



The Royal Society of British Artists

RBA Newsletter Spring 2014

President's Introduction

Dear Members and Friends

I am delighted to report that our annual show this year was an absolute success in just about every respect. Those of you who were present at the opening will remember the huge crowds and in particular a stirring and profound speech from Andrew Marr. The standard of the work from both members and non members was repeatedly commented on, by visitors and was thought to be the highest anyone can remember for many years. Not least the work from our sponsored younger artists, through the NADFAS and Dover foundation scheme, also produced extremely encouraging and promising work that often looked entirely commensurate with the work of much older and established artists. These schemes in combination with our own Rome Scholarship are now producing high quality work from young artists who are sending in work and being accepted into the show under their own steam.

I am also pleased to announce that a number of new prizes, several of which are designed to encourage young people, have been given to us to award, in particular Michael Harding who has donated seven prizes and the de László family who have introduced a new prize for technical excellence in a young artist. In addition to a successful annual show we now have more outside exhibitions for members in a variety of locations. The next will be held at the Russell Gallery in Putney in May.

We have also entered a new phase with our relationship to the FBA and are now working more closely than ever before with them in all matters particularly advertising and the production of the catalogue. This year Lewis McNaught has introduced a marketing forum and a Presidents forum both of which proved to be extremely helpful and informative not only to us but our fellow societies within the FBA. A particularly positive and beneficial move for us is the recent election of our own Treasurer Colin Gardner to the board of finance. This is indeed an exciting new era for us all and I am grateful to all the staff at the Mall Galleries.

Finally, as you will remember, last year saw our sales hit a record. I am pleased to say that this year we hit exactly the same amount. A little bit more would have been wonderful but still, I hope you will agree, an impressive result.

It only remains for me to give enormous thanks to all the council, without whose tireless contributions we would not be witnessing our current success rate. A special welcome to Mick Davies as Vice President who has been of huge help to me over the last few years and I look forward to continuing working with him as VP. Thanks also to Guy Portelli who is stepping down as Vice President but who I know will continue to help the society in every way he can. And very finally my great thanks to you the members for putting your trust in me for another term.

I guarantee that I will do my utmost to continue the upward trend we find ourselves in.

With all best wishes
James

Andrew Marr at the RBA Opening

The Opening of the RBA's annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries has become something on an event. Two years ago Michael Portillo filled the galleries with a witty opening address and this year Andrew Marr gave an impassioned plea for the values of drawing and traditional technical skills.

Andrew believes that art must be based on drawing and observation and that conceptual art is not enough. There are many artists throughout the country working unrecognized who need to express themselves because there is compelling about the process of creation. He warned that many conceptual artists whose work sells for great amounts might well become irrelevant in the future. He believes that drawing and painting can be a form of meditation, a way of getting to know yourself, and that picking up a piece of paper and starting to draw is an inexpensive and effective way of solving

your personal problems. He was critical of many art schools which did not teach drawing and expressed surprise that at least 10% of the top earning artists in this country could not draw. He went on to praise the quality of work at the exhibition and while admitting that some of the work was derivative, was delighted to see a large exhibition where so many artists were able to communicate by making marks on a surface and communicating through these marks.

We are delighted to announce that Andrew Marr has agreed to become an Honorary Member of the RBA and we look forward to seeing his works in future exhibitions.



Andrew Marr at the Opening of the RBA Annual Exhibition with paintings by David Sawyer behind

The Rome Scholarship.

Mick Davies, newly elected Vice President of the RBA, writes:

Mr G.H.Benn set up the Rome Scholarship in memory of his wife, Marianne Von Werther. She was elected a member of the Royal Society of British Artists in 1957 and was awarded the de Laszlo medal in 1969. The idea behind the award is to give a young artist a month long stay at The British School At Rome, where he or she can study, investigate and be inspired by the vast wealth of art and architecture that the Eternal City has to offer.

The 2014 Rome Scholarship attracted candidates from 22 different U.K colleges, schools and universities. The standard was high and the variety of styles and

techniques was both exciting and impressive. It was not an easy task choosing a shortlist, but eventually the selecting panel of James Horton, Carol Hubble, Nick Tidnam, Rowan Crew and myself Mick Davies settled on a shortlist of twelve, from which we chose 5 finalists

During the interviews at the Mall, we looked at sketchbooks, portfolios and journals discussing what the candidates wished to achieve during their stay in Rome. We were not just looking for expertise and talent, but also which of the prospective candidates we felt would benefit most from the award. The decision was not an easy one and the interviewing panel each had a different favourite, which meant that this was a close run result. However, agreement was reached and Tom Greenwood, from LARA [The London Atelier of Representational Art] was our eventual winner. We very much look forward to hearing his story and seeing the work at next year's RBA Annual Exhibition.

