

newsletter

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THE PASTEL SOCIETY



John Ambrus, by Victor Ambrus

Featured Artist Victor Ambrus, PS



This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising, ultimately crushed by the Russian military. Unsurprisingly, students played a prominent role in the rebellion, and when the tanks moved in, many of them found it prudent to flee to the West.

Among them was Victor Ambrus, who at the time was three years into a four-year course at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, where he had been studying drawing, anatomy and printmaking. Given some choice as to where he settled, he chose England, largely because of his admiration for such classical illustrators as E. H. Shepard, John Tenniel and Arthur Rackham.

Unable to speak English at that time, he was accepted by Farnham Art School to follow his drawing studies. It quickly became clear, however, that he was more advanced than most of his fellow students, and the school recommended him to the Royal College of Art in London. The award of a Gulbenkian scholarship enabled him to study illustration and printmaking there for three years. It was also where he met his wife Glenys, a fellow Member of the Pastel Society. Victor's art education in Budapest had been very formal and classical, and attending the RCA proved to be a real eye-opener. David Hockney was a contemporary, the college's "golden boy" who was already receiving media attention. Other students were experimenting with action painting, including riding bicycles over their wet canvases.

"Drawing wasn't taught there in a traditional sense," he adds. "You worked for yourself, with comments from your tutors. I will always be grateful for the traditional education I received in Hungary, but I think experiencing that different atmosphere in London meant I got rid of some of the stiffness, and loosened up a bit more."

'John', portrait of his brother by Victor Ambrus (cover picture)

'Home from the Walk'

'Clare'

To Members and Friends of the Pastel Society, Victor is best known for his large-scale drawings of people, often in folk costume or working clothes. They represent only part of his output as an artist, however.

While still at the RCA he received his first commissions to illustrate books, and it wasn't long before he was earning his living as a freelance illustrator, supported initially by part-time teaching back at Farnham Art School. In all, he has illustrated some 300 titles, mostly in watercolour or pen and ink. Two dozen of these are books he has written himself, including children's stories, and works on history, archaeology, and drawing instruction. He has twice won the Kate Greenaway Medal for illustrating children's books, and been a commended runner-up on three further occasions.

All of this is aside from his work on television. For 20 years he was the resident artist on the Channel 4 series, *Time Team*, and is still invited to contribute to *Time Team* specials. His job was to talk to the archaeologists and visualise how the settlements they had unearthed had looked when they were originally created. It wasn't the easiest of tasks since the experts, faced with a few post holes in the ground, often had very little idea of the buildings' appearance!

So then the question arises, how does all this activity fit in with the drawings for which he is so well known in the Pastel Society? The answer is intriguing. As an illustrator, Victor has always refused to work from photographs, yet commissions often come with a tight deadline. In this situation, he has to rely on his visual memory, which he keeps topped up by constant drawing. For many years he has been one of a group of artists meeting weekly near his Surrey home for figure drawing and painting. This is the source of most of his works shown at the Pastel Society. In addition, from time to time, he likes to draw animals from life – an altogether trickier task. As he says, you can't depend upon animals to stay still.



Victor Ambrus PS

However, with patience you will find that, although they may wander off, they will return to characteristic poses.

Victor is a master of fine line, which he attributes to his training in etching. He works on large sheets of off-white, high-quality cartridge paper. His initial drawings are made in a dark blue-grey or sepia pastel pencil or Conté, with watercolour pencils for the finest details. "I like the drawing to dominate, and use touches of soft pastel mainly to block in areas where I want to give some emphasis to textures or textiles," he says. "I think the kind of line drawing I do is perfectly complemented by limiting the color."

A Member of the Pastel Society since 1993, he is a Past Vice-President and has served on the Council until very recently. Active in many other areas, he is an Associate of the Royal College of Art, an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Graphic Fine Art, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter Etchers, the Royal Society of Arts, and the Royal Society of Engravers.

President's Letter

The Pastel Society Annual Exhibition has just finished and what a fantastic show it has been. Enhanced by the 'New Look' main gallery and the stunning lighting, every work on the wall looked as though it had its own personal spotlight. Members and Non Members can be proud to have exhibited in such a prestigious gallery. The feeling of a job well done had a knock-on effect, and without doubt the general public responded to this as sales reached an all time high.

"Order! Order!" - the Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe opened the exhibition in excellent form. She entertained everyone with some very funny tales and presented the Awards with great flourish. "This is just like Speech Day at school" she quipped. Nothing was too much trouble and she took everything in her stride. The gallery was packed and Ann was given a painting by Sarah Bee of Haytor Quarry, Devon, to thank her for coming. The painting was very well received: Ann knows the area depicted well as she lives close by.

