

Summer Workshops at Heatherleys



The Pastel Society's summer workshops started up again this summer and were held over four days at Heatherleys Art School in Fulham. Thank you to all the tutors, including Jan Munro (top left), Melodie Cook (bottom left), John Tookey (bottom right), Richard Rees (top right), Felicity House and Roger Dellar

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THE PASTEL SOCIETY



Tweedy in Centaur Costume - Giffords Circus, Melodie Cook PS

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Featured Artist Melodie Cook, PS



Metamorphosing

Think Melodie Cook and the term inspirational comes to mind. Her portraits always tell a story, her pastel workshops are a treat, and now I find she's dabbling with ceramics (look out for Horned Pots). But what's even more fascinating is her life story to date.

She had her career mapped out from the age of eight. Her plan was always that she would be a model ("even though I didn't know what a model did at the time"), then a fashion designer, and finally an artist – and so it turned out.

In the holidays between the sixth and upper sixth years, she persuaded her parents to let her attend Lucy Clayton's modelling school "because that was the only way I knew to get into the industry." She went to work as a house model in a bridal store, doing all their drawings, post-school until a contact introduced her to a photographer which led to her signing with the Models 1 agency in 1975.

She ended up as a cover girl for many of the fashion magazines of the time, touring the continent and spending a lot of time in Germany for the first couple of years before deciding to go to Milan for three weeks.

"I just thought I'd get a bit more style in my portfolio," she says. "I arrived on the Friday and on the Monday went to my first round of 'go-sees' with photographers. And there was this particular one called Giovanni."

The rest, as they say, is history. Three months later she collected her belongings from London and at 21, with no Italian, returned and stayed for 27 years. The lack of language was not a problem, most people in the business spoke English, and she became fluent quickly.

Melodie kept modelling up to 1980, and over the next three years would travel to London with her photographer partner for three months at a time. "We made a killing, actually, because we were seen as a couple and all the magazines booked us. It was a fantastic time, but I'd always wanted to be a fashion designer," she says.

So, in the '80s she quit modelling and, despite lacking training, eventually landed a job with menswear designer Guido Pellegrini who was impressed with her innate drawing ability.

Pellegrini, a well-known name in the 1960s/70s, taught her the ropes over the next two years in what was, at the time, a computer-free environment.

Time for the next step, then. At 30, as a recently divorced single mother, Melodie went freelance. Her circumstances, she says, made her even more determined to succeed. She won a contract with Benetton to design women's wear on a trial basis. "It was right at the end of the season, and they had ten freelance designers working on their collection," she says.



Melodie Cook with Grace Arranging

BOB LAST PS MSIAD 1932 – 2020



Bob Last; where to begin? As you all know, Bob's stunning energy, talent and dedication to the Pastel Society had no limits His attention to detail was legendary. His love for the Society and its members was huge. I will miss his phone calls. He was the only person who would call me on my home line. Now every time it rings, my heart leaps and then sadness; it's only another recorded message. Thank you, Bob. You gave so much of yourself.

Jeannette Hayes PPS

Dear Bob, where do I start? A few months you were up a ladder redoing the mastic on a flat roof and telling me you had just finished a huge painting, four feet long and then barely a month ago when we spoke you sounded so poorly it was hard to believe it was the same person.

We often chatted about various aspects of building work; we could discuss carpentry and plumbing, JCBs and brickwork. Bob was a hands-on person. He was also a perfectionist. I remember so clearly being told off for suggesting he altered an aspect of the Membership Certificate which he had designed!

Bob was never afraid to try something new, and he always worked to that very high standard which he applied to whatever project he had in mind. He was also a kind and extremely generous person. I am still deeply moved by the fabulous gifts (including a very large cheque) which he planned and organised for my retirement as President of the Pastel Society. Each box was carefully covered in matching paper, perfectly applied. I will treasure all these things, including the boxes, forever. I will miss him. He will be greatly missed by the Pastel Society, but most of all he will be missed by his family. We all felt he would go on forever.

Cheryl Culver

Bob Last was the most complete 'Society Man'. Nothing was ever too much trouble. He played a strong hand both in the forefront of the Pastel Society in exhibiting each year a full complement of pastel paintings (beautifully framed by himself) and behind the scenes as a Council Member and one-time Vice President.

His generosity of spirit knew no ends and I have seen him leap in to save a situation, such as when during a selection a work suffered frame damage. Bob said that he would take it home and reframe it, duly returning the next day with it under his arm and back to show standard.

