

newsletter



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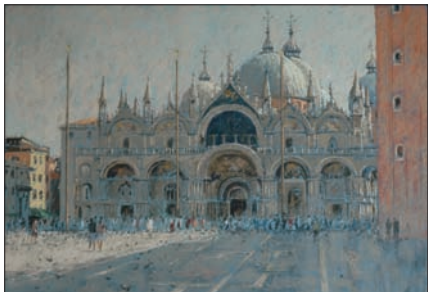
THE PASTEL SOCIETY UK

Early Morning at St Peter's, Rome

Michael Norman



Featured Artist Michael Norman PS



It is an unfortunate feature of the English education system that children showing academic ability are frequently obliged to drop art in their early teens in order to focus on other subjects. So it was with the young Michael Norman, although, luckily, an understanding teacher gave him and his form colleagues access to a large collection of art history books, which helped to keep his interest alive.

He left school, qualified as a quantity surveyor, and spent 35 years in the profession. However, the itch to do art stayed with him. What spare time he had between work and raising a family was devoted to painting and taking life classes and workshops at every opportunity. Retiring early to Exmouth allowed him to pursue these interests full time, initially painting in oils and watercolours.

It's not uncommon for artists to say that the moment they first tried pastels, they knew they had found their medium. That wasn't the case with Michael. His first experience of pastels came on a painting course, and he was far from pleased with the results. He persevered mainly because he felt he had reached a plateau with the other materials.

"Trying pastels again later, I found them much more enjoyable to use," Michael says. "I could make alterations, and I found that they were far more flexible than watercolour. Knowing that I could change things easily, my confidence grew." He went on to make pastels his main medium. He was elected to the Pastel Society in 2007 and has served as the Society's Treasurer for the past five years, stepping down from office at this year's annual meeting.

Many of his subjects are found close to home, around the beautiful Exe estuary. In recent years, he has also had more opportunities for

Captions, top to bottom: *Basilica San Marco, Venice; Beer Cliffs; Foxgloves, St Martins; Low Tide, Exe Estuary. Opposite: Michael Norman*

overseas travel, and visitors to Pastel Society exhibitions have been treated to his stunning interpretations of Rome and Venice. Of his ability to capture the complex architecture - such as *St Peter's* on the front cover, and the *Basilica San Marco* - he says modestly that his many years in the construction industry taught him how buildings are put together.

When Michael first began painting with pastels, he often worked *en plein air*. An incident involving an upside-down box of pastels and an incoming tide convinced him that the studio was a safer option. He's happy now to work indoors from sketches and colour notes. He supplements these with digital images for complex detail, occasionally relying rather more on digital image references if he is working on a busy scene such as a market.

There's a consistent 'look' to his work, ensuring that a Michael Norman painting is readily recognisable, so it is a little surprising to learn that he varies his working method quite a lot. At one level, this is simply about the complexity of the subject.

For example, the initial drawing for one of his seascapes may be no more than the horizon line. With some architectural studies, where the basic shapes are simple even if the decorations are ornate, he may dispense with an initial drawing and launch straight in with pastels. On the other hand, a complex subject like *St Peter's* may require him to develop a separate, detailed



drawing, which he will square up in classic fashion and transfer to his painting surface.

Less obviously, he may choose to start with an underpainting – which might be in acrylic, watercolour or pastel – but at other times he will do without. And he experiments regularly with materials, always seeking better ways of interpreting his favourite subjects.

“Recently I've tried something a little different as a pastel ground,” Michael explains. “I used a thick, solid-core sheet of mountboard to which I first applied a coat of acrylic gesso. Once dry, I loosely applied two coats of thinned Golden brand pastel ground with a decorator's brush. I then gave this surface a mid-tone coat of thinned blue/grey acrylic paint. This provided me with a lively surface on which to work.

“I used this surface for the *Basilica San Marco, Venice* painting. I first drew the composition out loosely in charcoal, using my finger to smudge and soften dark areas in places. Once I was satisfied with the overall effect, I fixed the drawing.

