

March 2025

No. 403

ArtNews



In this issue...

Face values -
David Satchel
and Jess
Williams talk
about portrait
painting
page 3



Spotlight on
...Nurcan
Erkocak
page 6



"Things I
can't do
without"
page 10



Catherine
Beale's
watercolour
demo
page 5



Artistic
inspiration
page 8



Plus What's On at BAS, new
members, not-to-miss
exhibitions and more
besides

A Warm Welcome

A warm welcome to all new members who we look forward to meeting at our events soon. Let's meet some of them:

Steve Clark

I'm a local art director who enjoys making, drawing and painting.

Mary Oubridge

I have recently moved and want to get more involved in my art again.

Claire Patterson

I work in all mediums but recently got really into digital art and everything is printed onto archival matt. I find digital a really amazing medium and very exciting.

Clare Hogan

I'm a mixed media artist and secondary school art teacher. My inspiration comes from my surroundings such as my home and garden.

Jennie Vallance

I've lived in Berkhamsted for 3 years with my husband and 7 year old twin girls. I used to live next door to Katie J, a current BAS member!

Ruth Woodbridge

I work in the Impressionist & Modern Art department at Bonhams and love working with art, but haven't had time to practice it myself for years. I'm keen to (tentatively!) take it up again, and to meet like-minded people.

Russell Boyd Garner

I taught art in Hertfordshire for 30 years, 18 years at Berkhamsted School. I'm now retired and working full time on my own work.

Susan Gray

I work as a full time artist but hope to have more time in the future to join in local art sessions.

Julie Ivelaw-Chapman

I hadn't picked up an art utensil since school (years and years ago) but started online classes during lockdown.

Face to face

portraits with David Satchel

David Satchel spent sixty years producing tens of thousands of photographs for English provincial newspapers, an experience that taught him a great deal about what makes an interesting image. David started teaching drawing for adults some twenty years ago, and still enjoys the process of teaching students how to observe, study and memorise what they see in a sitter.

However, while proportions and accuracy are important, David says he would be horrified if his students produced such accurate drawings that they looked just like a photograph. "They would be lifeless, without feeling. A good drawing is full of life and expression," he said.

"When I am teaching, I show how to draw a face and understand about proportions and what to draw first. This is usually the hair because it gives the artist a frame to work from; also to get the mouth early on because this is the important step to get a likeness. The mouth is the most important feature and shows almost everything about the character and mood of the sitter".

"These are just some of the skills needed before painting which is much easier than the drawing process itself".

David's technique is to work from photographs for reference. "I don't know any serious artist who doesn't. Leonardo da Vinci would certainly have used a camera!"

"I take many photographs of different expressions, mouth, eyes etc and stick them around my canvas. This is very like having a sitter and better in lots of ways because the sitter can't look happy for very long. I use one photograph for, say, the best mouth and another for the eyes".



David exhibited a metre-high portrait of "Gus" at the winter fair. "Gus was a very kind man who worked at the Cupid Green depot. I did a little pencil sketch of him forty years ago and subsequently painted this canvas before Christmas 2023. It sold as soon as the exhibition opened."

David also talked about other recent paintings: "'Blue Sky' took me more than a year to plan without taking up a brush. Then I met a young mother who is an art teacher. I always wanted to have an artist in the picture. The subject is obvious; she is looking at herself in the mirror (not looking back at us) but the half-finished work on the canvas she has painted is looking back at her. It took a long time to get all the (slightly) different types of blue paint, and four days to paint in all", he explained.



David has condensed his thoughts on drawing, including portraits, into a self-published book entitled "Anyone can draw if you can write your name. Just learn how to look."

He is currently working on the programme of BAS outdoor drawing evenings for this summer.

Face to face

portraits with Jess Williams

Jess Williams is a relatively recent exhibitor at BAS but has been painting portraits since she was in her early teens. Still only in her twenties, Jess has developed her own, bold, style where strong emotions in the subject's face create a distinctive point of interest. Since graduating in Fine Art from Loughborough University, Jess has turned semi-professional, working on commissions as well as her own work.