Even when he was perhaps not in the best of health, he would inquire about that of another. A most generous spirit. His range of interests and concerns were wide and varied. We had long conversations about the need (or not) of the crossbar on the letter J. Touring the exhibition with him was interesting each year and his comments were always honest and direct. It is not too much to say that he is irreplaceable. The strong quiet support which he gave to individuals and to the Society as a whole is greatly missed.

Brian Dunce PS

Obituaries

**VICTOR AMBRUS PS Hon (retired) FSA FRSA
1935 – 2021 Illustrator of History, Folk Tales,
and Animal Story Books**



Dillys's New Hat

Born 1935 in Budapest, Hungary, Victor showed early artistic talent that blossomed post-WW2. He enrolled in the Academy of Fine Art in Budapest in 1953 and undertook a classical training in drawing, which fed his passion for illustration. In November 1956 he was caught up in the Hungarian Uprising and had to flee his homeland on foot, trudging long miles through snow to the Austrian border and safety.

He was flown to England as a refugee and housed in an army camp near Farnham, Surrey, which happened to have an Art College. Even though he could only speak a few words of English, the Farnham School of Art accepted him as a student and encouraged him to draw. His talent was such that after only two terms at Farnham, he was commended to the Royal College of Art in London, to which he won a three-year Gulbenkian

Scholarship to study Printmaking and Illustration in 1957. 1958 was a good year for Victor. Not only was he feted as a Royal Scholar, but he also became a husband, marrying fellow illustrator and RCA student Glenys Chapman and embarking on a rock-solid 60-plus years partnership.

In 1994 Victor joined the crew of Channel 4's *Time Team* and for the next twenty years brought archeological sites and their contents to life in real time, effortlessly enabling viewers to visualise how our ancestors lived, worked and died through his illustrations. In 2009 *Time Team* held a retrospective exhibition of Victor's work at Sutton Hoo, the site of the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, the subject of Netflix's recent production *The Dig*. Victor's depiction of how the ship was dragged to its final resting place is a fine example of his in-the-field excellence.

Victor was a very active member and supporter of the Pastel Society, serving as Council Member and Vice President. He was a regular attendee of Art Events (always accompanied by Glenys, who is also a member) and was always drawing. A master of his art and the nicest person you could hope to meet, he will be sorely missed.

The Next Move demonstrates Victor's inimitable use of fine lines and colour to bring a subject to life. It also shows how in pleasing himself, Victor was able to bring joy to us all, the grown-up children whose imaginations were fired by Victor Ambrus illustrations in the books we read all those years ago.

Jeannette Hayes PPS



*Selection Day 2007 with Leigh Parry, Anthony Eyton,
Victor Ambrus, Bob Last and Moira Huntly*

She illustrated four different themes, with Benetton taking up 50 designs. Her jackets sold out globally, and Melodie was awarded a contract, while the other designers were fired.

Her designs featured in the stand-out ad campaigns shot by Oliviero Toscani, who she'd previously worked with as a model. Her freelance career went on to encompass collaborations with Stefanel, Replay and La Perla.

After 18 years she left the fashion world and set up a new art and design studio, creating collections and illustrations for editorials and children's books, stationery, ceramics and glass. But the hankering to explore her potential as an artist prompted her, in the end, to return to the UK.

She was taken in by Pastel Society member Sarah Bee, a model friend she had shared a flat with before going to Italy. Apart from Sarah, though, "I didn't know anybody," she says, "so I went on to Friends Reunited to see if I could find some old school friends (there wasn't Facebook at that point)."

From then on, it sounds like a matter of serendipity. A former boyfriend from her schooldays got in touch, who was now working in advertising and living near London. They started talking in 2005, but didn't meet until 2008, marrying a year later

He encouraged Melodie to realise her desire to go to art school, with the Art Academy in Borough proving her ultimate destination. "I started with the Academy because it was so figurative at that point," she says. "And they had these fantastic tutors, such as Brendan Kelly, Robin-Lee Hall, Andrew James and Tai-Shan Schierenberg.

It was Kelly, as head of drawing, who gave her a nudge towards pastels and suggested she focus on drawing when she left college. "So that's what I've done" she says.

