

# newsletter

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THE PASTEL SOCIETY



Stenhouse Wood, by Patricia Cain

## Featured Artist Patricia Cain, PhD, PS, NEAC, RGI, RWS



*The Florence Triptych*

Even before she was elected to membership, Patricia ('Trish') Cain was having an impact at the Pastel Society's annual exhibition, not least with a huge triptych of Florence she showed in 2008. Although the painting was widely admired for the technical skill and detail involved, there were mutterings from some conservative observers along the lines of "what is that large white area at the bottom about?"

One explanation certainly was that it was a compositional device to balance the sky area. Trish acknowledges this, but adds: "It was also about not hemming something down completely. I'm often attracted by ambiguity in things I observe, and this transposes into making a piece that might be considered to be left partially incomplete. The point at which a painting is 'finished' can be different for different people – I just prefer the ambiguity of incompleteness as it leaves something to be imagined."



*Patricia Cain in her studio*

From this it can be deduced that she is very articulate about her work, which can be very varied and appear to range – at least on the surface – from very realistic to very abstract.

There's a risk, in fact, that this profile could become little more than a list of her interesting observations on art in general and her own work in particular. First, then, a quick summary of her career.

Raised in Cumberland, she signed up for an illustration degree course at St Martin's School of Art in London. This was where she first got her enthusiasm for pastels, although as a country girl she found it hard to adjust to London life, and dropped out of the course after a year. Back in the north, she qualified as a solicitor, then studied part-time for a fine art degree.

There was a pivotal moment towards the end of this second course. Asked what some of her experimental drawings meant, she said she thought that intuition was a major element. Her tutor wrote: "I would very much question the role of 'intuition'...in art practice in the 21st century. After Matisse, Mata and Pollock, is it enough?"

Trish's response: "I just thought, how totally ignorant." The tutor's comment continued to nag her, however, and ultimately led to her researching the relationship between thinking and drawing, for which she was awarded a PhD.

Meanwhile, she had settled in Glasgow and married a fellow artist. A career turning point came when she became a kind of unofficial artist in residence during the building of The Riverside, the city's new museum. Works from this project led to her receiving the Aspect Prize in Scotland, and the Threadneedle Prize for the whole of the UK, as well as an offer of a solo exhibition at Glasgow's Kelvingrove Gallery.



Some of these detailed construction paintings have also been shown with the Pastel Society. But here's an interesting insight. Most viewers would see those works as being very realistic, whereas she sees them, particularly the largest ones, as being very abstract.

"The way the museum is built is reflected in the paintings, but the actual views may not have existed," she says. "Some combine slightly different views and perspectives, so it takes time to get one's bearings.

"And there's another way of looking at this question. Every picture in the world incorporates two elements: likeness and unlikeness. The likeness is the subject, while the unlikeness is the part of you that goes into the painting and what you make of what you see."

Not all of her paintings, of course, are on the scale of the diptychs and triptychs, which involve weeks of intensive work, including much rubbing of pastel into the paper surface. This can be painful - she regularly rubs her fingers raw.

She realises she could wear latex gloves, she once said in a magazine article, but that way she would lose direct contact with the paper, which she enjoys. The only solution, she says, is to use another finger, or her other hand, and rest the injured finger.

Creating such a large painting is a lengthy process. It will start with a sepia sketch, but as colour is introduced everything is open to change. She's constantly looking to create interest through contrasting areas of dark and light, positive and negative shapes, and 'busyness' and quiet. But nothing is finalised until the last possible minute.

Three years ago, the family moved to the Scottish countryside, and Trish's subject matter changed from urban landscapes to the visually very different trees, brambles and gardens of her current output.

"I have always struggled with being the common denominator among the rather multifarious nature of my output," she explains. "It seems that my way of working is to produce simultaneously very different types of work, which can include written work and 3D art-making too.

"To the viewer, I appreciate it might look like my work changes, but there are some long-standing

in-depth issues that are pervasive and which have become more clear through time, including the balance of things, the dynamic nature of negative space, and the relationship of outside to inside. The work is really just a vehicle for examining these kind of things."

To end on a lighter note, it's probably the case that this artist has more letters after her name than any other Member of the Pastel Society. "I didn't set out to collect them or anything, it's just that I seem to have personal links with each," Trish says. "After the Threadneedle Prize I had a real connection with the Mall Galleries and the Pastel Society was a bit of a 'natural' for me given the pastel work I do (although, and this isn't unusual, I didn't get in the first time I applied!).