"The focus of a lot of my art has always been centred around people, conveying their emotions and stories through their facial expressions, postures or the situation I place them in. It is this story-telling aspect, the process of visualising and communicating characters and their situations that I enjoy exploring in my work", she explained.

"I look to portray a mood or feeling: whether haughty, disgruntled, moody or pensive - it's all far more interesting to paint than a cheery or relaxed face. I enjoy painting this 'extra layer' of expression where the emotion is clearly evident. In a sense I'm starting a conversation with the viewer - who is the subject? What are they thinking and why?"



"Once I have an idea of the painting I'm aiming to create, I search for photo references for faces with the character and expression I'm looking for. I spend time studying a variety of different images before committing anything to paper or canvas". Jess explained that she particularly enjoys the freedom of choosing anonymous photographs for references. "That way I don't need to worry about pleasing a sitter!" she laughed.

Since leaving university, Jess has had considerable success.

After being honoured as runner up to the "Best in Show" Prize at Hertford Art Society's open exhibition in 2021, Jess's striking profile image of "Man in Monochrome" was awarded the John Goss Prize for Best in Show two years later.

Her success continued in 2024 when she was accepted into Oxford Art Society's Open Exhibition with two paintings: "Boy with attitude," an oil portrait of a young man glowering at the viewer and "Intimacy," a watercolour of two faces in close proximity. Two solo exhibitions and participating in Bucks Art Week have also increased her profile.



Jess concluded: "I've always been interested in depicting the human condition - capturing an expression in a moment of contemplation or immortalising a fond memory between friends on the canvas."

"As long as I'm painting something uniquely human then I'm happy!"

jess-williams.format.com Insta: [jessfswilliams_artist](https://www.instagram.com/jessfswilliams_artist)

Painting the Grand Union Canal

Susan Cooke reviews Catherine Beale's watery watercolour demonstration

Catherine introduced her talk by showing us some of her paintings from her home area of Bath.

Catherine described the reference photo for the demo as a packed image, and said it was important to choose where the focal point of the painting will be and decide how to increase the focus on that point. Catherine selected the bridge; she considered it was interesting to have sharp and loose areas in the same painting and also an asymmetry in levels of brightness.

Catherine started by using a pencil drawing on Aquafine cold pressed watercolour board. (Hobbycraft). She used a 2B pencil, labelling the areas where she wanted the white of the paper or a yellow colour. Masking fluid was used on these areas and also spattered in dots where the foliage was to be. Some wiggly lines of masking fluid were added to the water area; edges and the middle of shapes were masked unevenly to break up the shapes.

Catherine's painting technique was particular. She used daisy palettes and kept each well for an individual colour; all her mixing happened on the paper. The undiluted colours were kept on the palette, then water added but not mixed. Colours used included Sap green, Phthalo turquoise, (W&N) Quinacridone mauve, Indigo (Daler Rowney) French ultramarine, Cobalt turquoise, Transparent or Lemon yellow, Raw sienna, Burnt umber, Alizarin Crimson, Permanent Rose.



Areas to be painted were wetted and the board was tilted. Catherine just touched the edge of the pigment in the well with a Prolene acrylic 1" flat brush and ran the flat brush over the top of the image, letting the paint cascade down. She used the corner of the brush to drop solid colour in. She described this flat brush as a 'Thirsty' brush when dry, as it will remove excess water from an area, and a 'Sharp' brush as the edge can cut through colour when needed.

Catherine also used a Prolene 1" Rigger and a Rosemary & Co Eradicator brush, a stumpy brush for lifting out paint. Catherine worked round the painting, attending to each zone. Rock salt and fine salt were sprinkled on the wet paint to create texture.

