brother) to redevelop the RGA website from a relatively static site to something more technically up-to-date with more resources for members and also individual members' gallery pages. This in turn led to getting "stuck in" helping with exhibitions; from hanging, producing submission forms, making labels, catalogue creation, poster design, and generally being hands on. Over many years I got to know well the then Exhibition Secretary Carole Stephens, and learnt all there is to know about putting on an RGA Exhibition.

By 2019 the need for another major website redesign was evident with the advances in mobile devices and the RGA website was made "responsive". And there also came the

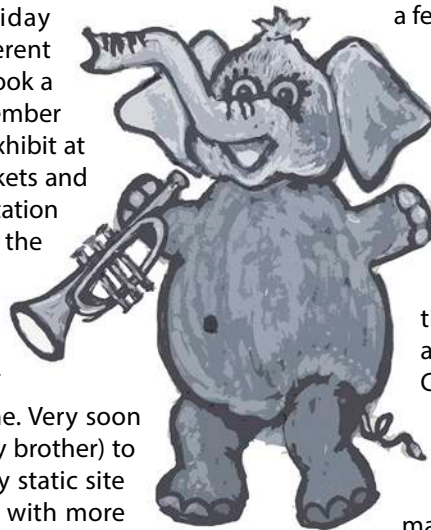
chance to curate my own RGA exhibitions, online, during the pandemic.

There soon arose the need for a new archivist, and seeing how this might benefit the development of the website, I volunteered to do this task too. As well as collecting ephemera for the RGA archive held at the Berkshire Record Office and dealing with enquiries from the general public, I set about compiling a visual catalogue of the past Marie Dyson Award winners, and developed the idea of the Museum Highlight along with Reading Museum. All these have enriched the RGA history, website, members' knowledge and outward perception of the RGA.



Along the way I learnt more than I ever thought I needed to know about the creation of a CIO charity, data protection laws, privacy notices, and all the joys and pitfalls of emails and technology. And then there's also the natural involvement with all that is publicity, from logos to flyers, photos and Press Releases. And this – the Annual Review!

Although much of what I did was "behind the scenes" (which suits me) in all things you work closely with people, make and develop many friendships, (undoubtedly clashed with a few too) and see how different artists work.



You may say I took on too much, which is why this is a cautionary tale, but basically I enjoyed it. And, by volunteering for the RGA, many other opportunities became available to me. However, in 2022, I decided that with over 10 years of being in the heart of the RGA, and with technology moving on again, it was time to step back. Although I'm still looking after the archive and a member of the RGA Council, it is time to say a big thank you!

Thank you RGA! Thank you to the artists I met, worked with, helped, been inspired by. Thank you for the friendships I've made. And thank you, I'm happy that much of the content of "my" RGA website has been preserved and utilised by Linda Saul to develop the latest one.

I've seen the RGA change and grow, and as it hurtles towards the centenary year in 2030, it needs new volunteers as never before.

Perhaps now is the time for you the reader to give volunteering for the RGA a go. There's something for everyone, use your strengths or learn something new. You just need to ... volunteer!

