



Newsletter

February 2018
www.warsashartgroup.org.uk

Welcome from your Chairman

Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you had an enjoyable Christmas and that you are now getting back into your arty mode.

There is another busy year of talks and demonstrations, tutorials and exhibitions to look forward to, and of course, the annual general meeting in March to vote in the new committee. This year will also be the year of our 60th Annual Art Exhibition and we should think about how we can celebrate this special event. I am sure that the Exhibition Committee will come up with something.

We all owe a big thank you to those members who work 'behind the scenes'. The tables and chairs don't just put themselves out for our meetings and then stack and stow away afterwards. Teas and coffees are served, the washing up and cleaning is done, all by the 'behind the scenes' people.

It is usually the same members every time, and at times, even non-members. Many of them are not on the committee but they are always there to help. The extraordinary thing is that I don't remember anyone asking them for assistance. They just know what is needed and turn up. It would be a tremendous struggle to prepare venues and exhibitions without these people. So, thank you, and please continue.

The Committee members get involved and they deserve our gratitude as well, but that seems to be expected of them. I am not so sure that this should be the case as they serve the group in other ways, however they willingly give their time and assistance.

This year a couple of the Committee members are standing down, and to keep the group running smoothly and share the load, I urge you to consider adding your name to the list of candidates. If you need information on what would be required or how it would take up your time, please contact me or any of the committee members and we would be pleased to help you.

Good luck in the new year.

Vic Bettridge, Chairman

New Members

A warm welcome to the new members who have joined Warsash Art Group since our last newsletter in November: Brian and Karen Clements (joined in September), Geoff Casey and Sue Perry.

Obituary – Anne Britton – Sadly Anne passed away in December after a long battle with cancer. She had been a member of Warsash Art Group for the past four or five years and was a talented artist. Our thoughts and prayers are with Anne's friends and family.

Annual General Meeting 2018

Thursday 1st March

St Mary's Church Hall, Warsash

Please arrive for 7.30pm

Wine and soft drinks will be provided.

Bring a painting or sketch to display.

Agenda and the Minutes from last year's AGM are attached to this newsletter.

Further to Vic Bettridge's piece on page 1 and our call for help on page 8 of the November 2017 newsletter, Sylvia Allen and Chris Francis have kindly signed up to join the committee, replacing Ian Lawrence and Cindy Sherman who will be standing down after many years of service. If you think you can help and would like to join us, please speak to Vic or any of the existing committee members before the AGM. You don't necessarily have to be a Committee member to make things happen; though for some tasks, attending the occasional committee meeting might be useful. Our most urgent need is for someone to shadow Rachael Brown as Treasurer. For that, you don't need to be a qualified accountant; just computer literate and have good attention to detail.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due for renewal on 1st April 2018. Renewal forms were in the paper copy of this newsletter. Please send yours, with your cheque for £15, to Membership Secretary Fi Haughton.

As Fi is unable to come to the AGM, Mike Ryde will sit in for her at the table in the corner of the hall on the night. He will take membership forms and payments by cheque or cash. Fi will then send out membership cards to all paid-up members soon after the meeting.

Please note that to be eligible to submit work to our Annual Exhibition in August, you need to renew by 1st June.

If you change your email and / or postal address during the year, please let Fi know so that she can keep the list of members up to date. That way, you won't miss out on any mailings or messages.

Tutored Workshops 2018

Tuesday Mornings and Afternoons

The Booking Forms for the Summer Term workshops (1st May to 3rd July 2018) will be published in the April newsletter.

WATER BASED OILS WORKSHOP – 24th February 2018 – with Maggie Cochran.

This workshop is now full. Thank you all for such strong support.

Chris Madden – Workshop Organiser.

Wednesday Afternoon Untutored Workshops 2018

Spring Term – 10th January – 28th March

Summer Term – 18th April – 4th July

Autumn Term – 19th September – 5th December

£10 Term fee, payable at the first meeting.

Any questions, please contact Nicky Ballingall, 02380 403568.

Informal Sketching and Painting

I've planned the following sketching sessions between now and Easter. Please watch Warsash Art Group's Facebook page and email updates in case of any changes of date and / or venue due to weather and other happenings.

Thursday 22nd February, 10.30am

Hill Head Harbour and visitor centre. Let's meet on benches between sailing club and beach huts. Parking nearby behind the sailing club. Bring your usual sketching materials and warm clothes, hat and gloves if you plan to sketch outdoors.

Saturday 10th March, From 10.00am

Sketching and gallery-going in Southampton. Let's meet in the foyer of the Civic Centre (near Box Office / outside the library). Visit the open exhibition in Southampton City Art Gallery on the theme of The Seasons. Sketch in the gallery, or outside in Guildhall Square. A wide choice of cafés nearby.