“I started with pastel pencils and hard pastels and built up the sky by hatching with a variety of warm and cool colours, at the same time I worked on the lighter areas of the basilica and the foreground to try and keep the picture developing as a whole. I finished the painting with soft pastels until I was satisfied with the result.

“I used a similar ground for the painting *Foxgloves, St Martins*, except that in this case I underpainted with a variety of brighter colours. This surface is good for architectural subjects and it also seemed to work well for the foxglove painting, but where I want to apply more pastel, such as in *Beer Cliffs* and *Low Tide, Exe Estuary*, I use Sennelier Pastel Card as it has a far better grip.”

President's Letter

We have reached the end of the 114th Annual Exhibition of the Pastel Society UK and I am still recovering from my first efforts at public speaking. We were extremely fortunate to have Philip Mould, art historian and art expert from the Antiques Roadshow as our opener and speaker. He gave an entertaining and humorous speech in which he expressed his enjoyment of the show and his surprise at the variety and diversity of work on display. Philip then presented the awards to the award winners. Also present was Carole Hubscher from the art materials manufacturer, Caran d'Ache, our sponsors. Carole had made the trip from Switzerland to personally select the winner of the Caran d'Ache Award and to present the award herself. Carole spoke a few words about the exhibition and the sponsorship of the Pastel Society. It was an honour to have both of these prestigious guests at our exhibition.

An Awards and Press Lunch was held at the Mall Galleries on the Private View day and the Council entertained the award donors over a splendid buffet lunch, after which they selected their prize winners. Almost all the sponsors of awards were present and it was pleasing to see that winners were chosen from Members and non-Members alike and from paintings exhibited in all parts of the gallery. This was an extremely satisfying result.

The work from non-Members and especially from young non-Members was of a very high quality and it gave us all hope for the future of the Society. Many of the non-Members who had work exhibited will be contacted to encourage them to submit again in 2014. This year we again had a designated Non-Member Award, the Pastel Society Catalogue Award, an initiative started by John Ivor Stewart in 2012. Full page images of both the winning painting and the runner-up were reproduced in the exhibition catalogue.

There were also four prizes designated for young artists. The Buzzacott Award, the Arts Club Charitable Trust Award, the Pastel Society Young Artist Award (First Prize and Runner-up) and the PanPastel Award.

Buzzacott presented their Award to the prize

winner during their Corporate Evening held on 11 June in the main gallery at the Mall Galleries. A number of works were purchased during this evening and we thank Buzzacott for their generosity and support.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the award sponsors for their interest in the Society and for their generous awards.

The Friends are very important to the Society and a lot of thought goes into the planning of Friends' events during the year. This year the Art Event and Friends' Evening were combined and the evening was well supported. This is an exciting date in our calendar and the Council have plans to make it even more interesting.

Earlier this year there was a Friends' visit to the Natural History Museum. There will be a visit to Sue Relph's house on 9 July and an outing to the Royal Horticultural Society's famous garden at Wisley on 12 September. For details contact Ann Wilkinson (ann@annwilkinson.co.uk).

The workshops held at the Mall Galleries during the exhibition were well supported and we hope that the summer workshops at St George's College, Weybridge, will be equally successful. This is a wonderful venue, with custom built art rooms. Easels and drawing boards will be provided. Please take advantage of this opportunity and contact Sue Relph for local information on 01932 564 871. To book, contact Norma Stephenson, e-mail norma.stephenson@btinternet.com, telephone: 01524 251 670. Application forms can be downloaded from the Pastel Society website www.thepastelsociety.org.uk.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members and non-Members for submitting such an excellent range of work, making 2013 such a successful year, with sales up by approximately 60% on last year.

Finally, I would also like to thank everyone at the FBA for their help and advice during my first year as President.

Cheryl Culver

Who is Sebastian Amoah?

If there was a prize for the face most in evidence at this year's exhibition, it would have to go to Sebastian Amoah. But who is he? The short answer is, he's an artist's model, and very popular with professional artists in the South-east of England.

At the end of 2012 he was chosen to model for an article in the Sunday Times magazine, in which a number of leading artists demonstrated their skills at life drawing. Among them was the well-known portrait specialist, Emma Sergeant. She was the guest artist at this year's Pastel Society exhibition, and the work chosen to represent her was her charcoal drawing of Sebastian.