When the painting and the masking fluid had dried naturally, a Staedtler acrylic eraser was used to remove pencil markings and colour added where needed e.g. leaf shapes. Details were added when the painting was dry, hard edges were softened, shapes edited and the salt granules are removed.

Catherine feels that it's never too late to adjust a painting. This finished canal painting sang with lively colour: Catherine's demo encouraged us all to go and paint our Grand Union.



Spotlight on ... Nurcan Erkocak



Visitors to Berkhamsted's winter art fair cannot fail to have noticed a large painting of a troubled-looking young woman looking over her naked shoulder at the artist.

You might also have seen a circular 'memento mori' of a woman, whose face morphed into a skull decorated with flowers. You probably then wondered about the artist and the inspiration for these unusual paintings.

The artist was Nurcan Erkocak who was exhibiting at Berkhamsted Art Society for the first time.

"I interpret my paintings by blending my dreams and the solid reality of the outside world. I like to explain my subjects with my own sensitivity, to show that every human being is actually very lonely, fragile and mortal," she said.

Nurcan is an accomplished artist who worked extensively in her native country of Turkey - until the oppression towards women, and women artists in particular, became intolerable and effectively stopped her painting.

"Contrary to what people might think, women are not really free in Turkish society. They are still judged by their appearances and conventional norms of beauty."

"Women's rights in Turkey have gone backwards in recent years", she said. "Just walking alone along the street can lead to harassment and worse. High levels of domestic violence are also tolerated by society."

Nurcan commented that women artists in Turkey are not respected, nor listened to, but are judged on their own appearances and the 'prettiness' of their work.

"You're expected to dress and behave in a particular way and as an artist that was affecting me deeply. Society tries to bring you down if you are intelligent and want to express yourself as an individual. I wanted my work to show an alternative view of women as they really are."

"In Turkey people criticised and commented on my art in inappropriate ways. I felt inhibited and unable to express myself, so I stopped. Here, I have started to paint freely again."

Nurcan's enjoyment of art started at a young age.

"I always wanted to be an artist, even at the age of 6 or 7," she said.



"My father bought a small reproduction of Constable's Haywain and as a child I used to study it intently, imagining myself in the landscape which was so totally different from anywhere I knew in Turkey. I didn't even know the artist was British until I saw the painting in the National Gallery. To this day, I still love the Haywain; it makes me so happy to gaze at it!"

Nurcan grew up in Çoram, a rural, conservative area, far from the stimulation of city life.

While she was a top grade scholar, Nurcan determinedly resisted pressure from her parents to train as a doctor. She fought hard to study art, coming top out of 10,000 applicants for university - but still her parents stood in her way, only allowing her to study fine art if it led to a career as a teacher, which was seen as more respectable than becoming an artist.

Nurcan's heart was never truly in teaching, however, and as the constraints on women and women artists became worse, Nurcan, her husband and daughter decided to take advantage of the Ankara agreement that allowed them to move to the UK.



Nurcan painting at the Acoustic Brasserie restaurant, Stoke Newington, one of many commissions in and around North London.

"I've only felt free to paint "as a woman" and share my work since we arrived in 2021," she said.

Since then Nurcan's career has flourished as she can now reflect the things that she felt strongly about when in Turkey.

Her background in graphic design, mosaics, sculpture, textiles, ceramics as well as oil painting has stood Nurcan in good stead. Today Nurcan's work is very varied and includes large scale commissions on walls in restaurants and retail spaces in and around London.



She recently completed five 2m x 2m representations of scenes in Sardinia on the walls of Il Bacio di Stokey in Church Street, Stoke Newington. In the run up to Christmas each year, she finds that her window designs of Christmas and winter themes are much in demand from retailers. Her first love, though, remains expressing her feelings about being a woman, through her paintings.

"I found it immensely difficult in Turkey to pursue my art without constant criticism about what is appropriate. Today I feel truly liberated to express myself and do the art I want to do, and I'm grateful for that," she said.

