

newsletter



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April 2017 website: www.thepastelsociety.org.uk

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THE PASTEL SOCIETY



Plant on ornate chair, by Ann Wilkinson

Featured Artist
Ann Wilkinson, PS, RBSA



Fruit and flowers

Ask Ann Wilkinson how long she has been associated with the Pastel Society and she has to pause to think. It turns out to be just over 20 years, and prompted by her move down from the Midlands to help with a granddaughter who had turned poorly – and who is now about to get married. It also coincided with making use of a set of pastels she had inherited from her husband.



Family day out



Apples on a patterned cloth

“I was always an oil painter,” she says, “but one day after my husband Ken died I was invited out and decided to take his box of pastels with me. I had never used them before and was gobsmacked. They were so nice and easy to use. And that’s why I decided to stick with them for a while to learn how to use them. It was a good way to start, really, because nobody told me what to do. It was trial and error, developing my own style, doing things on different backgrounds and seeing how they came out.”

This year’s Pastel Society Exhibition featured five of her instantly recognisable paintings. For Ann focuses very much on pattern. She assembles objects, textures, fabrics and colours that appeal to her and weaves them together into a still life that appeals, with her sense of design honed by time spent teaching dressmaking as well as art. She is also on a constant quest: to achieve a really good picture. “I have got one on the way at the moment that isn’t too bad,” she says, “but I can always find faults.”

At her 1930s home in Redhill, her pastels are ranged in boxes on three small table tops, the length of a big window, and sorted by colour into masses of small pieces. She uses a tightly

controlled palette, enjoys planning a colour scheme, and favours oranges and yellows. There is, however, one colour she has a problem with. "I have a box with hundreds of mid, light and bright greens – and I don't like it or use it very much," she says.

Although she paints landscapes, seascapes and figures, and uses oils as well as pastels, it is her still life works for which she is best known. These are often sketched from a high viewpoint, looking down on the arrangement. But, she says, "I don't ignore conventional perspective. Imagine that you have a plate with oranges on, a bottle, and glasses, with a little book open. When you sit down, you are fairly near to its level, so as you are drawing into the distance you are doing so in perspective with the lines going in. But if you stand up, and look down on that picture, you will get a totally different – and usually much more interesting – arrangement, because you can fill it with the pattern, the flowers and the objects."

The result is a very compact image, for which she draws inspiration not just from cupboards full of vases and little pots, but also from her extensive collection of sketches and photographs, and textiles. She will often incorporate cut flowers, fruit, plants and seed heads in her paintings. Speed is of the essence when painting perishables, because it is "not a case of if they start decaying," she says, "but when. I get the shape down, that's the main thing to draw in, and give it a light spray." Then she gradually adds colour to the shape, trying to achieve a thin layer of almost everything that the picture will contain, so that she can see how it is developing.

Ann also draws on her travels for inspiration, although these have lessened of late. She recalls time spent in the Galapagos Islands, China, Cuba, Croatia, Calhoun, Hong Kong, Romania, Sicily, Sri Lanka, Spain, the Greek Islands and Malta...but counts Oman as her favourite. She would stay with a friend's family, mixing with different nationalities, and helping out with art classes for locals. One memory that sticks in her mind is of driving across

the desert in a Land Rover with just one other lady, "a great stretch of sand, with no road, no other vans, no signs, just a little post which pops up with an arrow showing you the direction of the next stage."

Examples of the paintings that ensued feature on her website, glowing figures as well as still lifes. These are painted on boards which, when she started to work with pastels, she used 'as is'. She soon discovered, however, that with such a delicate, smooth surface that if her cat's tail went over it hours of painting would go astray. Now she is more likely to work on a dark mountboard, marking off the area she wants to use before making a detailed charcoal drawing and then applying an underpainting.

The colours of her pastels are what stick in the mind, and these are achieved because of the care she devotes to her paintings. She advises always having two on the go at a time, so that if you have to transport them somewhere you can always clip one on carefully on top of another. She also recommends, if space is not at a premium, placing paintings somewhere safe, like on top of a wardrobe so that the general moisture will settle it. Painting with pastels begins to sound like an adventure.



Ann Wilkinson

The President's Letter

Thank you to all who exhibited and attended this year's Pastel Society Annual Exhibition at the Mall Galleries. There was an 8% increase in entries this year, so sadly we disappointed more artists. Some 100 non-Members' works were selected, though, along with 171 from Members. Three large rooms at the gallery enabled the creation of 'the Candidates' Wall' as well as 'the Young Artists' Wall'.