Also in the show was Susan Relph's painting, Sebastian – Brief Studies from Life. And she chose him to be her model in the gallery for a live demonstration on 12 June.

Officers and Council

At the annual general meeting in June, Michael Norman stepped down after five years as Honorary Treasurer, and was warmly thanked for his services. Colin Murfet, a non-member, was welcomed as his successor. The Officers of the Society are:

President	Cheryl Culver RBA
Vice President	Jeannette Hayes
Honorary Treasurer	Colin Murfet
Honorary Secretary	Jenny Halstead FMAA
Exhibition Secretary	Peter Vincent
Membership Secretary	Roger Dellar RI ROI
Publicity Secretary	Jeannette Hayes
Friends' Secretary	Ann Wilkinson
Trustee	Moiria Huntly
	RWA RI RSMa PPS

The Council Members are: Glensy Ambrus ARCA, Victor Ambrus RE ARCA, Matthew Draper, Bob Last, Brian Gallagher, Brian Plummer, Susan Relph ASGFA, John Ivor Stewart ADAE FSBA, Antony Williams RP NEAC, Roy Wright

Key Contacts

The Friends Secretary is Ann Wilkinson (tel. 01737 764271)

Contributions to the Newsletter should be sent to the editor, Ken Gofton, 30 St Bernards Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 3NL, telephone 01732 364272.

Email: ken.gofton@dsl.pipex.com

Bookings for all Pastel Society workshops are handled by Norma Stephenson, Jack Beck House, Keasden, Clapham via Lancaster LA2 8EY (tel 01524 251670, email norma.stephenson@btinternet.com)



*Emma Sergeant in her studio,
with her drawing of Sebastian Amoah*

Says Susan: "He's very good to work with, and very professional. Unfortunately, he may soon be lost to the art world. He's very close to qualifying as a plumber."

Friends of the Pastel Society

The Pastel Society is delighted to welcome the following new Friends, who have joined since the last Newsletter: Margaret Griffiths, Vera Curtis, Georgina Howarth and Trudi Warner.

There will be a Friends' Day at the Royal Horticultural Society Garden at Wisley, Surrey, on 12 September. This is a change of venue, as the original plan was to visit Wakehurst Place in Sussex. One advantage of Wisley is that there are splendid new glasshouses offering both shelter and lots of sketching opportunities, should the weather be wet. For more information please contact: Ann Wilkinson, 1A Knighton Road, Redhill, Surrey. RH1 6EH; E.mail: ann@annwilkinson.co.uk.

Called to Jury Service

Jeannette Hayes, Vice-President of the Pastel Society, will be one of four jurors for the 15th annual Top 100 competition organised by the US magazine, Pastel Journal. Results will be published in the magazine's April, 2014 issue.

"As far as my recollection goes, Jeannette is the first non-US juror for the competition," says the editor, Anne Hevener. "I admire her work, and look forward to having the benefit of her talent and opinion in the Abstract/Non-objective category."

Artists' General Benevolent Institution

John Tookey has taken on the role of Pastel Society steward for the Artists' General Benevolent Institution. He can be contacted at 46 Ross Close, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4AY.

A very successful exhibition in 2013



However much one enjoys collecting art, it can't be denied that buying a painting is a discretionary purchase which, for all but the rarest individual, ranks far lower than feeding the family or having a roof over one's head. The last few years have been very difficult in the art market.

There are signs of improvement, though. Individual artists have reported better sales in the past few months. And, as Pastel Society President, Cheryl Culver, reports on page 4, purchases at the Society's 2013 annual exhibition were up 60% on 2012.

That's a very good result. And there were several other encouraging statistics to underline the widely held view that the June exhibition was a great success. The total number of paintings submitted for the 2013 show was 709, an increase of 70%. Within that total, 523 were submitted digitally under the pre-selection process – a rise of 57%.

This was only the second year of the digital, pre-selection system. It has been designed specifically to attract more entries to exhibitions at the Mall Galleries, giving artists a way of testing the acceptability of their work without committing to the high transport costs of shipping their works to London. If they pass the pre-submission, they are



still required to submit the physical paintings for the final selection process.