Work from all five finalists was hung at this year's show and it made for a very impressive display, demonstrating some of the most exciting young talent in the UK at the moment.

NEWS OF RBA MEMBERS

At the AGM on Sunday March 16th, the following new members were elected to the RBA:

David Brammel

Meg Dutton

Carole Griffin

Lee Madgwick

A successful exhibition by members of the RBA was held at Rye Art Gallery last October. It attracted the following report in **The Rye and Battle Observer** on October 17th 2013 :

RYE Art Gallery is hosting an exhibition of work by members of one of the most prestigious art groups in England.

Saturday saw the curtain go up on an exhibition by The Royal Society of British Artists. The RBA was founded in 1823 by a group of artists meeting in Lincoln's Inn Fields. At the time artists had celebrity status, pursued by royalty and the aristocracy and their work collected by the giant industrialists of the day. It was under the leadership of James McNeill Whistler that the Society won the right to the prefix 'Royal'. Members included great artists such as Monet, Alfred Stevens, Walter Sickert, L.S. Lowry, Henry Moore, Peter Greenham, Sir Roger de Grey, Carel Weight and Colin Hayes.

The Rye exhibition features works by over 40 members of the RBA including paintings, prints and sculptures. It runs daily until November 10 at the gallery in the High Street.”

(I'm not sure that Claude Monet was ever a member of the RBA, and the Henry Moore referred to here is the brother of Albert Moore, a 19th century seascape painter, rather than the famous 20th century sculptor – but it seems a pity to ruin a good story. Ed.)



The Opening of the RBA Exhibition in Rye

Paul Bartlett had an article in The Artist magazine, November 2013 issue, sharing thoughts and advice for practical portrait drawing, based on his teaching and his own work. He also had three prints included in an exhibition running 19th Oct 2013 - 19th Jan 2014 at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery called 'Birmingham Printmakers: 30 Years of Printmaking 1983-2013'.

The Geedon Gallery Spring exhibition takes place from April 12th- to 27th 11am-5.30pm daily . The exhibition is devoted to the works of the Small Paintings Group and good number exhibiting are members of the RBA including **Cinzia Bonada, David Eustace, Judith Gardner, Christopher Hall, Charles Hardaker, Ann Heat, Ken Howard, Pamela Kay, Peter Kelly, Christopher Miers , Barbara Richardson, Richard Sorrell, Nick Tidnam, and Anne Wright**

Geedon Gallery, Jaggers, Fingringhoe, Colchester, Essex CO5 7DN

0126 728 587 /01206 729 334

www.geedongallery.co.uk

David Sawyer is a finalist in the International Artist Magazine's Art Prize Challenge no. 80 "Favorite Subjects". His work will be featured in the magazine's Issue no. 96,

April/May 2014. The International Artist magazine is an American publication, the equivalent to the UK 'Artist and Illustrators' Magazine

David will also be holding a one-man exhibition at Thompson's Gallery, 15 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 9UB from 11th to 29th June 2014 and during the summer he will be running courses in St Lizier in the South West of France where he has a house. The courses last 5 days and cost £325, the nearest airport being Toulouse. Further details of these Summer Courses in France can be found on David's website : <http://davidsawyerrba.artweb.com>

The dates are:-

1. Monday 25th – Thursday 28th August 2014
"Works on paper. Drawing from nature. Sketching with pastels and watercolours".
2. Monday 1st September – Friday 5th September 2014.
"Painting in oils. Gouche and Watercolour".
3. Monday 8th September – Friday 12th September 2014.
"Painting in oils. Gouche and Watercolour".

Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize. 18-22 March 2014.

Among the 85 works shortlisted for the Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize, and on show at the Mall Galleries 18-22 March, are paintings by three members of the RBA: **Peter Kelly, Christopher Miers and Bridget Moore.**

Cheryl Culver was guest of Honour at Pastel d'Opale in Saint-Leonard, town of Boulogne city, from 1st to 16th March 2014. She will also be working in the Painting Tent at Art in Action in July 2014.

George Devlin writes: My solo show at the Billcliffe Gallery, Glasgow, opens on 25/4/14 and runs for one month. In June Artist Magazine will profile my work and I am an invited exhibitor at the Fabriano International Watercolour Exhibition running from June to August.

