

newsletter



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THE PASTEL SOCIETY



Kathy with Lace Shawl, by Glenys Ambrus

Featured Artist Glenys Ambrus, PS, ARCA, NDD



Still Life with Garden Flowers

Trawling through the work of Glenys Ambrus is an inspiring exercise. Her portfolio spans painting in pastels, oils, and watercolours; she's a skilled illustrator, and is equally at home with portraits as still life compositions. Looking back at her early years, maybe this comes as no surprise.

She remembers her father as a Sunday painter, who enjoyed copying the likes of Rembrandt and Van Dyke. She recalls, too, her first day at infant's school when she produced a drawing of a cat with no ears. "On that day," she says, "we were asked by the teachers exactly what we wanted to be when we grew up. My answer? 'To be a mummy and draw books.'"



Girl in white dress



Garden late summer

Glenys has achieved all this, and more. Despite her mother's preference for her to pursue a career at the bank, "a decent job", she was allowed to go to the local art school where she wanted to learn how to illustrate fashion. A dislike of pattern cutting and machining prompted a switch to the painting school, a National Diploma in Design (NDD), and a move to the RCA.

In fact, she counts her first art school teachers as having been the major influences on her style. "Drawing was always so important, and composition and colour was always to the forefront of their teaching," she says.

She went on to tackle a range of publishing projects, a few with her husband Victor. "They were happy days." Her favourite children's book was *Princess Well-I-May* (by Pamela Oldfield, published by Andre Deutsch), whose leading character kept a lowly shepherd on the hook with various tasks.

The Pastel Society's handbook states that she enjoys pastel's directness and immediacy, and this is evident in the way that she plans her work. "Composition is very important to me," she says. "Occasionally I might sketch out what I want but usually I dive straight in. Pastel lends itself to being manipulated. I plan out quite lightly with a blue-grey Conté crayon and then start alternately blocking in and drawing."

Whether she's working with a model, or a still-life arrangement, Glenys always sets out with an idea in mind of the kind of image she wants to create. Inspiration for the latter may stem from a bunch of flowers or something that she has picked up

previously from a junk shop. Then, gradually, she builds it up using other elements such as cushions or crockery. She likes, she says, to repeat colours throughout the composition, so that the eye travels round the picture.

A portrait, however, demands a different approach. She appreciates models who wear interesting clothes, but usually carries a couple of patterned sarongs that can be used as a skirt or to add a bit of colour (or even to cover up maroon, which she is not particularly fond of).

Glenys protects pastel work, when on the move, by carrying another same size board that she can just lay over the bulldog clips holding the main picture to the drawing board and securing it with masking tape. "It depends how far I have got with the picture: a piece of newspaper clipped over is usually enough," she says, "but I do spray occasionally with fixative during the process – albeit sparingly."

Some of her models, such as Natalie, have sat for her for about 20 years. "I don't get tired of drawing her," she says. "She wears paintable clothes and I have painted her in all mediums. She has what I think of as Irish colouring: plummy hair, grey-blue eyes and a skating of vermillion in her cheeks, plus she sits so well."

As for the preparation, Glenys works on mount-board, generally a pale blue grey. If doing a large A0 landscape, she will rub greeny-blue watercolour or watered-down Dr Martins inks on it randomly, using a bit of kitchen paper.

Then her steely-blue Conté comes out, and she's off. She admits to having favourites in her pastel box. "Unison has the most wonderfully vibrant oranges and olive greens," she says, "while Rowney used to produce a beautiful grey-green and poppy red which I miss, although I've still got a few precious stumps left."

"Schwan-STABILO made a grey-green pastel pencil, since discontinued, which was so useful in portrait. But there are huge amounts of different colours and I have presentation boxes with untouched colours."

Her approach to pastels has always been 'painterly', but in some recent portraits she has

used a more graphic approach. This does, however, depend on the model. "When I paint Natalie," she says, "I tend to think in terms of paint when using pastel but we had a beautiful Spanish model – Maria – with a mass of long crinkly hair, who needed a different, more linear approach."

Students have also benefited from Glenys's passion for portraiture, given that she took over Mary Hackney's Adult Education classes. The transition was easy, she says, because they thought alike and enjoyed drawing the same set-ups. After two decades, though, she called a halt. The form filling and the politics became too much, so she started a workshop at a local pottery, a venue which is gradually expanding into an Art Centre. Her students came with her, being of like mind.

Glenys continues to work in a range of mediums, painting in oils and watercolours when sketching or for a short portrait pose. "I also often mix watercolours with water-soluble coloured pencils or crayons," she says, "but not with pastel." There was one final question which I summoned up the courage to ask: what, if any, are the pros and cons of being married to a fellow artist?