Further donations to Support King's College Hospital in December

In addition to the £110 donation I made to the above charity in October(largely from the sales table we had at our meeting in October, see November newsletter, page 8), I was able to donate a further £65 in December. Most of this (£61.69) was raised at classes tutored by Kay LePoidevin, from the sale of books and other items stored by Ian Lawrence. A big thank you to Kay and Ian for all their efforts.

Joan Lee

Portrait in Oils 'a la prima' by Max Hale – Thursday 2nd November 2017

'A la prima', we later discovered, means a portrait painted 'in one session'. For Max Hale, two hours represents only a fraction of the three weeks he normally takes to produce one. However, Max proved to be an insightful and informative demonstrator, producing an impressive portrait of Joan – our patient and colourful model – while at the same time packing the two hours he had with lots of information, hints and tips. Max later summed up his philosophy of portraits by noting how the sitter's clothing is the support act to the face, which is always the star of the show.

Max began by asserting that oils should be malleable, with corrections made simply by removing unwanted paint with a rag, for example. For this reason they are slow drying, even when mixed with water, and should be applied boldly as opposed to tentatively. One brush stroke can change everything, so it is important to be honest and paint what you see. In addition, without applying sufficient paint it is impossible to see where you are going with the portrait and if you have laid the paint down correctly. So, Max's motto was to 'feel the fear but do it anyway', preferring not to prevaricate but to make your mark through the brush stroke and then leave it, confident in the knowledge that it can always be changed. This bold and spontaneous technique created a great sense of vitality in the resulting portrait.

For his painting surface, Max used a cotton canvas that had already been covered with a 'turpsy wash' and subsequently dried with a rag. The aim was to create a neutral, pale Umber background on which to work, but it also proved to be both warm and glowing. His palette consisted of Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Orange, Venetian Red, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Cobalt, Ultramarine and Raw Umber, together with an odourless Citrus Medium. Max confided that he never uses pure White or Burnt Umber, preferring Raw Umber as kinder and greener in hue and therefore good for mixing skin tones, and always softening pure white with another colour.

Max discussed his palette and identified two ways in which this could be laid out. Firstly 'open', where colours are mixed as you go and only when you need them. Alternatively it could be 'closed', with a selection of 7 or 8 flesh tones pre-mixed before you start to paint. Max's preference was for an open palette, as this can help avoid mixing up tones that you either never use, or later have to alter. As an aside, he advised that a flesh tone is best darkened by adding green rather than blue, as this keeps the colour on the warm side.

Max started the portrait by taking a No.6 synthetic Filbert brush and a thin mix of Raw Umber and Ultramarine in order to 'draw out', ie make a sketch or 'map' of the sitter's whole head and face before putting in any of the features in detail. Max advised that using thin paint and a brush was the traditional method of drawing out and cautioned against using a pencil on canvas or board (although charcoal or marker pens can make reasonable alternatives). He explained that if the underpinning drawing is correct, this takes much of the stress out of finishing the portrait. It is therefore critical to get the drawing 'as right as you can'. 'Just good enough' will not do. Accuracy acts as a motivator and results from looking hard and continually measuring the features as well as the relativities between them. At this drawing out stage, the primary concern was to achieve this level of accuracy in the width of the head and length of the nose (a common pitfall being to make the nose too long) with the bridge of the nose positioned in the centre of the face and lit by light. In addition, for his challenging three-quarter portrait, getting the shape of the side of Joan's face right was crucial. Her mouth needed to follow the shape of her face by 'wrapping round'; her gaze had to be focused in the right direction, and her eye line correct. In the finished painting, the edge of the face and jawline were not to be too hard, but rather 'smoked' into the background. To check the direction of gaze, Max bisected the head with a vertical line and then drew a horizontal one through the eyes thereby creating a matrix.

Max went on to develop his portrait firstly by putting in the darkest flesh tones, looking initially for the darkest dark. Filling in these dark areas from the start, he felt, immediately brings depth to the painting. These darks are most often found on the neck or next to the nose, with the philtrum – or the indentation running from under the nose to the middle of the top lip – being essential for shaping

the top lip accurately. For Max, achieving a strong likeness always flows from getting the mouth right, both in terms of its overall shape and size, but most particularly the line where the lips meet.

Once the darks are down, Max explained how light and shade can be built up in thin layers (to keep the portrait dry) with the artist feeling their way and carving out shapes. For hair, it can be sufficient just to suggest texture. Whites of eyes are rarely white. In older people the whites take on a greyish hue, with a blue one appearing in those of younger people. It may be sufficient, he said, to get the shape of the eyes and 'catch lights' right (or the white spot where the light falls) and dispense with any further fussing over detail.