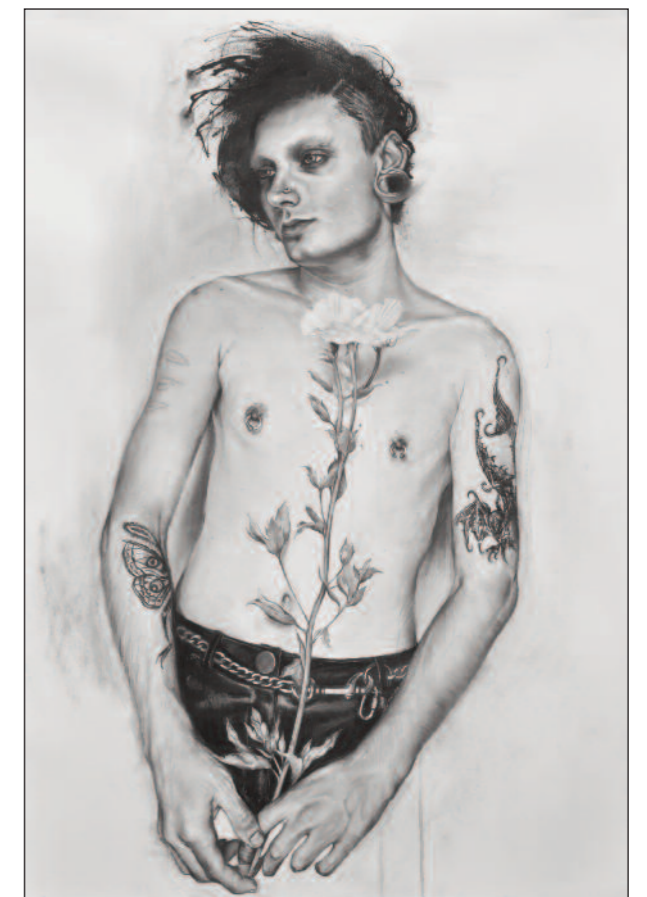
She began exhibiting with the Pastel Society the following year and also showed two portraits of her son with the Royal Society of Portrait Painters in 2013 and 2014. "After the death of my son in 2019 I felt inspired and moved to dedicate my portrait work to young people."

She cites as influences her tutors from college, but also names artists like Lucien Freud, Holbein ("one of those artists who could get a really accurate likeness with very few marks"), Paula Rego, Egon Schiele and photographer David LaChapelle.

Her drawings – or rather her paintings – stand out at the Pastel Society's annual exhibitions for their size, their visual impact, their colour and subject matter. This year they featured art students Alexi and Grace.

Holbein's influence is plain to see, and a comprehensive description of the process she uses to tell their story is available in a video on Instagram (@melodiecookartist).

So, when does a pastel drawing become a painting? When it covers the whole canvas, says Melodie. And what will be the next stage in her artistic adventures? It's a case of wait and see, but I bet the wait will be worthwhile.



Alexi and the Spider

Letter from the Society's new President

This is the first newsletter that I have had the pleasure of contributing to as your new President. Jeannette resigned in October after a very successful five years at the helm of the Pastel Society in which she has fought hard on all sides to protect and enhance our interests. I wish her well in her 'retirement' and she tells me she is going to produce lots more work!

I also have Simon Hodges alongside me, as the new Vice-President of the Society. We have already started to evolve a fruitful balance of responsibilities that is enabling us to deal with the many complex aspects of running the Society. I have, of course, inherited a formidable and effective Council from Jeannette, for which I am very grateful.

It has been a hectic last few months and we are coming up to our February Annual Exhibition - number 123 – after only a short time since exhibiting in the Mall Galleries in 2021. I do hope that this has allowed you the time to produce some great new work. The theme of the exhibition is 'Fresh Eyes'. We chose this to reflect the potential for looking at things freshly after the doldrums of the Pandemic and to encourage new artists to submit works for the exhibition.

We are planning, regulations permitting, to have a studio set up in the North Gallery of the Mall Galleries where we will be doing demonstrations as frequently as we can. Similarly, a 'Fresh Eyes' evening art event is planned subject to no COVID restrictions coming into place in the meantime.