At the Private View we had an enthusiastic crowd for our guest opener and speaker, the Rt Hon. Michael Portillo. With more than 300 in attendance, and with his polished charm, he proved to be quite a star draw (excuse the pun). By way of a thank you, he was presented with a pastel drawing by Past President Moira Huntly.

Congratulations to winners of all the awards and prizes. The prestigious Alfred Teddy Smith and Zsuzsi Roboz Award for a young artist was given to Steven King. Zsuzsi Roboz was a distinguished Member of the Pastel Society and I thank the trustees for continuing the Award with the Pastel Society.

In passing, it's worth mentioning that Steven King should be an inspiration to all aiming to have their work shown with the Pastel Society. He first submitted work in 2014, but without success. In 2015, two of his paintings got through the pre-selection round, but not into the show. Last year, one of the three paintings he submitted was chosen for exhibition. But this year all six of his entries were approved at pre-selection. Three were in the show, with one – The Co-Pilot – receiving not only the Alfred Teddy Smith and Zsuzsi Roboz Award, but also the Pastel Society Catalogue Award for best work by a non-Member.

Our Sponsor, Derwent, has supported us throughout the year, with awards and prizes, including the new 'Visitors' Choice Award' which proved to be very popular. The winner was Patricia Whiting for her highly accomplished coloured pencil study, Jugs and Roses. Derwent also supported the FBA Coffee morning and the Art Event Evening.

The Art Event evening had two models posing, Megumi in Japanese costume and singer and songwriter Hattie Whitehead singing beautifully with her guitar. The evening brought in a record number of over 40 people. I thank the Council and the Staff of the Mall Galleries for masterminding and organising the enjoyable event.

Throughout the exhibition, Workshops were held in the Learning Centre and Demonstrations in the Gallery. The 118th Exhibition went very well, and I am happy to say achieved sales exceeding the forecast.

Jeannette Hayes

St George's College Summer Workshops

Council member Sue Relph has again organised a week-long programme of workshops for both amateur and professional artists in late August at St George's College, Weybridge Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2QS. Early booking is advisable.

The programme is as follows:

Monday, 21 August: 'Improving your Pastel Paintings – Landscapes and Interiors' with John Tookey

Tuesday, 22 August: 'Landscape Abstraction' with Jeannette Hayes.

Wednesday, 23 August: 'Full Figure Costume in Charcoal and Graphite' with Caroline Bays.

Thursday, 24 August: 'Life and Portrait Drawing for All Abilities', with Sue Relph.

Friday, 25 August: 'Developing Portraits' with Antony Williams.

The fees for the workshops are £60 per day, or £55 per day if booking four or more. For Friends of the Pastel Society, reduced fees apply of £55 per day, or £50 per day if booking four or more. Visit www.thepastelsociety.org.uk for more details and to book.

AGBI Steward, 2017-18

Malcolm Taylor will be the Pastel Society steward for the Artists' General Benevolent Institution for 2017-18. He can be contacted at 544 Newton Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 1PQ, or talcummail@btinternet.com

A generous array of prizes

The main gallery at this year's exhibition became really crowded as the time approached for the official opening by TV personality and former Government minister Michael Portillo, with a real air of excitement as he announced the award winners.

The Pastel Society is very fortunate in enjoying the support of many organisations and charitable trusts which, between them, provide the prizes. Their generosity is greatly appreciated. The full list of recipients is shown in the table.

Felicity House PS won the prize donated by our sponsor, Derwent, with her painting, *Lemon Tree*. *Banana Bunch*, by Jenny Halstead PS, took the Caran d'Ache prize, and Libby January PS received the Buzzacott award for her gently muted abstract, *Music & Silence*. Tony Allain was the only Member to receive two prizes this year: the Schmincke award for his painting *Cape Cod*, and the *Artist and Illustrator* magazine award for *Cadwith Cove*.

Three of the seven artists taking part in the exhibition, who went on to be elected to membership at the annual meeting, were also among the prizewinners. David Brammeld's three treescapes got *The Artist* magazine award, with Jaana Fowler's oil pastel and collage still life, *Blue Bottle*, receiving the Frank Herring & Sons award. Melodie Cook was a prize winner for the fourth time in five years with *Samuel Froggatt with Peonies*.

The most valuable prize on offer was the £5000 Alfred Teddy Smith and Zsuzsi Roboz award for a young artist. It went to Steven King for *The Co-Pilot*.

Encouraging young artists is a key policy. Other prizes specifically aimed at the up-and-coming generation were the Society's own young artist award (won by Sofia Welch), and the Unison Colour £500 young artist award (Rachel Solani).