"Lots of pros," came the reply. "There is always someone to bounce ideas off. If one of us runs out of something, the other usually has it. And not too many cons." But I wonder why I get the feeling one does more cooking than the other?



Glenys Ambrus in her studio

The President's Letter

My first year as President: I'm sitting here typing away this letter in Southcot, recalling the mixture of emotions felt when I heard the news – and how, when that subsided, reality set in...

The Annual Exhibition has been, and probably will always be, our main focus, as a showcase for existing and potential new members, while encouraging emerging talented non-member artists. The Awards and Prizes, such as the prestigious Alfred Teddy Smith and Zsuzsi Roboz Award, are a huge incentive, and we are fortunate to have a gift from Zsuzsi, who generously bequeathed an award of £5,000 for a young artist, as well all the other 15 prizes available this year.

Our Sponsor Derwent has generously supported the Society over the year and has been involved with us reaching out to artists and supporting us with materials, especially recently with our successful Pastel Society Summer Workshops, organised by Sue Relph, held in St George's College, Addlestone, Surrey.

This year we have seven magnificent new members who we are delighted to welcome, but sadly it's also been a year of loss. Two PS stalwarts, past President John Ivor Stewart and best loved figurative artist Bernard Dunstan, will be greatly missed. The pastel community is of a size that such losses are keenly felt, and underlines the need to attract the next generation of artists.

Education is, as I said last year, a priority for the Society. The workshops and demonstrations are key to this, as is promoting awareness of the medium, and that is still very much the case. With this in mind, I am starting to compile a centralised database of pastel workshops held nationally throughout the year.

To this end, I'd like to encourage members to send me details of workshops and courses that they are running across the country so that we can feature it as a calendar on the Pastel Society's website and maybe the Newsletter.

More is needed to be done to educate the galleries, both public and private, about the very special quality of the medium.

For the moment though, the next task is organising the 2018 exhibition. Details of the arrangements appear in the next column and we're hoping for another bumper year. Please make a note of the relevant submission dates.

Annual Exhibition Arrangements

Plans are, as usual, well in hand for the Pastel Society's annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries from 20th February to 3rd March 2018 with the Private View on Monday 19th February.

All non-members' artists submissions must be made through the digital pre-selection process: www.registrationmallgalleries.org.uk and the deadline is midday on **Friday 3rd November**. Artists will be able to check whether submissions have been successful by visiting the same website.

- Pre-selection notification:
Friday 10th November 12 noon
- Receiving Day:
Saturday 6th January 2018 10am-5pm
- Acceptance notification:
Tuesday 9th January 12 noon

Officers and Council Members

President	Jeannette Hayes
Vice President	Michael Norman
Hon Treasurer	Colin Murfet
Hon Secretary	Jenny Halstead
Exhibitions Sec	Peter Vincent
Membership Sec	Brian Plummer
Publicity Sec	Jeannette Hayes
Friends' Sec	Felicity House
Trustee	Moira Huntly
Education Officer	Brian Dunce

Council: Matthew Draper, Sheila Goodman, Bob Last, Sue Relph, Robin Warnes, Roy Wright, Sarah Bee.

Other Members' News

Roy Wright and Patricia Cain will be at the Rebecca Hossack Gallery in Conway Street, Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6BA. Titled 'Millefolia', the PV is on 1st November and finishes on the 25th.

AGBI Steward

Malcom Taylor is 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.

Cheques should be made payable to the AGBI and sent to AGBI, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BB, or by using PayPal via the Home page of the AGBI website, which is at www.agbi.co.uk

Obituaries

John Ivor Stewart (1936-2017)

John Ivor always gave his full support to the Pastel Society and was the first person to make contact with me when I exhibited initially. He was most encouraging and friendly and became a good friend over the years.

His favourite place to visit was Wisley Gardens, where we met on several occasions. He was a great flower enthusiast and used this as a subject matter many times.

John could start a conversation with a complete stranger. Phone calls with him could easily last up to an hour, but being John, he always kept a timer handy so as not to go over his free hour.

I feel the Pastel Society will be the poorer without him, and we shall certainly miss his sense of humour, generosity, enthusiasm and thoughtfulness for others.

Bob Last

Very sorry to hear of John Ivor's death. He was largely responsible for my becoming a member of the PS, having phoned me out of the blue to encourage me to re-apply following a failed attempt! I believe his kind act was regarded as a bit unorthodox at the time but I was sincerely grateful to him. A subsequent conversation a few years later confirmed our mutual warmth of feeling for each other's artistic endeavours. I had hoped one day to see more of his works in his home which he'd described as overflowing with them! He will, indeed, be much missed.

Tom Walker

I stayed with John Ivor on a couple of occasions when taking a PS Workshop in Surrey. He was a generous host and I much enjoyed looking at his beautiful, superbly executed watercolours of flowers which hung on every wall.