I look forward to us getting together again, and to seeing you all at the exhibition and AGM.
Best Wishes
Richard Rees PPS

The Pastel Society's 123rd Annual Exhibition 2022

At the Mall Galleries: Wednesday 16 to 26 February 2022

Receiving Day: Saturday 15 January 10am to 5pm

Private View: Tuesday 15 February, 2pm to 8pm, official opening at 6pm

Art Event Evening: Tuesday 22 February, 6pm to 8:30pm, which members are encouraged to attend free of charge

Collection of unsold work: Thursday 3 March, 10am to 5pm, or after the AGM

We ask that members submit their work online by midday on Tuesday 4 January the gallery's Open Exhibition Submission System (OESS), at the private, members-only link:
<https://mallgalleries.oess1.uk/invitedartistlogin.aspx>

Officers and Council Members

President	Richard Rees
Vice-President	Simon Hodges
Treasurer	Colin Murfet
Honorary Secretary	Jenny Halstead
Trustee	Moira Huntly
Membership Secretary	Sheila Goodman
Publicity Secretary	Melodie Cook
Friends Secretary	Norma Stephenson, Felicity House
Education Secretary	Richard Rees
Exhibitions Secretary	Peter Vincent

Council: Sarah Bee, Jeannette Hayes, Susan Relph, Roy Wright.

Editorial Contributions

This newsletter aims to reflect the news and views of its members, and so if you are planning any workshops or exhibitions, please get in touch and I will endeavour to feature your input in a forthcoming issue. Likewise, if you have an article that is bursting to be written, please forward it to me. My email is Louella.miles@writers4management.com and I will acknowledge receipt and get back to you as soon as I can.

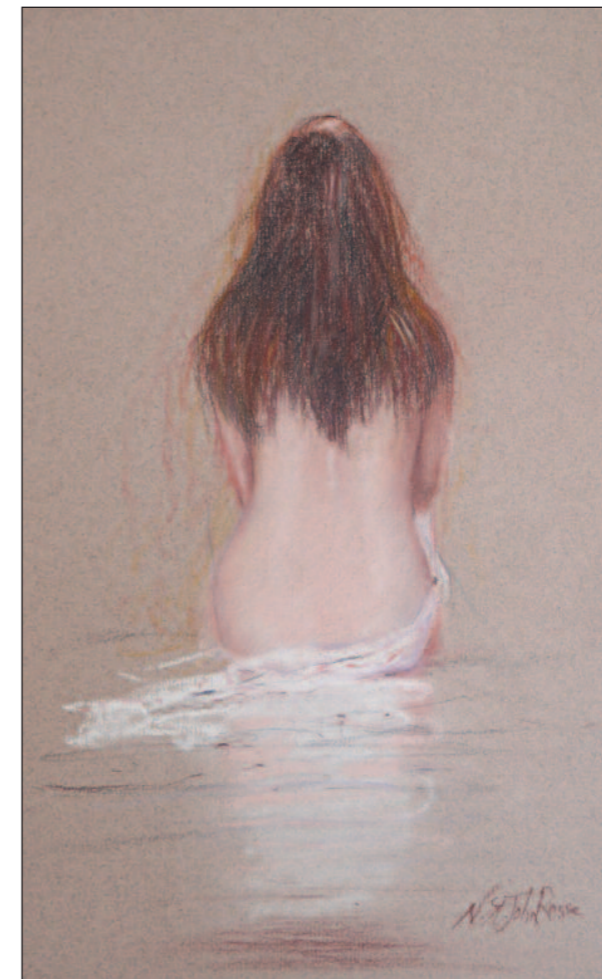
AGBI Report

This year's Artists' General Benevolent Institution (AGBI) Report outlines support for 109 artists with 15 children of artists supported by the AGBI Children's Fund. Overall, £345,906 was awarded. As well as several members contributing so generously to the AGBI independently, The Pastel Society as a whole contributed £455 thanks to 10% of the monies made from paintings sold via the secret bid held during our annual exhibition. As we look for a new member to take the reins as steward for the coming year, I hope we continue to build on this in the future and help out less fortunate artists in these particularly difficult times.

Simon Hodges VPPS

admired his superb drawing technique and interpretation of the figure. "On the more 'painterly' side, I love seeing Tony Allain's free use of colour and bold compositions," he says, "while I'm always taken with David Brammeld's tree studies in various media."

For his part, he prefers soft pastels to oil pastels but to date hasn't done many in the former. The Derwent prize, however, could be a game changer. His method, he says, is fairly standard.



Hair and Back Study

"First of all, I draw on cartridge paper (he's on a quest for a smooth permanent tinted version) and then I lay down a tone, usually a light one if I'm doing a nude, say. After that I draw into it with pastel pencils and go back and forth from these to the actual pastels," he says. This method means he has to fix his paintings along the way to ensure

he can store them and then pick them up again. He has to live with the tonal change when he does so, and a diminishing of the 'lightness' but he does then get to work on them again. "I think it's David Brammeld who doesn't fix them," he says. "And he does it on cartridge paper, which I find totally amazing."