Award winners 2017

Derwent Sponsor's Award:

Felicity House PS

Alfred Teddy Smith & Zsuzsi Roboz Award:

Steven King

Contemporary Arts Trust £1000 Award:

Dominic McIvor

Pastel Society Young Artist Award:

Sofia Welch

Pastel Society Catalogue Award 1st Prize:

Steven King

Pastel Society Catalogue Award 2nd prize:

Robert Strange

Jackson's Art Supplies Award: Elizabeth Nast

Annie Longley Award: Michelle Lucking

Henri Roché Award: Melodie Cook

Faber Castell/West Design Product Prize:

Kevin Line

Artist Magazine Award: David Brammeld RBA

Schmincke Award: Tony Allain PS

Buzzacott Award: Libby January PS

Unison Colour Product Prize: Jennifer Thorpe

Unison Colour £500 Young Artist Award:

Rachel Solani

Caran d'Ache Award: Jenny Halstead PS

Artist and Illustrators Award: Tony Allain PS

Frank Herring & Sons Award: Jaana Fowler

Officers of the Pastel Society

President	Jeannette Hayes
Vice-President	Michael Norman
Honorary Treasurer	Colin Murfet
Honorary Secretary	Jenny Halstead FMAA
Exhibition Secretary	Peter Vincent
Membership Secretary	Brian Plummer
Publicity Secretary	Jeannette Hayes
Friends Secretary	Ann Wilkinson
Trustee	Moirra Huntly
	RWA RI RSMA PPS

Not just an exhibition...



Top: Early visitors on Private View day enjoy a first peek at this year's display. Above, left: Michael Portillo presents the Caran d'Ache award to Jenny Halstead PS. Left: Peter Batkin, who presented the £1000 Contemporary Arts Trust award to Dominic McIvor. Above: Steven King's painting, The Co-Pilot, winner of the Alfred Teddy Smith/Zsuzsi Robox award and best painting by a non-Member.

...more a pastel fest



Among the special activities at this year's exhibition, the Art Event Evening (top) attracted a record attendance. Megumi (above, left), a friend of Eiko Yoshimoto PS, modelled in traditional Japanese dress. Gail Tointon won the Derwent Art Event Evening prize for her drawing of Hattie Whitehead, singer/songwriter, who provided the entertainment. Pastel Society Members led workshops in the Mall galleries' Learning Centre on most days of the exhibition, including John Tookey (left), Eiko Yoshimoto, Ann Wilkinson, Cheryl Culver, Tony Allain, Sheila Goodman, Susan Relph, Jason Bowyer, Jenny Halstead and Tom Walker.

The Society welcomes seven new Members

A big welcome is extended to the seven new Members who were elected to the Pastel Society at the annual meeting which followed this year's exhibition. All have made an impact with their work, not just at this year's show, but over the previous few years.

Most genres are represented in their work, from cityscapes and landscapes to portraiture and still life, and the styles are as varied as the techniques. The common element is the artists' passion for their work. Images of some of the paintings they showed this year are on the back page.

Janine Baldwin's inspiration comes from the landscape of the North Yorkshire coast, where she lives. It can be a bleak experience, particularly in winter, and this is reflected in her paintings, which often combine pastel with charcoal and graphite. As she explains so clearly on her website (www.janinebaldwin.co.uk), "My interest lies not in making a literal representation of nature but rather in celebrating the physical sensory experience of land and sea. As a result, the semi-abstract paintings are vibrant and energetic, combining gestural marks and the use of rich evocative colour."

In contrast, Liz Balkwill (www.lizbalkwill.com) is best known to Pastel Society Members and Friends for her beautifully executed, classical, still life studies. However, she is also an accomplished portrait artist. In both genres, she works in oils as well as pastels. Liz lives in East Anglia, where she also teaches. She has studied with leading American pastel artists including Daniel Greene and Sally Strand.

Another of our new Members who enjoys teaching art to others is David Brammeld. Based in Staffordshire, he finds inspiration for his own art in the countryside, particularly trees, and the urban landscape. A group of three treescapes won *The Artist* magazine prize at our exhibition this

year. He shows regularly at the Mall Galleries – not just with the Pastel Society – and is a Member of the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA) and the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (www.davidbrammeld.com).

Melodie Cook (www.melodiecook.co.uk) began her career working as a freelance with top brands as a fashion designer in Italy, later opening a design studio. She returned to the UK and took a two-year course in fine art, specialising in the figure and portraiture. Her distinctive paintings have won awards at four of the past five Pastel Society shows, including the Henri Roché award this year.