No analysis has been done yet to see if this system is attracting increased submissions from more distant parts of the UK, which is one of the aims. It's worth noting, though, that Lara Scouller, who won the Pastel Society Young Artist Award, first prize, with her study of a porcupine, is based in Dundee. She was one of nine young artists (aged 35 or under) with work on show.

The pre-submission system is attracting artists from abroad, including entries this year from Germany and the US. The winner of the Pastel Society Award for Non-Members was Halla Shafey (see photograph, page 12) – the first time she had exhibited outside Egypt.

Carole Hubscher of Caran d'Ache with Pastel Society President Cheryl Culver listen to the opening address by Philip Mould OBE, art historian and TV personality (opposite, right). The Private View evening was very well attended (see photographs above).



Add in the high quality of the work on display, the successful Art Event and Friends' Evening, and the popular programme of in-gallery demonstrations and workshops, and the Society has every reason to be pleased with its 114th annual exhibition.



Award Winners, 2013

The following awards were made during the 2013 annual exhibition:

Caran d'Ache Award: Roger Dellar PS

The Artist Magazine Award: Norma Stephenson PS

The Arts Club Charitable Trust Award: Lucas

Reynes-Matter

Conté à Paris Award: Melodie Cook

Daler-Rowney Award: Astrid Volquardsen

Derwent Award: Libby January PS

Faber Castell Award: Ken Paine PS

Frank Herring & Sons Award: John Tookey PS

Henri Roché Pastels Award: Robin Warnes PS

John Longley Award: Paulene Tunnicliffe

Purcell Papers Award: Christopher Gray

Schmincke Award: Dave West

Pastel Society Young Artist Award, 1st Prize: Lara Scouller

Pastel Society Young Artist Award, 2nd Prize: Christopher Gray

Pastel Society Non-Member Catalogue Award, 1st Prize: Halla Shafey

Pastel Society Non-Member Catalogue Award, 2nd Prize: Simon Page

Unison Award: Liz Balkwill

Panpastel Award: Maria Mari Murga



News from Pastel Society Members

The Federation of British Artists, to which the Pastel Society is affiliated, will be staging an exhibition of contemporary still life works from Monday, 16 September to Friday, 20 September, at the Mall Galleries, London. The exhibition will be open from 10a.m. to 5p.m. each day, and admission is free. According to the Mall Galleries, this will be an eclectic selection of works, "ranging from the realist to the abstract, all of which utilise form and texture, colour and tone, to convey the extraordinary essence of ordinary, everyday objects". At the time of going to press, it was known that Pastel Society Members Angela A'Court, Glenys Ambrus and Jason Bowyer will be participating.

The Cork Street, London, gallery Browse & Darby held an exhibition from 15 May to 7 June of works in oils and pastels by Honorary Member Anthony Eyton RA to mark his 90th birthday.

Although, in the end, it did not receive a prize, a large pastel work by Patricia Cain was a finalist in the prestigious international competition, the Arte Laguna Prize, in Venice in January-February. In March, Patricia was awarded the Wilhelmina Barns-Graham residency from the Royal Scottish Academy for 2013, in conjunction with the Barns-Graham Trust. In May, she was elected to membership of the Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts (RGI).

Sue Relph will be showing with the Society of Graphic Fine Art exhibition, Paperworks, at the R K Burt Gallery, Bankside, London, 15-26 July, then at the Menier Chocolate Factory (Art Centre) in Southwark, 30 September – 12 October. She also hopes to participate in the AppArt Art and Sculpture exhibition at 'Secretts', Hurst Farm, Milford, Godalming, Surrey, 5-20 October. Sue will tutor an all-day life drawing session for all abilities during the Pastel Society's summer workshops in August (see programme details, opposite page).

Monday or Tuesday, by Angela A'Court, was accepted for this year's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, which continues until 18 August. She is also represented in the annual exhibition at Thompsons Gallery, Aldeburgh, due to end 30 June, and has a two-person show with Teresa

Lawton at Highgate Contemporary Art, London, from 11 September (Private View) to 6 October. In conjunction with the British pastel manufacturer Unison Colour, she will be giving a talk on "Why Pastel is a Contemporary Medium" at Brody House Studios, Budapest, on 19 October, coinciding with a competition and exhibition, *The Dance of Colour*.