He also uses charcoal pencil, because you "get a very lovely effect straight away," he says. "The moment it touches the paper you feel the same way you do when your brush first touches the canvas: you know that you're going to enjoy it."

As for subject matter, his paintings normally feature beach compositions, with ideas coming from sketches and colour studies done in situ on the beach and then worked up in the studio. He first started painting the sea when he lived in Spain, but it wasn't always his first choice. When he lived in London, he'd be painting street scenes with figures or Hampstead Heath.

He also got to know an old kite maker at the time and did countless paintings of him and of Parliament Hill which were well known at the time, featuring on a TV programme which he has never managed to see (if anyone has a recording, he'd be very interested).

So, would he recommend entering the PS exhibition to other artists? Yes, comes the reply, with the warning that acceptance is becoming more difficult as submissions are increasing dramatically and you need determination, plus a thick skin. We have been warned.



Nicholas, painting Back Study in his studio

The 2021 Derwent Award Winner



Contemplation, Pastel

The winner of the Derwent Award is a familiar name, Nicholas St John Rosse. He's an artist better known for his works in oil, although he's used a variety of media including egg tempera, deciding which one to use based on the subject, the circumstances, his mood and what materials interest him at the time.

He has always used colour pencils, considering them a very under-rated medium, but was finding that they gave a rather weak effect. It prompted a return to pastel pencils, which to his mind produce a much more robust kind of line.

"I don't normally try for competitions, so winning the prize was a huge surprise and a great honour," he says. "My normal show at the Mall Galleries is the RSMA, of which I am a member. Winning hasn't changed my perception of the Pastel Society, but it has reinforced my view that pastel – and all kinds of pencil – have recently enjoyed a new surge of interest."

It's a trend which he feels has been prompted by greater availability of pastels, together with more firms producing them, while he considers that pastel pencils have also improved considerably.

His winning entry, 'Contemplation', is a study for a painting he exhibited at the RSMA. "The setting was a view down onto a bright late afternoon beach into the light, done from a plein air gouache/watercolour study," he says. "The model, Nikki, I have used countless times, also two of her children. She is a strong part of beach life here and many of my figure/beach paintings feature her in many guises. She also paints the sea herself. I've been very lucky with models over the years and they have been my true inspiration."

His prize (£1,000-worth of pastel pencils and associated materials) took him around a fortnight to sort out from the Derwent website. "It's not as easy as it sounds," he says. He started using them right away to supplement his existing materials and is hoping to start some "full-bodied full-colour" pastel work soon.

Nicholas's 'history' of life drawing has been a long one, starting with sessions at Burgh House, Hampstead in the early 1960s; followed by studying in the studio of Pietro Annigoni, then the Scuola del Nudo, in Florence and Heatherleys in the late 60s.

"From then on I've taken part in many life groups," he says, "but mostly I hire models privately in the studio. I frequently draw (great) grandchildren and sketch people on the beach. For figures, I tend to use pencil, pen, colour pencil, pastel and, since winning the Derwent prize, their sensual tinted charcoal pencils. My figure drawings are studio studies done inside or out and visualised from the start as part of a beach setting."

His studio is a few yards from his home in Cornwall and is full, he says, of hundreds of paintings, thousands of unframed works on paper, plus multiple sketchbooks, frames, framing material and machinery and canvas preparing stuff.

"There's just enough space for a model, though sometimes I put her in the house if she needs spoiling. Most people seem to enjoy seeing the studio and I just haven't the heart to clear it up. I enjoy plein air sketching and painting – essential preparation for my best work – and this work is done in the studio."

Nicholas's favourite work at the show was Victor Ambrus's 'Girl with a red necklace', having long

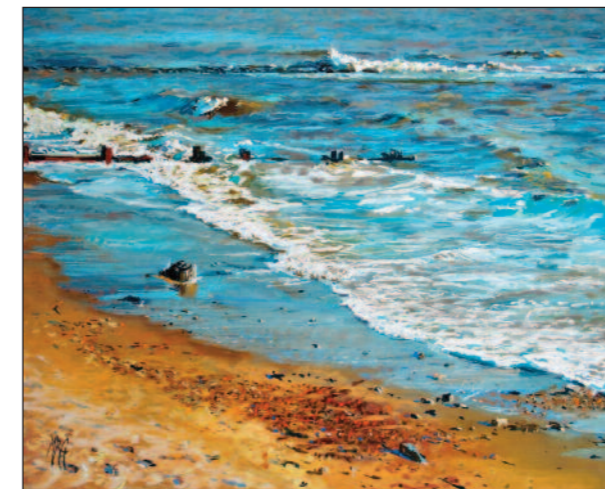
Awards and Member News

It's an age since Griff Rhys Jones opened the 2021 exhibition, but let's give the worthy winners a shout out before we get engulfed by entries for next year's show.