"The Mall Galleries link with the NEAC followed that. With the RGI (Royal Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts), I served on Council as an artist member for six years before I was elected, so I had a long association there, and with the RWS, I was invited to apply following a prize in 2014. The PhD was probably the easiest to achieve...."



## **An interview with the Society's new President, Jeannette Hayes**

### **What was your response on learning that you had been elected President of the Pastel Society?**

I think you could say that it was a mixture of delight and shock or horror. I am very proud to have the support of my fellow artists and be elected President of a society that is over 100 years old, a society with such a distinguished history. At the same time, having served on the Council for 13 years, most recently as Vice-President, I know this is no empty, token honour. The job carries a lot of responsibility and will be very demanding in terms of the time and effort required to do it properly.

### **So can you give us an insight into what the job entails?**

The first thing to say is that the Society is currently enjoying real momentum, thanks very largely to the efforts of recent Presidents. I think it is really important to maintain that momentum. Of course, many of the individual tasks, such as Exhibitions Secretary or Friends Secretary, are delegated to Council members, but there is a hands-on leadership role that only the President can fulfil. I am in awe at the amount of hard work undertaken by my immediate predecessor, Cheryl Culver, and can't thank her enough for the huge contribution she has made to the Society. For example, she was instrumental in negotiating sponsorship for the Society, first by the Swiss art materials producer Caran d'Ache, and now Derwent pencils. She was also very heavily involved, working with the experts at the beginning of this year to upgrade the website. As I wasn't involved, I'm not being immodest when I say we now have a website of which we can be really proud.

### **What are your priorities, now that you've taken over from Cheryl?**

The annual exhibition is our biggest activity of the year and the main priority. It's our showcase. The last few exhibitions have been very successful in so many respects. The standard of work has been really high, from both Members and non-Members. Lured, I am sure, by the very valuable prizes on offer for young artists, we have attracted a lot of entries from the next generation, and that's something we are very happy to encourage. Commercially, the exhibitions have also been very successful. The Mall Galleries depends for much of its income on the commission it receives from sales, and sets targets for us and all the other societies based there. I'm happy to say that we

have been beating our targets recently. I would say the first priority is to maintain and where possible improve even more the quality of our annual shows.

The fact that so much good work is now being entered by non-Members, including the young, raises another interesting point. We are not a large society, and probably never will be, because we aim to set the highest standards in pastel painting, whatever the style. I see no reason to change that. The process for individuals seeking Membership has been simplified a little, but it still takes a successful candidate a minimum of two years to be elected. Without lowering standards in any way, I would like to encourage more of the talented non-Members putting work forward for our exhibitions to apply for Membership.

Beyond that, there is still an education job to be done. It is an unfortunate fact that many galleries, both public and private, are still woefully ignorant about the great work produced in pastel, both now and in the past, or of the very special qualities of the dry medium, including its durability. There is an on-going need to get the message to a wider public.

### **The 2017 exhibition is fast approaching. Is there anything you can tell us about the plans?**

Yes, you're right to say that it's approaching soon and at a frightening pace. At the same time, it's just a little bit early to say very much. There's a short article in this issue [opposite page] about the arrangements. The closing date for digital entries from non-Members is 4 November, and during the following week we will get an opportunity to assess these entries for the first time. That can be quite exciting, if a little daunting because of the volume. Meanwhile, a lot of planning is going on in terms of themes and illustrations for the catalogue, and organising demonstrations and workshops. It really won't be long before some of us will be gathering at the Mall Galleries over a weekend to agree on how to display the paintings. Then it's fingers crossed, waiting for the doors to open for the Private View, in the hope and expectation of another spectacular exhibition.

*Jeannette Hayes studied fine art at Kingston Art College. She believes a temporary loss of hearing when she was a child intensified her other senses, not least an awareness of her inner feelings. The immediacy of pastels appeals to her, "as I am very much a mood painter".*

## Arrangements for the Annual Exhibition, 2017

Plans are well advanced for the Pastel Society's annual exhibition, 2017, which, as usual, will be held at the Mall Galleries on The Mall in central London. The private view day will be Monday, 20 February, and the exhibition will be open to the public from Tuesday, 21 February to Saturday, 4 March.

All non-Members wishing to enter must do so through the digital pre-selection system. While not guaranteeing final selection, it saves artists the expense of transporting paintings to the Mall Galleries in London for the first thinning out of entries. Jpegs of the works involved, under 1MB in size, should be uploaded to [www.registrationmallgalleries.org.uk](http://www.registrationmallgalleries.org.uk) by noon on Friday, 4 November.