This was our first exhibition with our new sponsors, Derwent, and we welcomed Astri Thomas-Saunders from Derwent to our show. Astri attended the Awards and Sponsors Buffet provided by Renzo and his staff, and selected the winner of the Derwent Award. We wish to thank Derwent for supporting the Pastel Society and their sponsorship is planned for 2016, 2017 and 2018. We will work hard to ensure that Derwent benefit from the arrangement as much as the Pastel Society.

I would like to thank all the award givers for their generous support, mentioning in particular a couple of new prestigious awards. Unison Colour offered a £1500 award for a young artist working in soft pastel, and Rembrandt/Royal Talens donated a huge boxed set of Rembrandt pastels which were delivered to me from Holland. It was hard not to open them and try a few! The Alfred Teddy Smith and Zsuzsi Roboz Award for £5000 was again presented to a young artist. This high-value prize is of extreme importance to the Society and we are always grateful to Zsuzsi for thinking of the Pastel Society in her bequest.

Each year the Pastel Society runs workshops during the annual exhibition in the Mall Galleries' Learning Centre and also during August at St George's College, Addlestone. Bookings are already coming in for the summer workshops.

Details can be viewed on the Pastel Society website www.thepastelsociety.org and application forms can be downloaded. Workshops during the exhibition were fully booked two weeks before the exhibition opened. An excellent result.

Demonstrations by Members also took place during the exhibition. These always generate a lot of interest.

The Art Event this year was held on Tuesday, 1 March, and was very well supported by Friends of the Pastel Society, Friends of the Mall Galleries and exhibiting Non Members. We were entertained by violinist Anna Ovsvyanikova who did an excellent job, both modelling and playing for everyone. Beautiful music, we were tempted to waltz our way around the Mall Galleries.

Shigemi Cheves, a friend of Pastel Society Member Eiko Yoshimoto, has modelled for us before in traditional dress. However, the full Japanese outfit is very heavy, and in the past she found it very tiring, standing throughout the evening. This year, she decided to model a resting pose - 'the dead Madam Butterfly', according to Eiko - which attracted many of the participants. The colours of the kimono and the drapes which surrounded Shigemi made a stunning display.

Ann Wilkinson created a still life arrangement which was also very popular and some excellent work emerged from this. Derwent Art Materials from Cass Art were on sale. The Mall Galleries café stayed open until 8pm and served a glass of wine or a soft drink to everyone on arrival.

Each year Members of the Society donate a small painting for the Sealed Bid auction. Sealed Bid works are displayed during the exhibition and also on-line. The highest bid wins the work. This is a fund raising exercise for the Society, which is a registered charity. I would like to thank those Members who donated work and also thank everyone who placed a bid for a painting.

One bit of excitement this year was the attendance at the exhibition of the China Xinhua News Network Corporation (CNC), which interviewed Members Angela A'Court and Jeannette Hayes about their work and inspiration. CNC is an international news broadcaster based in China, providing news to Chinese ex-pats all over the world.

Before my final paragraph, I would like to thank my Council and Members of the Society, the staff of the FBA, the technicians and of course Ken Gofton

who does such a wonderful job of editing this Newsletter.

Finally I have to announce that I have decided to stand down as President of the Pastel Society. It has been a privilege and an honour to represent the Society and I have enjoyed most of it and learned a huge amount about myself and many other useful things. I will miss being President, but I need to free up some 'Me' time and not least of all some 'Painting' time. I thank everyone for supporting the Pastel Society and hope that it will continue to go from strength to strength.

Cheryl Culver

Officers and Council Members

President	Cheryl Culver RBA
Vice President	Jeannette Hayes
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, John Ivor Stewart ADAE FSBA, Robin Warnes, Roy Wright

Welcome to new Friends

The Pastel Society is very pleased to welcome the following new Friends: Dr Stuart Walton, Rosemary Hearnshaw, Karen Bravery, and Liz Dury.

Arrangements are being made for the first Friends' outing of the year, to the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, although at the time of going to press the date had still to be finalised.

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.

Website saga

We had been justifiably proud of the Society's website since its launch. But then it was hacked, which was a scare, and just before Christmas it lost its menu (writes Cheryl Culver). Without a menu there was no way the site could be navigated. It was essential to get the site back in action before the run up to the 2016 exhibition and the long break between Christmas and the New Year was counter-productive.