Lastly, turning his attention away from the portrait to the background behind it, Max suggested that light should always be included to give the head a three-dimensional feel and ensure that the background is not too dark. By putting the background in it becomes possible to see what is happening with the rest of the painting.

Max's highly enjoyable demonstration spurred me on to sign up straight away for a forthcoming one-day Saturday workshop 'Painting in Oils' to be led by Maggie Cochran on 24th February 2018. This workshop promises to offer participants an opportunity to try out water-based oils, concentrating on understanding these materials and the best techniques for using them. Thank you, Chris Madden, for organising this now fully booked workshop. If you have signed up, see you there.

Linda Amor

Recycled for Christmas

This year my wife and I received our Christmas presents from my son and daughter-in-law wrapped in plain brown paper and tied up with string. They had used fancy card labels tied to the string. To be honest, in amongst the other festive paper wrapped packages, they looked quite nice, a bit different.

My son explained that they had decided to use ordinary brown paper as a stand against the usual wrapping paper that cannot be recycled. They hadn't used sellotape for the same reason. Looking at the large wodge of discarded wrapping that the family had used all of which was to be heading for the tip, I thought that they had been very sensible.

Now, I can understand WAG members thinking that brown paper wrapping would look boring and unseasonal, but, we are artists and so our plain paper parcels can be decorated with our own linocuts, potato cuts, stamps or coloured drawings, to reflect the seasonal spirit. Anyway, that's what I am going to do next year. If I don't fancy tying up with string I can always buy paper sticky tape. Maybe we could have a competition for the best Christmas parcel wrapped in brown paper next year instead of, or in addition to the Christmas card.

The other headache in the battle for recycling is the thin plastic bags that retailers supply for customers to put loose items in, such as fruit or vegetables. They all end up in the tip or blowing around. I have checked online and it is possible to buy paper bags of varying sizes, like the market traders use, costing about £4.50 per 100. So that is what I am going to do. It's only a small step in doing my bit and they can be re-used if they don't get wet or too dirty. The only fly in the ointment is what do I do with the three large rolls of Christmas and assorted rolls of birthday wrapping paper that I have left over from this year?

Vic Bettridge

Editor's note: Let's revisit Vic's idea for creative / handmade/ sustainable Christmas wrapping during the run-up to the 2018 Christmas social in December. This year Vic's 'The WAGgoners' band, who have provided the musical entertainment at our last two Christmas socials will be playing for the Fareham Cardiac Support Unit at their Christmas Party which is on the same evening (6th December) WAG's party, we will be looking for new musical entertainment. If you think you can help us out here, please speak to Vic or another member of the Committee by the end of October.

Dates for your Diary 2018

Thursday 1st March – AGM – 7.30pm
Thursday 5th April – Trevor Waugh – “Chasing the Light”– watercolour demonstration
Thursday 3rd May – Katherine Howlett-Davies – Architectural sketching (Inktense pencils)
Thursday 7th June – Jamel Akib - Appraisal
Thursday 5th July – Douglas Skeggs – Talk on Velasquez
2018 Annual Exhibition – 15th – 19th August
Thursday 6th September – Soraya French – Acrylic painting demonstration
Thursday 4th October – David Boag – “The World of the Wildlife Photographer” (talk)
Thursday 1st November – Julie Longdon – Demonstration with coloured pencils
Thursday 6th December – Christmas Social

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will be produced for our evening meeting on Thursday 5th April. It will include the Programme Booklet for 2018/19. Thank you to Linda Amor for her excellent write-up of our portrait painting demonstration by Max Hale last November.

Members' contributions, including write-ups of evening meetings and news of your art endeavours are always welcome. If you have anything to contribute, please could you send it to me by email by Friday 23rd March.

Joan Lee

What's On

The Seasons – Open Exhibition, Southampton City Art Gallery

3rd February – 21st April. Gallery open 10.00am – 3pm Monday – Friday, until 5.00pm Saturday.

AppArt Easter Exhibition, Priors Field, Priorsfield Road near Godalming, Surrey. GU7 2RH.
30th March – 14th April. Near A3 Compton turn off.

William Blake in Sussex: Visions of Albion, Petworth House, until 25th March

POP! Art in a Changing Britain, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, 24th February – 7th May
<http://pallant.org.uk/home>

Interesting websites

Graham Oliver - <http://www.grahamolivergallery.co.uk/>

Maggie Cochran - <https://maggiecochran.com/>

Vic Bettridge - www.vicbettridge.com/

Rachael Brown, fused glass artist - www.rlbrown.co.uk/