Monday or Tuesday – Angela A'Court's pastel painting in this year's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition

Tom Walker is the moving force behind a two-week exhibition and series of events, *More Secrets of the Dust*, at the Foundry Gallery, North Street, Lewes, Sussex from 12-28 July. On show will be work by Tom Walker and Peter Vincent, a number of other local artists, and many of Tom's students. Accompanying events include workshops with opportunities to try pastels under the guidance of artists, and a couple of sessions where artists and musicians will improvise together.

As part of the Artwave Festival at Lewes, Sussex, Peter Vincent will again be opening his studio from 2p.m. – 6p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, 31 August and 1 September, and the following weekend, 7 and 8 September. The address is Algiers, 28 The Green, Newick.

Libby January has also had her studio open to the public (29 June-14 July) as part of the annual

Warwickshire Open Studios event. This Newsletter may well appear too late for readers to take advantage of this opportunity. However, Libby, who is based at Harbury, near Leamington Spa, points out that she does open her studio regularly under various schemes, and also welcomes individual visitors, providing they make an appointment first (email: libbyjanuary@yahoo.co.uk).

Pastel Society President Cheryl Culver will be demonstrating her skills in the painting tent at the Art in Action Festival at Waterperry, near Oxford, from 18-21 July. There will be a two-page feature about her work in a book, *Green Art: Trees, Roots and Leaves*, by E. Ashley Rooney, due to be published by Schiffer Publishing in the US in September. Cheryl also has an article, 'For the Love of Trees', for the September issue of *The Artist* magazine. She will be represented once more at the Battersea Affordable Art Fair, 23-27 October.

Admirers of Sarah Bee's work will be interested to know that she is teaching two short courses this year, at Jack Beck House in the Yorkshire Dales (www.jackbeck.co.uk), 6-8 August, and at West Dean, near Chichester (www.westdean.org.uk), 4-7 November.

The ever-active Roy Wright will be represented at several exhibitions in the coming months, including 20/21 British Art Fair, 11-15 September, Royal College of Art, London (Henry Boxer Gallery), and, via the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, The Lapada Art & Antiques Fair, 25 - 29 September, Berkeley Square, London; the New York AAF, 3-6 October; the Affordable Art Fair, 23-27 October, Battersea, London; the Singapore Fair, 21-24 November; and the London Art Fair, 15-19 January 2014, at the Business Design Centre, Islington.

Following her spell as artist in residence at the University of Reading's Harris Garden, Jenny Halstead has now written about her experiences. Her book, *An Artist's Year in the Harris Garden*, is on sale at the bookshops of the Mall Galleries and the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading, price

£12.50. It is published by Two Rivers Press (www.tworiverspress.com).

Pastel Society Summer Workshops, 2013

The Pastel Society will hold a series of workshops in August at St George's College, Weybridge Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2QS. Tuition will be provided by leading Members, and there is a wide range of topics from which to choose. This is the programme:

Monday, 12 August – Life Drawing for All Abilities with Sue Relph.

Wednesday, 14 August – Seeing the Invisible, an Interpretation of Landscape, with Brian Plummer.

Thursday, 15 August – Figures in the Landscape, with Jenny Halstead.

Friday, 16 August – Painting a Portrait, with Caroline Bays.

Saturday, 17 August – Pastel Interiors, with John Tookey.

Application forms can be downloaded from the Pastel Society website

(www.thepastelsociety.org.uk). The fees are £50 per day, or £45 per day if booking for four or more workshops. Reduced fees for Friends of the Pastel Society are £45 per day, or £40 per day if booking for four or more. Early booking is advisable.

Application forms and fees should be sent to Norma Stephenson PS, at Jack Beck House, Keasden, Clapham via Lancaster, LA2 8EY. Cheques should be made out to The Pastel Society. Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope. Further information is available from Norma via email (norma.stephenson@btinternet.com) or telephone (01524 251670).