The full truth then emerged. The website, which uses a program called Joomla, should have been 'upgraded' not just once but twice, which essentially meant it had to be rebuilt. It was time to call in the serious squad. Tim Sawers, who originally built the site, offered to take on the job, but I still had to take up residence in front of my computer for something like three and a half weeks. Information had to be transferred from the old site to the new but although the CMS (Content Management System) was similar....it was different!

Tim persuaded me to sign up for Skype. This worked really well except for constantly seeing my face in a little square in one corner of my computer screen. What a confidence boost these photos are! Tim took a lot of trouble sharing his screen with me so that I could see the way the thing worked. Copious notes were taken as the old memory is a bit iffy on all things IT.

Everything went reasonably well and we went 'LIVE'. Whoops! The original photos, which had been fine and visible, had disappeared. Now for the technical bit: file names for the new CMS shouldn't have spaces; and as soon as we went 'Live' the old site was of course deleted and with it the photos. Fortunately, in something called my 'Filing System', I had the original images. Ittook... awhile to find them but I got there in the end.

Tim, I thank you, and I also thank Anthony Garrett who was very involved in the expansion of the original site, for all the support and good jokes we have shared in times of stress. I almost began to enjoy computer technology.

‘NOW@ the Pastel Society’ – this year’s exhibition in pictures



Top three images, opposite page:
Views of the main gallery, just before the doors
opened for the Private View.

Opposite page, bottom left:
The Rt. Hon. Ann Widdecombe presents the
Rembrandt prize to Felicity House PS.



Opposite page, bottom right:
Astri Saunders-Thomas of Derwent presents the
Sponsor's prize to Michael Norman PS.

This page, top:
Shigemi Cheves, wearing a traditional Japanese
kimono, adopted a restful pose when she acted
as a model at the Art Event evening.



This page, centre:
Nicky Litchfield and Richard Rees with President
Cheryl Culver after being presented with prizes for
their drawings at the Art Event evening.

This page, bottom:
Among the many visitors to this year's exhibition
were Liliane Desmartes, President of La Société
des Pastellistes de France and a colleague,
Philippe Baujard, at right, seen with President
Cheryl Culver and Vice-President Jeannette
Hayes.



Young artists present in force

*'Forge of Diosgyor' (left),
erased pastel on drafting film,
by Peter Matyasi*

*'Midwinter Fire' (right),
pastel, charcoal and graphite,
by Janine Baldwin*



One of the Society's major strategic aims is to encourage young artists to work in dry media, and particularly pastel. This objective has been greatly helped by being able to offer two generous prizes for artists under the age of 35 at the annual exhibition – the Alfred Teddy Smith and Zsuzsi Roboz Award, worth £5000, and, for the first time this year, the Unison Colour £1500 Award.

It is very gratifying to report that, of the 728 submissions to this year's show, one in six (118) were by artists under 35.

Zsuzsi Roboz was a much-loved Member of the Pastel Society, originally from Hungary. It is particularly fitting, therefore, that Peter Matyasi,

this year's winner of the prize made possible by her generous legacy, is also Hungarian.

The architectural studies he entered for the exhibition are extremely subtle and delicate, due very much to his unusual, experimental technique in which pastel is applied to drafting film and then partially erased.

The Unison Colour prize for young artists was awarded to Janine Baldwin for a group of semi-abstract landscapes inspired by the area around her North Yorkshire home.

Less valuable in monetary terms, but nevertheless prestigious, the Pastel Society Young Artist Award was won by Andrew Leatherbarrow.

Award winners, 2016

Below is the full list of awards made during the 2016 exhibition:

Derwent Sponsor's Award: Michael Norman PS

The Alfred Teddy Smith & Zsuzsi Roboz Award:
Peter Matyasi

Unison Colour £1500 Young Artist Award: Janine Baldwin

Unison Colour Product Prize: Charlie Schaffer

Caran d'Ache Award: Roland Corbin

Royal Talens/Rembrandt Prize: Felicity House PS

Daler-Rowney Prize: Patricia Cain PS NEAC

Conté à Paris Award: Peter Matyasi

The Artist Magazine Award: Matthew Draper PS

Artists & Illustrators Award: Henry Jabbour

Henri Roche Prize: Patricia Clements

Schmincke Prize: Linda Penny

Faber Castell/West Design Prize: Patrick Moffat

Annie Longley Award: Jan Munro

Frank Herring & Sons Prize: Jan Munro

Pastel Society Catalogue Award (1): Susan

Brooke

Pastel Society Catalogue Award (2): Melodie

Cook

Pastel Society Young Artist Award: Andrew

Leatherbarrow

News from Members

Victor Ambrus, subject of this issue's Featured Artist, has just completed the illustrations for *The Story of Somerset*, to be published later this year by Taunton Museum. Marking this event, Taunton Castle is staging an exhibition in April of his drawings, plus photographs, artefacts, art materials, and pieces from his collection of arms and armour. "They come down and go off with a van load of stuff, and still they want more," says his wife and fellow Pastel Society Member, Glenys Ambrus. "It's quite exhausting trying to locate all of it." The pair recently started a series of Wednesday workshops on portrait painting and drawing in a studio at Farnham Potteries. "Surprisingly, we are now chock-a-block, and it's just lovely to work with like-minded people," Glenys adds.

Having broken her ankle while sketching in Cornwall last October, Sarah Bee has been unable to work at her easel until very recently, but is now getting back to work. She will be teaching at Coombe Farm Studios, South Devon TQ6 0JA (www.coombefarmstudios.com), 18-22 July.

A work by Roy Wright, *The Leaves Cling and Grow Paler*, was selected as a finalist for the Columbia/Threadneedle Prize at the Mall Galleries in February. (3-20 February), and was subsequently selected to tour to the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 1-24 July. He will be represented at the Paris Art Fair and Grand Palais (30 March - April). Roy will also be participating in mixed exhibitions throughout the year with The Drang Gallery (Padstow, Salcombe, Falmouth and St Ives) and will have work in the Thompsons Gallery annual summer show in Aldeburgh (June/July).

Bernard Dunstan and his wife Diana Armfield, who are both long-standing members of the Royal Academy as well as Honorary Members of the Pastel Society, have a joint exhibition at the RA's Keeper's House in Piccadilly, central London, continuing until 16 April. It includes works in pastels and oils, as well as lithographs.

John Tookey will be conducting a workshop,



'The Leaves Cling and Grow Paler' by Roy Wright

'Improve Your Pastels', at Flatford Mill, courtesy of the Field Studies Council, 26-28 August (more information from enquiries.jh@field-studies-council.org, telephone 01306 734501)

Moira Huntly will be taking part in the Little Picture Show at the Albany Gallery, Cardiff, 1 - 23 April, and also participating with the Royal Society of Marine Artists in an exhibition at the Tenby Museum & Art Gallery, Castle Hill, Tenby, Pembrokeshire from 30 April to 12 June.

Whenever they visit new places, Peter Vincent and his wife make a habit of visiting the local churches, which so often tell the history of the area. This has resulted in a number of paintings which have been shown at Pastel Society exhibitions and then, as reported in the last issue of the newsletter, an

News from Members (continued)

invitation to participate in a special exhibition, 'The Painted Parish', at the Mall Galleries. Subsequently he received a commission, via the Mall, to produce a painting of a modern church, St Cuthbert's in North Wembley, for the vicar, the Rev. Steve Morris.

Felicity House will be leading a two-day pastel workshop at Quiddity Fine Art near Andover, Hampshire, 4-5 May. Details from www.quiddityfineart.co.uk.

French Pastel Society President Liliane Desmartres has suggested that five or six Members of the UK Pastel Society participate as guests at a pastel exhibition in Feytiat, 30 June - 4 September. This follows her visit to London last year and to this year's exhibition. Details have still to be finalised.

Works by Pastel Society President Cheryl Culver will be shown by the Russell Gallery at the Affordable Art Fair Chelsea in April and the Affordable Art Fair Hampstead in June. Interestingly, she has been contacted by the producers of 'Papa ou Maman 2', a sequel to a popular French comedy starring Marina Fois and Laurent Laffite, to ask permission to reproduce one of her paintings in the new film.

Robin Warnes is exhibiting at The Peter Pears Gallery, Aldeburgh, Suffolk, 16-30 April as part of the Students from The Royal Academy East Anglian Group. The Exhibition is called New Ground.