Born in Finland, Jaana Fowler came to the UK to take a Fine Art BA. Until 2013 she was a freelance assistant to Sir Anthony Caro. While sculpture remains her main medium, she has continued to work in two dimensions, particularly with collage and oil pastel. At this year's Pastel Society exhibition she won the Frank Herring and Sons award (www.jaanafowler.co.uk).

Simon Hodges (www.hillviewstudio.co.uk) worked as an architect, mainly on public sector projects such as schools and hospitals. By 1999, however, he'd concluded that landscape painting now held a greater attraction to him than computers and committee meetings. A full-time artist since then, he works on location and in the studio, in an Impressionist style, seeking to capture the atmosphere of 'place'.

Hemel Hempstead cricket pavilion in Buckinghamshire is the somewhat unexpected venue for regular art classes with Jan Munro – see her website (www.janmunro.com). As she says, "Enabling others to enjoy and develop their own art is a big part of my life and a most rewarding endeavour". Best known to Members and Friends for her strongly-coloured still life paintings, she also paints buildings and landscapes.

News from members

Six Pastel Society Members will be featured alongside other international pastel artists in a new book, *Pure Color 2*, to be published this summer by the US magazine, *Pastel Journal*. Felicity House, Victor Ambrus, Tony Allain and Angela A'Court will be in a section headed Style and Expression, while Cheryl Culver's work will be included under Composition and Design, and Glenys Ambrus will feature in Color and Light.

In Scotland, Trish Cain has been very busy curating a touring exhibition, *Seeing Beyond the Immediate*. It's a large show, filling six rooms at Gracefield, Dumfries, and features her own work and that of the late Scottish abstract artist Wilhelmina Barns-Graham. It originates from a three-month residency that Trish spent at Barns-Graham's house, Balmungo. "I very rarely see fellow Members, so there will be a special welcome for any who can make it to the opening on 20 May," she says. The exhibition runs until 8 July, moving on to the Hawick Scott Museum, and then to the Lillie Gallery, Glasgow. Trish will also have a joint show with Roy Wright, *Millefolia*, at the Rebecca Hossack gallery in London in November (dates still to be finalised).

Angela A'Court has just enjoyed a solo show at the Stour Gallery in Warwickshire, based on work inspired by time spent recently in Japan. British-born but living these days in New York, she had other work based on her Japanese experiences on show with the Susan Eley Gallery at NY's Art on Paper exhibition. She's currently working as an artist in residence at a charter school in Brooklyn, and is also developing a series of paintings inspired by Benjamin Brittain and Peter Pears for Thompson's Gallery in Aldeburgh.

A new practical art magazine in the UK, *Paint and Draw*, has featured paintings by Past President Cheryl Culver, and has invited her to write an article for later in the year. Libby January has contributed a short article to their 'Bite Size' section in the April issue on her creative process.

Victor Ambrus was commissioned by Creative Direction (Worldwide) to design postage stamps for

Tristan da Cunha and Ascension Island, commemorating the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare last year (see illustration).



Victor Ambrus commemoration stamps

Dry Red Press has published Cheryl Culver's *A Shower of Gold as Winter Creeps into the Forest* as a greetings card. Royalties go to the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA). She will be exhibiting at the Affordable Art Fair, with the Russell Gallery in May, with the RBA at the Russell Gallery, 4-27 May, and The Pilgrims Way Artists, The Tithe Barn, Lenham, Kent, 20-30 May. She has work in Lion Street Gallery and Erwood Station Gallery, Hay-on-Wye, Powys.

Sarah Bee will be leading courses at West Dean College, West Sussex (www.westdean.org.uk) 9-13 April and 10-14 September, as well as at Jack Beck House, Yorkshire (www.jackbeck.co.uk) 20-22 June, and Coombe Farm Studios, South Devon (www.coombefarmstudios.com), 17-20 July.

Libby January is participating in the Warwickshire Open Studios, 17 June – 2 July. Details can be found at warwickshireopenstudios@gmail.com

Tony Allain's art mission to China

Channel-islander Tony Allain was elected a Member of the Pastel Society in 2015, following his return to the UK after several years in New Zealand. A much-travelled artist, he was invited to exhibit and teach at the 2nd Biennial International Pastel Art Exhibition in Suzhou, China, last October – November. Here is his report:

Why me? I have been involved with the International Association of Pastel Societies (IAPS) for about six years as an Instructor and demonstrator, attending their Biennial Convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Being a member of the Master Circle of Pastel Artists and a regular tutor for IAPS resulted in me being one of the small International team of five artists – four from the US and myself from the UK – to travel and help promote and introduce the art of soft pastel into the education system of the elementary schools in Suzhou.