### Officers and Council Members

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	Moira Huntly RWA RI RSMA PPS
Education Officer	John Ivor Stewart ADAE FSBA PPS

Council: Tony Allain, Matthew Draper, Sheila Goodman, Bob Last ARCA, Susan Relph SGFA, Robin Warnes, Roy Wright

### Welcome to new Friends

The Pastel Society is very pleased to welcome the following new Friends: Ann Courtney, Paule Bedford, Debbie Pope, Mary Brittain, Mary Bew, Penelope Mahon.

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

### AGBI Steward

Joanne Last is the Pastel Society steward for the Artists' General Benevolent Institution for 2016-17. She can be contacted at 3 Bernard Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 0TX.

Artists will be able to check whether submissions have been successful in this round by visiting the same website from noon a week later. If yes, the works should be delivered to the Mall Galleries, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5BD on Saturday, 7 January, for the final selection process.

Full details of the submission process, including entry fees, can be found on the Mall Galleries website, [www.mallgalleries.org.uk](http://www.mallgalleries.org.uk).

As usual, there will be a full programme of workshops and demonstrations during the exhibition, and an arts event evening with the opportunity to paint alongside Members, or simply to socialise. When finalised, details will be available at [www.thepastelsociety.org.uk](http://www.thepastelsociety.org.uk).

### Bob Last shows another side

Council member and former Vice-President Bob Last is well known for his large-scale abstract paintings in pastel, but he's a versatile artist. His oil painting *Agnieszka, after 'A Bar at the Folies-Bergere' by Manet* created a lot of interest and even some international media coverage after it was shown at the Royal Society of Portrait Painters' annual exhibition in May. It's a striking likeness of Agnieszka, who runs the café/bar at the Mall Galleries.



### Derwent relaunches graphite range

The Pastel Society sponsor, Derwent, is relaunching its graphite pencil range under the title Choose Your Shade. The highly light-fast pencils have an improved core strength and are available in 20 consistent degrees from 9B to 9H.



## News from Members

Angela A'Court has spent some 18 months in Japan recently with her husband. This exposure to Japanese culture has had a major impact on her output, reflected in her current solo exhibition at the Susan Eley Fine Art Gallery in New York, which runs until the end of October. Almost all the works are in pastel-dominated mixed media, and reflect her fascination with the simple yet beautiful designs of Japanese ceramics.

Back in New York, she has also been learning how to make paper and, ever an experimenter, has one work in the show – *Breathing Space* – which features soft pastel cut-out leaves embedded in handmade paper. Angela will also have a solo show at the Stour Gallery in Shipston on Stour from 12 October (PV) until February and will be showing work at the Winter Exhibition at the New Ashgate Gallery, Farnham, from 11 November (PV) until 7 January.

Trish Cain, the Featured Artist in this issue, has an exhibition called *Build* at L'Entrepot, 230 Dalston Lane, London E8 1LA, running from 29 September for a month.

*Capturing Light* was the title of an exhibition of works by Honorary Member Anthony Eyton RA and his late mother, Phyllis Eyton, at Browse & Darby, 19 Cork Street, London W15 3LP, from 14 September to 7 October.

After celebrating her 60th wedding anniversary in August, Past President Moira Huntly has settled down to painting again. She will be exhibiting in the RWA Annual Exhibition at the Academy in Bristol from Sunday, 9 October to Sunday, 27 November, and also taking part in the Winter Show at Bath Contemporary, Gay Street, Bath from 2 December to 29 January 2017.

Newly-elected Member Malcolm Taylor had a solo exhibition – but including only a couple of pastels this time – at Cricket Fine Art, 2 Park Walk, Chelsea, London SW10 0AD from 11 to 22 October.

Past President Cheryl Culver will be represented through the Russell Gallery at the Battersea Affordable Art Fair, 20-23 October.

Caroline Bays (carolinebays@googlemail.com) is tutoring a series of one-day, once-a-month portrait workshops at The Print Room Chertsey Artists, 6a Windsor St, Chertsey KT16 8AS. The fee is £40 per session. Students can work in any medium. The dates for the next six months are, Sunday 23 October; Sunday, 20 November; Saturday, 10 December; Saturday, 14 January; Sunday, 12 February; and Saturday, 25 March.

Known for his highly-detailed charcoal drawings, Roy Wright is among a number of artists participating in a project by The Victoria Foundation, including an exhibition and illustrated book of works of art of the view made famous by Turner of Richmond Hill and the surrounding area. The exhibition will run from November to February, and a percentage of the sales will go to provide projects for the elderly. Through the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, Roy will also be represented at Art Toronto at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (28-31 October), and through Thompson's Gallery he will be at the London Art Fair at the Business Design Centre (18-22 January).