Several Members will be opening their studios to the public as part of organised Open Studio events this summer. Jenny Halstead will be one of 36 artists in 22 venues participating in the Whiteknights Studio Trail, a walking trail around the area of the University of Reading, on Saturday and Sunday, 11-12 June. She will also be teaching for



'St Cuthbert's Church' by Peter Vincent

two weeks at L'Age Baston, Charente, France, 17 and 24 September (www.lagebaston.com). Recent pastels by Felicity House will be on show at her home in Bournemouth during Dorset Art Weeks Open Studio event, 28 May-12 June. Find out more at www.felicityhouse.eu. Peter Vincent is opening his studio and garden on 28 May as part of Newick Festival weekend (Newick, East Sussex). Proud owner of an excellent new studio and gallery in Harbury, Warwickshire, Libby January will be opening the doors to the public during the Warwickshire Open Studios event, 18 June - 3 July. Check with warwickshireopenstudios@gmail.com for more details. Based at Sandwich, Kent, Cheryl Culver will be participating in the South East Open Studios programme on 3-5 June, 10-12 June and 17-19 June.

Pastel Society Exhibitions this Summer



St Barbes Museum and Art Gallery, Lymington

This summer the Pastel Society is resuming its practice of staging exhibitions outside London, in collaboration with local galleries. There will be two, both in popular tourist centres.

The first will be at the Broadway Modern Gallery in Broadway, Worcestershire, one of the prettiest villages in the Cotswolds. It will open on 2 July and run for about a month.



Broadway Modern Gallery, Broadway

The second, running from 30 July to 10 September, will be at the St Barbes Museum and Art Gallery in Lymington, close to the New Forest. The museum has embarked on an ambitious programme of expansion and refurbishment. It received confirmation in January that it is to be given a £1.78m grant from the Lottery Heritage Foundation for this purpose.

Lots of variety at summer workshops

For the third successive year, the Pastel Society has arranged a week of summer workshops at St. George's College, Weybridge, Surrey, between 22 and 26 August.

The venue is ideal – it's a 5-minute drive from the M25 at Chertsey, as well as being within walking distance of Addlestone railway station.

The college offers excellent facilities including a spacious art room and ample parking. It's a safe environment on a large campus, with a cloistered rose garden ideal for the lunch break and sketching.

This year the tutors will be:

Monday 22 - Felicity House (Still Life Colour and Composition)

Tuesday 23 - John Tookey (Improve your Pastel Landscape)

Wednesday 24 - Jenny Halstead (Pastel Over Different Painted Surfaces)

Thursday 25 - Sue Relph (Life Drawing for All Abilities)

Friday 26 - Antony Williams (Developing Portraits)

"Every year, tutors and students delight in this opportunity," says Sue Relph. "Some students have also enjoyed staying in local hotels in Chertsey or Weybridge. It is also an advantage being so near to Wisley RHS, Windsor, Hampton Court and Brooklands."

The fees for Friends of the Pastel Society are £55 per day, or £50 per day if booking four. Fees for non-Friends are slightly higher at £60 per day or £55 per day if booking four. Bookings can be made through Sue Relph (email bjrelph@yahoo.com, telephone 07711 360379). Application forms can be downloaded from the website (www.thepastelsociety.org.uk)

Malcolm Taylor welcomed to Membership



Alongside



Baking Day

At the annual meeting of the Pastel Society in March, Malcolm Taylor was elected to Membership. Previously a designer with the international engineering group Ove Arup, in recent years he has devoted himself to fine art.

"I am principally a painter of landscapes and still life but, for the past few years, I have worked in an increasingly abstract format," he says in an Artist's Statement on his website (www.malcolmtaylorart.co.uk).

"Much of this shift from representational painting to a more abstract approach has been inspired by my many visits to St Ives, where the rich tradition of abstract art has held a special interest for me. "I use my many sketchbook studies and drawings as a starting point for my work from which a fully abstract painting develops. At the outset I often don't have a fixed form in mind, preferring to let the imagery evolve through the process of painting...Energy and a sense of freedom is what I strive for, allowing the spontaneity of the marks to be interesting in their own right."

Although he has used pastels for many years, acrylics and oils have been his main media. However, as he has moved towards abstraction

he has used pastels and other dry media more – "and now that I've become a member of the Pastel Society I'm sure my use of soft pastels will increase exponentially!"

Malcolm is Vice-President of the Manchester Academy of the Fine Arts, and a Member of the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Art.

Derwent the Society's new sponsor

The Pastel Society is both honoured and delighted to have Derwent as its sponsor for the next three years. Its roots as a cottage industry in the Lake District led to the development of the UK's first pencil factory in 1832. It became the Cumberland Pencil Company in 1916.

Derwent has long had a reputation for innovation. Milestones have included the launch of the Lakeland range of children's pencils in 1930, followed by the Derwent brand of fine art pencils in 1938. Constantly innovating, its introductions in recent years have included tinted charcoal pencils and blocks and Inkense pencils and blocks.

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