I had the honour of teaching three workshops at the Ming Jia Art Education Centre; I also took part in public lectures and painting demonstrations, plein air outings and visits to schools and universities around Suzhou to spread our passion for pastel.

It was a pleasure and a great honour to share this once in a lifetime experience with some of the best pastel greats, including such artists as Master Pastellists Isabelle Lim (Singapore), Liz Haywood-Sullivan (USA), Stan Sperlak (USA), Desmond

O'Hagan (USA) and, of course, editor-in-chief of the Pastel Journal, Anne Hevener (USA).

The workshop schedule was split into three one-day workshops with three different tutors. The 20 'students' would then rotate each day to their next tutor. Alain Picard would teach his portraiture from life, Liz Haywood-Sullivan taught representational landscape and I would then involve my students in impressionism for catching colour, light and movement.

It seems, however, that there is no word in Mandarin for impressionism, so I was known as Mr. Teacher of Abstract! Most of the students were art teachers from schools and universities in Suzhou and Shanghai. Our job was to pass our knowledge and experience of all things pastel to our students, so they in turn could take it direct to the education centres and schools.

All pastel sticks and paper were supplied by our hosts and we were told to use only Chinese-made materials. I guess it made sense to keep to materials available to our students. Chinese culture appears to be very orderly and every detail has to be just so, everything should sit in its correct space. My challenge was to get the students to think outside the box and encourage them to create work from memory or a past experience (no photos allowed). One session was a day of plein air where I was surrounded by all 60 students eager to watch



An attentive audience in the demonstration hall at the Ming Jia Art Education Centre



A demonstration piece by Tony Allain – ‘impressionism’ was a new concept to students

me paint and sometimes exaggerate the colour seen in the landscape in front of us. The questions were relentless:

“Why are you making that yellow wall so bright?”

“Why are you adding that figure in the wrong place?”

“Why are you adding blue/grey to your shadows?”

Once they had grasped the fact that there are no hard and fast rules when creating, they seemed to embrace the idea of freedom of experimentation and individuality – so much so that all of my sketches and demos ended up being welcomed as gifts and mementos from Mr Abstract Teacher!

The main exhibition was located in the Ming Gallery of Art, the Ming Jia Arts Education Centre. It featured 100 paintings – one each from 60 international artists and 40 from Chinese artists – all beautifully framed by the gallery. My own painting was a large version of my subject titled Marina Reflections, a smaller version of which was exhibited at the Mall Galleries last year. The works on show were varied in style and content, but all of a high calibre. We are told that the exhibition will travel throughout China in the coming year.

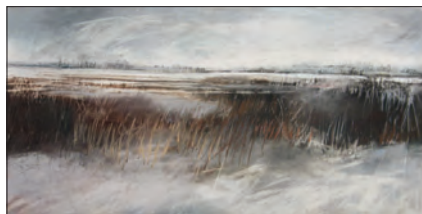
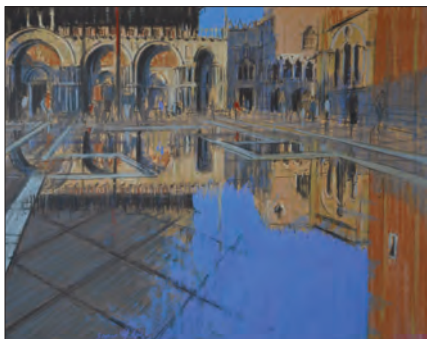
Each evening our hosts escorted us to a different hotel, where a traditional Chinese banquet was staged in a private dining room. No expense was spared as we were treated to some interesting and unusual local cuisine. Warm distilled water was drunk with the meal and also used to toast each guest many times!

Some free time was built into the programme, allowing us to explore the area around Suzhou, which is a bustling cultural city, and spotlessly clean. This was a trip well worth being involved with, and I would like to express my thanks to IAPS and Yang Hui (Simon), the Ming Gallery director.



Anne Hevener, editor of Pastel Journal, introduces Tony Allain

New members display their work



On this page, works by seven artists newly elected to membership of the Pastel Society. Clockwise from top left: Liz Balkwill 'Blue Pitcher with Clementines'; Melodie Cook 'Samuel Froggatt with Peonies'; David Brammeld 'On the Downs - Winter'; Janine Baldwin 'Horizon'; Jan Munro 'Homage to Hastings'; Jaana Fowler 'Blue Bottle'; Simon Hodges 'Reflection, St Mark's Square, Venice'. See also page 8.

Don't forget to visit our website at www.thepastelsociety.org.uk

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