Anthony Yates will be having a one-man exhibition featuring between 30 & 40 of his oil paintings at the Fosse Gallery, Stow-on-the-Wold. You are invited to the Private View on Sunday 6th April 2014, 11.00am - 4.00pm. The exhibition continues until Saturday 26th April. Gallery open Mon - Sat 10.30am - 5.00pm. Details can also be found on the Fosse Gallery web-site www.fossegallery.com



Anthony Yates 'At the Sink'

Jill & Martin Leman will be exhibiting paintings at Patchings Art Centre in an exhibition organised by Dry Red Press. 12 April - 26 May. www.patchingsartcentre.co.uk
Martin & Jill are also exhibiting at the RWS Spring Exhibition, Bankside Gallery, 48 Hopton Street, SE1 9JH 28 March - 26 April Daily 11-6 PV 27 March 6-8pm

Judith Gardner is having a very busy summer taking part in a number of group exhibitions including a 3 person show - Island Fine Arts - Isle of Wight - 5th to 26th April, the Small Painting Group - Geedon Gallery - Fingringhoe - 12th to 27th April, a group exhibition at the Josephine Harpur Gallery in Bury St Edmunds - 2nd to 8th May and the RBA show at the Russell Gallery in Putney - 22nd May to 14th June
She is a demonstrator at Art in Action in the Painting Tent at Waterperry Oxford - 17th to 20th July and course tutor at Art in Action courses - Oil Painting Landscape courses - 6th to 7th September, 22nd to 23rd September, and 24th to 25th September

Barbara Richardson writes : I am continuing to show work with Red Rag in Stow on the Wold. I will have paintings at the RBA exhibition at the Russell Gallery next month and along with the Small Paintings Group at Geedon Gallery from 12 - 27 April and by appointment to 27 May. In May I'm also showing work in a mixed exhibition put on by Josephine Harpur at Bury St Edmunds.

Greetings card company **Dry Red Press** artists including Jill Leman, Martin Leman, Sue Campion, Susan Bower and others are exhibiting at Patchings Art Centre, Calverton, Nottingham from 12th April to 26th May

Malcolm Ashman writes: ' This year I will be exhibiting with Bath Contemporary, (35 Gay Street, Bath BA1 2NT Tel: 01225 461230 www.bathcontemporary.com) in an exhibition entitled 'Paint, Metal and Concrete running from 17th May to 7th June I am also exhibiting at The Jerram Gallery, (Half Moon Street, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3LN www.jerramgallery.com) from 20th September to 8th October 2014.'

Christopher Hall is taking part in the West Berkshire and North Hampshire Opne Studios from 3rd to 26th May. He is sharing his studio with the potter Ursula Waechter.

The opening times are as follows:

Saturday 3rd, Sunday 4th and Monday 5th

Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th

Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th

Saturday 24th, Sunday 25th and Monday 26th

Other times by appointment, please contact Christopher Hall on 01635 42340

Tessa Spencer Pryse writes:

On the last day of January this year our President , James Horton, led a small group of artists to Rajasthan, and a series of Indian palaces became our home for twenty four days . Rajasthan is visually and culturally so rich that it was difficult to focus on work at all. However, despite the distances that we travelled and the many times punctured tyres of our minibus, which can make a five hour trip into an eight hour journey, we did work hard and I shall hope to complete works begun in situ at home in my studio.

A trip out into the desert from took us from Jaiselmer to the annual camel fair, a very local affair, full of colour and drama. It was impossible to paint on the spot, but an excellent venue for drawings. It was also good to see the people of the region in a traditional activity.

Sadly we were not able to have an audience with our new patron The Maharajah of Udaipur; his diary was already full when we arrived there, but he wrote a friendly letter to James expressing his regret and promising to meet in London in June.



James Horton and Tessa Spencer Pryse in India

Exhibition Reviews

Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs

Tate Modern

17 April – 7 September 2014

For many artists the later years of a successful career can be something of a struggle and often a disappointment to later generations, but Matisse's later work is both inspiring and uplifting. Between 1943, when he was 74, and his death in 1954 Henri Matisse embarked upon a new way of expressing himself by creating huge cut outs, images cut from coloured paper. In 1941 Matisse was diagnosed with cancer and following a risky operation he started using a wheelchair and was unable to work on large scale canvases. Undaunted, he embarked upon what he described as 'Une seconde vie' during the last fourteen years of his life. He began to cut painted paper with scissors in order to make studies or maquettes for various commissions, including books, stained glass window designs, tapestries and ceramics. In these cut-outs, outlines take on sculptural form and painted sheets of paper are infused with the luminosity of stained glass. The results reflected both a renewed commitment to form and colour and an extraordinary inventiveness for an elderly artist.