Insta: [arya_art19](#)

Inspirational art

BAS members choose pieces of art that mean a lot to them

My parents had an original framed LNER railway poster in our family home which I saw daily as it hung in the loo! It showed a sea view "UTDA COME TO ULSTER BELFAST LOUGH - THE GATEWAY TO HAPPY HOLIDAYS" by Norman Wilkinson RI Printed by S C Allen & Company Ltd Belfast.

It is a masterclass in poster design by Norman Wilkinson (1878-1971), one of the foremost maritime and poster painters of his day.

Gazing up at the large picture I always admired the 'flatness' of the print. The way the areas were blocked out, simplified and stylised - almost like a lino-cut (which I used to believe it was) There is of course nothing 'simple' about this.

Wilkinson was a master draughtsman, coming to fame early with his radical 'Dazzle Ship' design to camouflage ships in WW1. However, as a fine art student in Portsmouth Poly I was more interested in textural oil painters such as Auerbach; this flatness was of no interest to me as a teenager back then.

It was only much later after I had married and had my family and was working at Berkhamsted School as the art technician that this strange new flat paint came into my life as I watched a 6th form student paint with it. That was it - I was fascinated to learn more. It was called gouache and it's what the poster was originally painted in.

Mary Casserley chooses a railway tourism poster



After a few aborted first attempts to get the paint to lie flat- not bumpy and crusty, prone to cracking - I nailed it and painted a picture of the iconic Water Tower, Berkhamsted, as my first success.

This gouache paint was an absolute revelation to me. I was hooked and have continued to paint with it in the poster style for the last 10 years.

Researching Norman Wilkinson, I was amazed to discover he attended Berkhamsted School in the 1910s (and won a prize for Art!). Not only that but he also studied art in Portsmouth! Also, my mum told me she had bought the print from the little 'junk' shop in Castle Street opposite the school in the 1980s (sadly now long gone). So many links!

The poster is large ("Quad Royal" 40in x 50in) which reveals it was a railway station waiting room poster as opposed to a platform poster.

Wanting to know more, I sent a photo of mum and dad's poster to the National Railway Museum, York who hold a collection of railway posters. I received a letter back with all the details I could have wished for.

The poster is framed, and to this day it hasn't been taken out to see if the customary text box has either been folded back on itself or cut off. Mum still has the poster on her wall in her new home in Berkhamsted which I admire every time I visit.

www.marycasserley.com

Mountains and Sea by Helen Frankenthaler

chosen by Pauline Maddox

During my art studies spanning a decade, my inspirations varied from the great master Turner, through to Matisse, Modigliani, Richter and lately Helen Frankenthaler.

American born Frankenthaler's groundbreaking career stretched from the 1950s to the early 21st Century and she was a pioneer of the groundbreaking 'Colour Field' painting movement. Her career stretched over 6 decades and was a major contributor to the history of postwar America.

Her technique was referred to as 'soak-stain' and involved thinned oil paints applied to unprimed canvas allowing the pigment to soak into the fabric achieving a somewhat watercolour effect. This technique broke away from the gestural brush marks used by the Abstract Expressionist Movement and would later inspire her contemporaries such as Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland to continue pushing the boundaries of abstraction.

Her early work titled 'Mountains and Sea' painted in 1952 when she was just 23 years old, was her first professional exhibited work. Although panned by the critics, this work was to become her most influential and best known canvas.

Standing at 7' x 10', it's heralded as the inception point of the soak-stain and despite its critical role in art history, it never sold in her lifetime and remained in her possession. It is now on permanent exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

I love the lyrical abstraction of the work, the pastel colour palette and the addition of the chalky background.

The soak-stain technique of pouring very liquid paint, forms puddles of colour which makes the subject matter more prominent, leaving the background to breathe as merely an accompaniment to the mountains and sea.