For local information, contact Sue Relph on 01932 564871.

Attraction to Abstraction

By Bob Last MSIAD PS

It was after 35 years as a freelance designer that I decided to stop working and return to my roots. I was keen to get back to drawing and painting again, so I enrolled at Putney School of Art for a life drawing class— something I had done many years previously during my time at Art School.

Three years later I had a pastel life drawing accepted by the Pastel Society. I became a member in 2001 and continued to produce mainly life drawings and landscapes in pastel, oil, and acrylic.

I was never satisfied with just a simple pose and often used extreme perspective or unusual settings for the model. I began to get more interested in shape, pattern and abstracted forms.

For example, in *The Mondrian Dressing Gown* I was initially inspired by the Papasan chair. I liked the fact it was round, with a large round cushion, and that the model was able to make a circular pose within it. I bought a plain white dressing gown and some fabric paints and had the idea of copying a Mondrian-type design onto the fabric. I was interested to see the abstracted shapes the fabric made when worn by the model.

In more recent paintings I have been working in a very different way. I began to feel that a representational approach, to some extent, was simply copying what nature had already designed. I wanted more freedom and scope, something which probably came from so many years as a designer, where every job required me to come up with a new idea.

So it was a natural progression that I started to explore different ideas and approaches, which could be summarised as abstract - but then, what is abstract? The dictionary definition of the word is 'A non-objective and non representational form of art'.

In this context I'm not sure that what I do is entirely abstract, as my paintings always seem to take on



a form, and are often recognisable as a landscape. But the inspiration and method of working are in a sense abstract as I like to work without any sketches, and more importantly, without any preconceived idea of what the end result will be.

Initially I use charcoal, to start the process of mark making, followed by a wash of colour and some texture medium.

In *Fragmented Landscape* I began by drawing related forms, keeping mainly to grey tones. What emerged gave a feeling of rocks and the fissures between them. Developing this idea, I added strata - a natural formation which has always fascinated me. In contrast to the square forms, the simple addition of a circle - suggestive of a sun or a moon, instantly created a landscape. I made no attempt to represent recognizable reality but used shape, colour and textures to achieve a complete and balanced design.

In *Cathedral*, I also started by making marks in charcoal and had no particular idea of which direction the painting would go. At some point however, a tower shape appeared and that gave me the idea to add elements of a cathedral - windows, doorways, walls, and so on. I enjoy working this way,



and it's rare that something doesn't materialise that I can then add to in order to create a finished picture.

For example, in *Cave of Dreams*, (started in the same way with just random marks), rocks and organic shapes began to emerge. I wasn't thinking about a cave and haven't been in one for several years! I'm sure the subconscious takes over when drawing like this, and if I was actively thinking 'how shall I draw the next shape?' rather than let it just happen, the result would not be the same or have the same degree of independence from the visual reference of reality.

In *Tree of Moons* (not shown), I worked from a small pastel sketch which had the appearance of a fabric design. I decided to do an enlarged drawing using the same elements but restricting my palette exclusively to different tones of blue, which can be



quite hard to control on a large painting. I tend to naturally 'anchor' line and shapes to the edge of the painting and the result in this case suggested a trunk base with a tree-like top. The fruit of the tree are in the shape of moons.

To some extent artists need the inspiration of something to work from, be it a landscape, still life or model. But I prefer working without any outside influences. There is the excitement of seeing something appear that I hadn't been thinking of, with the added element of chance.



This page, top: Fragmented Landscape; above right, Cave of Dreams; below right, Cathedral. Opposite page: The Mondrian Dressing Gown

Pictures at an Exhibition



Carole Hubscher, of Caran d'Ache, sponsors of the Pastel Society, presents Roger Dellar with the Caran d'Ache Award at the opening of this year's annual exhibition (above). Below, left and right, opportunities for portraiture and figure drawing at the Art Event and Friends' Evening. See also the President's Letter, page 4, and exhibition report, pages 6-7.



Halla Shafey (above) with her painting 'Girl from the South of Egypt', which won the Pastel Society Catalogue Award for the best painting by a non-Member.



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