Matisse was born into a family of weavers who produced textiles for the fashion houses in Paris. So he had both an innate sense of fabric design and an ability to use scissors, because scissors became the tool of his trade in these later years and in fact he described it as 'Paintings with Scissors'. The ability to continue creating colour, form and pattern despite his illness gave Matisse great comfort and in many respects these late cut outs are created as much for himself as for clients and collectors. In fact he said "You see as I am obliged to remain often in bed because of the state of my health, I have made a little garden all around me where I can walk... There are leaves, fruits, a bird."

Some of his first cut outs appeared in a book published in 1947 entitled 'Jazz' on which Matisse had been working during the war years. The colourful and yet extremely simple cut outs reproduced in this limited edition book point the way to Matisse's more ambitious cut outs. During Matisse's illness he was helped by a young nurse, Monique Bourgeois, who decided to enter the Dominican convent at Vence in 1943 as sister Jacques-Marie. She asked Matisse to help with the design and decoration of a new chapel and at the age of 77 Matisse began working on the architecture, windows, ceramic murals and furnishings of the chapel. He made extensive use the cut out technique which were then transformed into the glowing stained glass of the windows which are full colour and joy.

Throughout his career Matisse had painted the human figure and in his cut outs he continues this theme. "The Blue Nude" of 1952 with its rhythmical lines and sense of colour looks back to the great nudes he painted before the First World War. There is a wonderful sense of liberation and joie de vivre which can also be seen in 'The Horse, The Rider and The Clown'. Maybe the most iconic of these cut outs is 'The Snail' of 1953 where plays a visual game with the viewer's balancing the image between abstraction and figuration.



Henri Matisse : The Horse, The Rider and The Clown

Matisse would cut the shapes out of coloured paper in a freehand manner using simple scissors. He would keep both the intended shapes and the remaining paper and then loosely pin the shapes to the studio wall. He would then spend time looking and re-arranging the shapes creating organic patterns such as leaves, seaweed, coral or algae in addition to the human figure. This was indeed his 'garden' and when he was finally happy with the composition, he would glue the paper to a support such as board or canvas, helped by his assistant Lydia Delectorskaya. This process of fixing the image took weeks even months as Matisse changed the composition, which this unusual technique enabled him to do. The paper he used was painted in gouache by Lydia in various colours which Matisse selected.

Matisse himself felt that in these late works he had achieved something very special when he said "Only what I created after the illness constitutes my real self: free, liberated.'

THE GREAT WAR IN PORTRAITS **National Portrait Gallery until 15th June**

Over the next few years we are going to be bombarded by TV and radio programmes about the First World War, not to say books, memoirs and exhibitions, and the NPG has kicked off with a small but fine exhibition devoted to portraits about the War. We see some wonderful works by William Orpen, an artist whose reputation has suffered over the years probably because of his later rather anodyne work. John Singer Sargent had dominated the market for portraits in the period before the War and his bravura style had influenced many painters, but Orpen manages to break away from this influence in his striking portraits of the leading figures of the War including Sir Douglas Haig. Greatly admired Orpen's portrait of Marshal Foch painted with broken brushwork in places revealing the white canvas beneath and owing much to the paintings of Sickert and the Camden Town School. Orpen also painted himself in 1917 as a war artist clad in a military greatcoat, helmet and a sketchbook in hand.



Gilbert Rogers : The Dead Stretcher Bearer

There are other striking images of the horrors of the War. I was particularly struck by 'The Dead Stretcher Bearer' by Gilbert Rogers who is a relatively unknown artist. He trained at Liverpool School of Art and became a fair portraitist but by no means a leading figure. He enlisted in the Royal Army Medical Corps and saw the war through the eyes of a Medical Officer later recording some horrendous sights, including the dead stretcher bearer lying in a muddy trench. The realism of the scene, the texture of the mud and wet clothing and the overall feeling of desperation are impressed on my mind.

The exhibition also includes a wall of photographs of ordinary soldiers and nurses entitled 'Valiant and the Damned' as well as a screen showing films of the fighting. These films have been restored so that we see the events in surprising realism and there was a large crowd gathered around the screen during the whole of my visit.

Julian Halsby