The artist is said to have likened the work to a "large paint rag, casually accidental and incomplete" and as the oil was thinned with turpentine and applied to an unprimed canvas, you can understand the analogy. A conflict occurs when deciding which areas to fill and which to leave, but the addition of a linear charcoal mark helps to forge an alliance between both.

Her arrangement of colours and shapes often evokes the natural environment, no more so than in 'Mountains and Sea' which has inspired me in my latest work's narrative of land pollution.

Less is more, in my opinion, is certainly significant in her work. In particular the openness of the painting throws a light filled filter to the ethereal sand colour surrounding the mountains, rocks, hills and water.



As an artist I have always, and will continue to, play with the technique of applying paint to canvas, whether that be oil or acrylic separately or together on one canvas. I understand the friction that occurs when deciding how much of the canvas should be left or merely a background to the main players.

After painting with watercolour for the first stages of my painting career, I can fully appreciate the adage of 'happy accidents' and 'once it's down, it stays', the likes of which can be viewed in many of Frankenthaler's paintings. I also work on large canvases and find this gives me the freedom to experiment with the nature of movement and combinations of colour and hue, which would possibly be stifled on smaller canvases.

www.PaulineMaddox.com

Things I can't do without...

BAS artists choose their favourite gadgets, gismos, art materials and anything else that helps them with their work.

"My **Zoomyo Paper Trimmer** immediately springs to mind. Large sheets of paper can be divided up without fear of wonky edges; gone are the days trying to cut accurately with scissors. Artworks which have a pleasing section can be trimmed and converted to cards or bookmarks; labels made for the Art Fair and Christmas cards made into gift tags. Unlike some art purchases which are consigned to the back of a cupboard this is one piece of equipment which is used daily".

Catherine Archer

"My favourite items are **twigs from the garden**, especially Leylandii twigs which I dip into watercolour or diluted acrylics and drag across the surface".

Mitzie Green

@mitziegreen44



"I couldn't do without my **Amsterdam Expert acrylic paint Indigo**. I have tried other indigos but they're just not right. It forms the basis of 99% of my paintings and makes gorgeous smoky greys and greens when mixed". Liz Grammenos

Insta:lizgrammenos

"An interesting one is a **black mirror**, which is like a normal mirror but dark like a mobile phone screen when it's turned off. Looking at my painting and subject in a mirror helps me see mistakes because it flips the image. And the darkness simplifies the values which makes things more obvious". Ros Morgan

Morgan

@rosalindfrancesmorgan

"I hate waste, so was overjoyed when, a few years ago, I found a **tube squeezer** that made it easy to get the most out of my paint tubes. Plus it leaves them with a pretty, crinkled body; what's not to love?! "

Catherine Hay

CatherineHayartist.com

"The only thing that I truly need when I paint is **good jazz music, tranquillity, and a nice warm herbal tea!**

I really enjoy Pukka tea for its taste (and packaging) especially "joy", "love" and "feel new".

I put on the "classic voices in jazz" playlist on Spotify and enjoy the music of Etta James, Nina Simone, Billie Holiday and others as I paint".

Helen Engrand

@Helenengrandesign



Etta James

What's On at Berkhamsted Art Society

The major date for your diary is the Spring Art Fair at Berkhamsted Civic Centre from Friday May 9 to Sunday May 11 2025.

Look out for submission forms and requests for volunteers which will be sent out soon.

There's plenty else to keep you busy in the meantime at BAS:

18 March - 'Castles, Spaceships and Trenches': Life as a Movie Art Director'. Senior Art Director, Gary Tomkins, will talk about his four decades of working in the film industry, including stories and behind the scenes photos from Harry Potter, Star Wars and many more. The Court House, Berkhamsted 7.30 - 9.30pm

24 March - life drawing at the Court House, Berkhamsted 7.45- 9.45pm

12 April - Emanuela returns for our spring life drawing session at Hastoe Village Hall.
9am - 1pm £15 per person

28 April - life drawing at the Court House 7.45 - 9.45pm

Note start and finish times for monthly life drawing.