John Tookey

When I was about to retire as President of the Pastel Society, Mark Leach was the President Elect. We were all deeply shocked when Mark died suddenly of a massive heart attack. There were no other nominations for the Presidency so I approached John Ivor, who had held the post of Honorary Treasurer in the past. After a lot of heart searching he finally agreed to stand as President but only for two years. I was immensely grateful.

John was a complex character, he could be charming, a natty dresser, and always caring about the health of others, yet he didn't take life easy except when he was in his beloved garden. In committee he kept us on our toes, always challenging, sometimes abrasive, but always passionate about the future of the Pastel Society. We will miss him.

Moira Huntly

John Ivor Stewart is my "Superman".

An operatic tenor with a charming Irish lilt, he did much to maintain the relationship between the Pastel Society UK, and the Société de Pastellistes de France.

Jean Pierre Merat, the founding member of the PDF, invited members of the PS UK to exhibit in its annual exhibitions. In 1999, I invited Jean Pierre to London for a return visit.

We got a phone call saying all the French pastel works had been held up in Customs. Just then the doorbell rang and in strode tall John Ivor, hitting his head on the Victorian lamps. I explained the disaster, and once again that tenor laugh filled the room. "That's fine," he said. "I'll go and get them now. Don't worry I have my Green Card." He secured the works ready for showing in the Mall Galleries that same evening.

Now, when faced with a problem, I smile and think: "How would John Ivor fix this?"

Eiko Yoshimoto

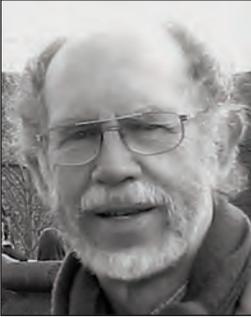
Bernard Dunstan RA PPRWA NEAC (1920 - 2017)

I was very sorry to learn that one of our best loved figurative artists Bernard Dunstan has died - he was a wonderful painter and terrifically generous in sharing his skill of making paintings through numerous art magazine articles and his wonderful books - which are so worth reading. Bernard painted his wife Diana Armfield every day - so many drawings exist but I'm happy to have just one - a pastel drawing on water-colour wash. It was my good fortune to win this back in 1999 when I purchased an RWA fund raising draw ticket - a photographic image is not so good as it's under glass but I enjoy looking at it every day. A generous artist in every respect - he leaves much to us all.

Felicity House

(Published in Making A Mark)

John Ivor Stewart, ADAE, PPS, FSBA July 1936-July 2017



This appreciation is an attempt to more fully expand and flesh out the brief obituary notice posted recently on the Society's website and to share among friends and colleagues some memories of a complex man. These are recollections of things we

talked about over a period of some 30 years. Memories of other friends will be expressed elsewhere.

John studied at Belfast School of Art 1956-60, then went on to attain his ATD at Reading University 1960-61, and a further ADAE at the Cardiff College of Art 1973-74. In 1990, he retired from full-time art education at Frensham Heights, an independent modern progressive co-educational school, founded in 1925, and which is run by a registered charity. He was a Founder Member of the Society of Botanical Artists in 1982 and exhibited regularly with them as an FSBA. He was the first recipient of the Joyce Cummings Award with that Society.

In 1988, he was elected to Membership of the Pastel Society, having already won the Major Prize in 1986 as a Non-Member. He went on to be awarded the Major Prize again in 1992 and 1997. In his time as a Member of our Society, he served as Honorary Treasurer, Membership Secretary, and was elected President. In this capacity he served from 2009-12, despite failing health. He continued as Education Secretary until this year, which was greatly important to him.

His diabetes, which he suffered from for most of his life, failed to curb his enthusiasm for regular trips to France, where he brokered the joint exchange exhibitions with Members of our Society, and the Société des Pastellistes de France. In 1999 John won the 'Grand Prix de Peinture' at the 'XIIe Festival Européen des Arts et de La Poésie' Var, Provence.

John was a complex person with many interests. He held very strong opinions and was not bashful about sharing them with everyone. It was a tragic irony that someone who loved to talk, with such a beautiful and melodious voice, should be deprived of easy speech during the last months of his life.

When talking with him, on the phone, in his home or in the gallery; the topics shared moved in and out like a woven tapestry, with often a surreal twist.

My conversations with him about Society matters would often be quickly resolved (five minutes), but the rest of the conversation (one hour fifty-five minutes) would consist of talking about everything else. That he died on 1/7/17 would have provoked a long and detailed analysis of symmetry/cemetery and numerology.

His house was full of other artists' work, paintings and drawings, and the ceramics which he and his wife Jenny had collected together over the years. He delighted in talking about their ceramic collection, and insisted that they must be picked up and handled while talking about them. One was pressed for opinions about other artists' work and often about his own. Up until his last invasive serious surgery, he kept his vigour for the Society matters and his sense of humour. When discussing the last of his many operations I asked if it was 'keyhole' surgery. "No, JCB," he replied.