*In Amongst It All*, pastel on paper, by Angela A'Court

## Excellent out-of-town exhibitions showcase Members' work



A light and airy display in Broadway

Two highly popular tourist destinations – Lymington, close to the New Forest, and Broadway in the Cotswolds – were the settings for Pastel Society summer exhibitions. Both were beautifully presented, and met the objective of displaying a selection of the best of contemporary works in pastel and other dry media to a wider public.

Felicity House PS lives in Bournemouth, close enough to the St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery at Lymington to count as a local artist. She gave a talk at the Private View about the Society and the history of pastels, and discussed the wide variety of techniques used by Members whose work was on display: Angela A'Court, Tony Allain, Sarah Bee, Patricia Cain, Cheryl Culver, Matthew Draper, Sheila Goodman, Jeannette Hayes, Felicity House,



The private view at St Barbe's

Moira Huntly, Jill Jeffrey, Keith Roper, Norma Stephenson, Peter Vincent, Tom Walker, Ann Wilkinson, and Roy Wright.

This was the final exhibition at the centre before it closed for a major renovation programme lasting until July next year.

At the John Noott Gallery in Broadway, participating artists were Tom Walker, Michael Norman, Jeannette Hayes, Roger Dellar, Jenny Halstead, Sheila Goodman, Sarah Bee, Peter Vincent, Tony Allain and Moira Huntly.

Past President Moira Huntly lives close to Broadway. "The light and airy exhibition space showed off the medium to great effect," she says. "I don't recall such a big display of pastel paintings in the village before."

## Summer Workshops at St George's College, Addlestone

St George's College at Addlestone, Surrey, with its custom-built art rooms, has confirmed its reputation as an excellent venue for short art courses, and is now established as the location of choice for the Pastel Society's summer workshops. The landscaped gardens greatly add to the attractiveness and, weather permitting, provide an opportunity to work in the open air.

This year's workshops were held in late August and were judged to be among the most successful yet. Subjects ranged from the technical to landscape, still life, life drawing and portraiture. A big thank you is due to the tutors Felicity House, Jenny Halstead, John Tookey, Antony Williams, and especially Sue Relph who organised the event.



Jenny Halstead (centre, red apron) with workshop students



John Tookey (left) led his students in a landscape workshop



## The Changing of the Guard

A very enjoyable buffet lunch was held at the Mall Galleries in July to mark the inauguration of Jeannette Hayes as the new President of the Pastel Society, and to thank the retiring President, Cheryl Culver, for all her hard work while in office. Cheryl presented Jeannette with the chain of office.

The top photograph shows (left to right) Members Eiko Yoshimoto, Sue Relph, Past President Cheryl Culver, President Jeannette Hayes, Roy Wright and Antony Williams.

A number of presentations were made to Cheryl to mark her retirement, including a hand-turned wooden bowl with commemorative plaque, an album of photographs and goodwill messages, and a china figure of an English setter, reflecting her love of the breed. She and her husband John now have two setters – Lottie, who habitually accompanies Cheryl on sketching trips and has been a regular attendee at Pastel Society exhibitions, and new recruit Baxter.

“Thank you so much to all Friends and Members of the Pastel Society for my wonderful retirement gifts and the kind words written in the special ‘Little Book’,” Cheryl says.

“A special thank you to Bob Last [with Cheryl in photograph, bottom right] who masterminded the whole thing. Also a huge ‘Thank you’ to Ken Gofton who gave me so much support during my time as President, and who is continuing to help with the Newsletter to ensure it continues for the future.

“I will continue to manage the Pastel Society website for the time being. Could Members send any news, exhibition details, etc, to me at [cherylculver@btinternet.com](mailto:cherylculver@btinternet.com).”

There was also a presentation to Ken Gofton of an RHS Encyclopedia of Garden Design, together with garden gift tokens, to mark his retirement as editor of the Newsletter after eight years. This, however, is a somewhat fluid situation.

Says Ken: “It really is time I stepped down from the editorship, and I’m very grateful to everyone for the beautiful and quite unexpected presents. However, I was shocked to find that, in the absence of volunteers, there was a risk that the Newsletter would not continue. For that reason, I will continue to have an involvement, at least for a while, helped on this occasion by a former colleague of mine, journalist and pastel enthusiast, Louella Miles.”