Spring events

Head out to these wonderful exhibitions to be inspired

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Rembrandt: Masterpieces in black and white

The only opportunity to see this exhibition in the UK.
Until 1 June 2025

Milton Keynes Art Gallery

Andy Warhol: Portrait of America

A survey of over 130 of Warhol's most iconic artworks including the renowned Marilyn series.
Until 29 June 2025.

Kenwood House

Heiress: Sargent's American Portraits

Eighteen portraits by John Singer Sargent
16 May to 5 October 2025

Please check all opening times

The Courtauld

Goya to Impressionism

Works by Goya, Monet, Renoir, Van Gogh, Picasso, Cezanne and others.
Until 26 May 2025.

National Gallery

Siena: The Rise of Painting 1300 - 1350

A golden moment and catalyst for change in Italian art.
Until 22 June 2025

National Portrait Gallery

Edvard Munch: portraits

Intimate portraits of friends and family as well as self-portraits.
Until 15 June 2025.

Royal Academy

Brasil! Brasil! the birth of modernism

How 20th century art in Brazil interpreted the vibrancy of everyday life. Until 21 April 2025.



Wallace Collection

Grayson Perry: Delusions of Grandeur

40 new works by Sir Grayson Perry including ceramics, tapestries and digital works.
Until 26 October 2025

Dulwich Picture Gallery

Tirzah Garwood: Beyond Ravilious

First major retrospective of a visionary British artist.
Until 26 May 2025

And In Other News

A car boot sale dream

Have you ever dreamt of buying a painting at a car boot sale, only to find it is an Old Master? For one lucky person in Minnesota, USA, that dream might have come true.

The buyer sent the 18 inch high painting of a fisherman, bought for \$50, to be studied by experts. Their astonishing conclusion is that it was painted by Van Gogh in around 1890.

Van Gogh often painted “translations” of other artists' work. This painting was thought to be a translation of Danish artist Michael Ancher's portrait of a fisherman, a subject to which Van Gogh was drawn.

In the lower corner is the word “Elimar”, a character in the novel “The Two Baronesses” by Hans Christian Andersen, one of Van Gogh's favourite authors. The experts point to the formation of the letters as a good clue to the handwriting of Van Gogh.

They claim to have found other clues including a ginger hair in the paint and the same thread count as canvases used by Van Gogh.

However, other experts - including those at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam - insist the painting is not by Van Gogh and attribute it instead to Danish artist Henning Elimar. Despite this decisive verdict, the original panel of experts stand firm and the debate still rages. A great deal is at stake: if authentic, the piece will be worth an estimated \$15m.



Painted by Henning Elimar - or Van Gogh?



The cat's whiskers

A California-based artist, Joy of JoyousJoyfulJoyness, turned a photo of a cat's nose into a beautiful painting, only to later discover the touching connection it held for someone in the UK.

Joy found a wonderful photo of a cat's nose online and created a radiant work of art brimming with colour, charm and warmth.

She shared the painting - Boop - on social media where it was admired by someone who unexpectedly recognised the cat and revealed that the cat's nose belonged to her beloved Millie who had sadly passed away.

Joy didn't hesitate: she immediately sent a print of Boop to Millie's owner as a gift, and Millie's owner was overjoyed with this perfect tribute to her beloved feline friend.

ArtNews - info

Do you have any comments on ArtNews or ideas for future editions?

Please do get in touch!

Penny Clifton

clifton2022@outlook.com

Berkhamsted Art Society Committee Members

Chairman	James Honour	01442 879632
Treasurer Membership Secretary	Ian Jones	01442 876034
Secretary	Suzanne Selman	
Social Secretary	Catherine Archer	
Facebook	Tracy Dudley	
BAS News	Penny Clifton	
	Lindsay Stillwell	
	Anne Smith	