Looking back on visits to his house, I cannot remember a television, and if there was one, we never spoke of any programmes. Likewise, we never spoke of politics (apart from PS ones of course). He did speak regularly of Jenny though, who pre-deceased him, of their buying ceramics together and for whom his garden was made.

His studio was tiny, the interior apex of his bungalow roof space conversion. It always amazed me that he could produce such large scale and intense work such as 'The Parting' of 1998 (156x112 cm), his selection for inclusion in the Centenary Book of the Pastel Society 'Pastel Painting and Drawing 1890-2000'. In many conversations, he often expressed a desire to expand the format of his pastel painting, and to this end in 2015, with 'Souvenir of a Landscape' (1), and in 2016, with 'Figure in a Landscape' (2), one of his group of submissions for the Annual Exhibition at The Mall Galleries, was a soft pastel on a 3D construction.

A recurring subject for discussion was often the 'Venus' paintings which are linked across the centuries. The Giorgione 'Sleeping Venus'



The Parting, 1998

(completed by Titian) (3), Dresden c.1508-10; 'The Venus of Urbino' (4), Titian, before 1538, Galleria degli Uffizi; and 'Olympia' (5) Manet, 1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris. There is a very interesting book about Victorine Meurent (6), the model for 'Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe' and 'Olympia', which is worth reading, as is *The Seduction of Venus*(7). The former goes some way to re-establish the reputation of this working class young woman, who sought to become a painter, but who has always been referred to as a drunk and a prostitute.

Among contemporary artists he was keen to talk about were Marcelle Hanselaar and Jenny Saville, Paula Rego and Anna Maria Pacheco.

Brian Dunce

References

1. 'Look Again', The Pastel Society Annual Exhibition catalogue, 2015, pp16 or <https://www.mallgalleries.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/look-again-pastel-society>
2. 'Figure in a Landscape', The Pastel Society Annual Exhibition catalogue, 2016, pp19
3. In the Age of Giorgione, The Biography of a Myth, Simone Facchinetti and Arturo Galansino, Royal Academy of Arts, ISBN 978-1-910350-27-0
4. 'Titian', National Gallery Catalogue to 2003 exhibition, edited by David Jaffe, ISBN 1-85709 905 6
5. The Hidden Face of Manet, Juliet Wilson Bareau, The Burlington Magazine 1986, volume CXXVIII, number 997
6. A Woman With No Clothes On, V.R. Main, Delancey Press, ISBN 978-0953119-7-4
7. The Seduction of Venus, France Borel, Skira ISBN 0.8478 1217-0



Opium, Picotee and Flamenco Poppies

Out of Town Showcase



In the last issue we featured details of Tony Allain's trip to exhibit and teach at the 2nd Biennial International Pastel Art Exhibition in China due to his involvement with the International Association of Pastel Societies (IAPS). Here, it's the turn of Margaret Glass.

At the beginning of the year I was asked by the French Pastel society if I would like to go to China to tutor three two-day courses in pastel. It was an opportunity that I couldn't refuse, so the middle of July found me at the Ming Jia Art Education Centre in Suzhou, China. My students, all 65 of them, were art teachers, secondary students and primary students from Beijing.

There is a growing passion for pastel in China and Simon at the Jai Ming Art Education Centre is at the forefront of this. I was greeted with enthusiasm and afforded great hospitality. My students were keen to learn more, as most of them had only been using pastel for about a year or so.

I was supplied with a basic set of 72 pastels and paper, the same as the students. This was somewhat limiting and a bit of a challenge for me as it wasn't what you might call a landscape range.

Next to the Education Centre is the Ming Art Gallery where, throughout the summer, there is an international exhibition of pastel paintings. This exhibition was reviewed in a national art paper, so the medium is getting the publicity it fully deserves.

I was delighted to be able to participate in a small way and be involved in the growing awareness of the pastel medium.

Margaret Glass

This year has been a busy one for Pastel Society members exhibiting and teaching overseas.

David Brammeld PS was selected 'Invité d'Honneur' at the 17th International Festival du Pastel at Feytiat, France, from July to September.

He exhibited 18 pastels and graphite works, mostly treescapes. The exhibition was very well received and promoted, and David was pleasantly surprised when the Mayor's office bought one of his pastels. After much practise, David made a speech in French on the opening night!

As part of the festivities, he also did a three-day workshop and two demonstrations. David is now a member of the Société de Pastellistes de France.



Le Park En Automne



David Brammeld PS was Guest of Honour at Société de Pastellistes de France 'Festival du Pastel' at Feytiat July-Sept 2017

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

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