Derwent Award

Contemplation

Nicholas St John Rosse



Caran D'Ache

Margaret Glass PS (Incoming Tide – see above)

Artists & Illustrators

Halla Shafey PS (A Walk in the Fields)

West Design and Faber-Castell Award

Dave Roberts (Tree at Dusk)

Henri Roché – La Maison Du Pastel

Maximillion Baccanello (Portrait of Rania)

The Frank Herring & Sons Award

Rebecca Hardaker (An Analogue State of Joy)

The Pastel Society Young Artist Award

Charlotte Bullock (The Beast's Negative Space)

The Pastel Society Catalogue Award

First Prize: Anne Magill (September)

Second Prize: Janine Shute (Pink Tape Measure)

Schmincke

Christine Watson (Fez Scaffolding III)

The Artist Magazine

Janine Baldwin PS (Frozen Ground/Furrowed)

The Yoshimoto Prize

(£1,000 for an outstanding work, in any dry medium, by a non-member)

Tom Hudson-Davies (Self Isolation)



Unison Colour

Member Award: Susan Relph PS (Deirdre - above)

Non-Member Award: Anne Magill (September)

Young Artists Award: Caitlin Heslop (St Agnes II)

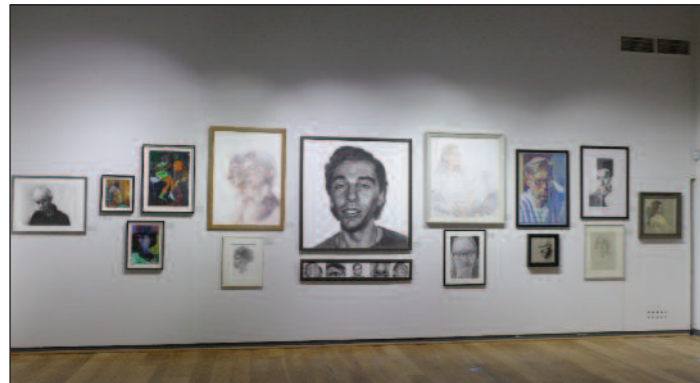
Members' news

June Arnold PS SWAc is donating all the sales of her Indian collection of paintings, now and any in the future to the St Judes Childcare Centres in five different Cities across India. The Charity provides needy children undergoing cancer treatment, together with members of their family with free accommodation, education and holistic care throughout the treatment. Families from far and wide might otherwise end up living on the streets. Paintings can be viewed on the St Jude Childcare website, a selection at Sarah Samuels Fine Art autumn/winter exhibition, and at June Arnold's studio by appointment.

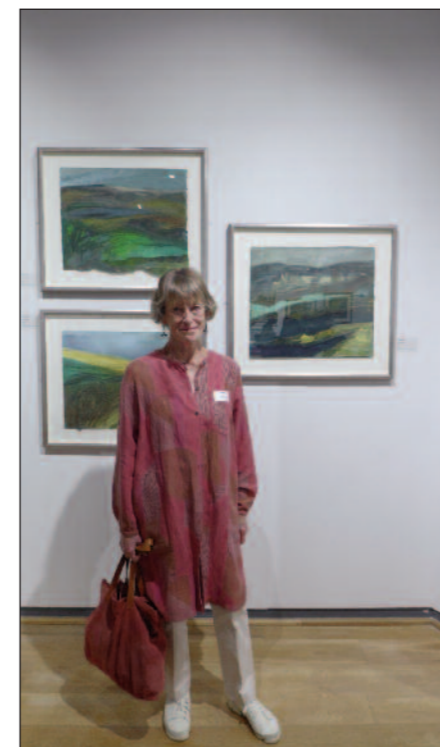
Annual Exhibition thrives...



Even in a pandemic



Clockwise from top: Roger Dellar in front of his work and that of Moira Huntly; Ben Hope; Bob Last's daughters Jo and Jackie standing before his paintings; the back wall of portraiture in the main Gallery



Clockwise from top: Cheryl Culver; Ingrid Wilkins, invited art works; winner of the Young Artist Award: Charlotte Bullock's The Beast's Negative Space, and Jill Jeffery

