



# ArtNews

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With thanks to the many contributors to this issue, including Jane Fletcher, Alan Gray, Mitzie Green, Peter Hodgson, Helen Saibil, David Satchel, Louise Williams

# Welcome

**A warm welcome to all our new members; let's meet a few of them:**

"I've always loved painting but never really did it properly. I used to sketch my cat in pencil and play around with watercolours as a hobby, but I never found the time to do more. Now feels like the right moment to take it more seriously and commit. Super excited to be part of the Berkhamsted Art Society and learn with you all!" **Ekaterina Coburn**

"I've done some watercolour classes in the past and more recently have been attending acrylics classes." **Suzanne Atkinson**

"I'm a Hungarian-British fine art painter based in Leighton Buzzard." **Nora Nadoban**

"I'm purely an amateur: watercolour, pen and wash, a bit of acrylic. I enjoy outdoor sketching." **Eve Greenfield**

## Member news

Visitors to the Winter Fair will have been intrigued to see three distinctive pieces showing spiders, by new member **Tara Louise Hughes**. The images are part of a series called "Web of Wonders", which explores the beauty of spiders.

The European Garden Spider, one of three on show at the BAS Winter Fair, won the Mini Beast Award at the Southern Nature Art Exhibition 2024.

Two other pieces in the series featured in the Mall Gallery's Society of Wildlife Artists Exhibition "The Natural Eye".



Tara uses the art of pyrography (wood burning) to create her images, with specialised tools to get the fine details of the spiders and a blowtorch to create the darkened background.

Each piece took Tara around 16 - 20 hours to create.

# What a great fair!

Three days of art, with hundreds of paintings, ceramics, cards and glassware, demonstrations, children's activities and school visits all added up to another successful fair.

A wide range of creative and artistic techniques was evident this year.

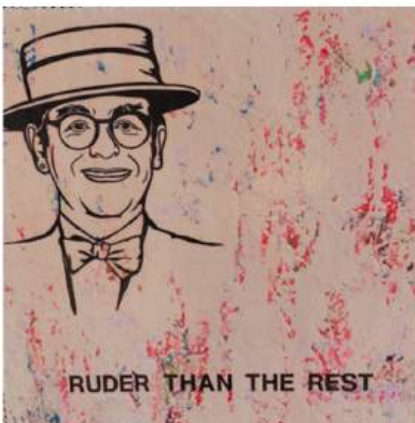
**Edwina Wilks** exhibited a set of highly original artworks of cakes made with Washi tape, a decorative, low-tack masking tape originating from Japan, made from natural materials like hemp or bamboo.

**Lindsey C St John-Smith** showed her 'Funky flowers' artwork made using fused glass, while **Jackie Hodgson** was one of several artists using fabric, exhibiting a vertical concertina of landscape collages.

**Fenella Mowbray** showed a table of large and small pots, ceramics, dishes and candle holders while **Ian Jones** showcased his raku skills with a variety of pots and dishes.



**Natalie Jakubiel** exhibited four striking acrylic canvases of well-known figures - Elton John, Richard Attenborough, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Chekhov - with overlaid text. She used heavy acrylic paint, commonly used in theatre sets as a base.



Subject matter was no less diverse.

**Kate Wynne-Eyton** exhibited "Wilderness", a portrait of her family and friends at the eponymous multi-arts event each summer in Oxfordshire.

Kate spoke to school groups about her painting, pointing out the details of the people, what they are wearing and doing, the tents and other features of the festival.



The popularity of local scenes remains a constant each year with Chilterns landscapes and recognisable landmarks much in evidence.

**Peter Hodgson** exhibited his pen and wash image of Ivinghoe Church, while **Mary Casserley** showcased her series of ever-popular Berkhamsted street scenes and buildings such as The Rex.

Some of the work produced at the summer drawing evenings made it into the fair, including **Steve Clarke**'s dramatic version of Sunnyside allotments and **Helen Saibil**'s snoring, pot-bellied pig from Sunnyside, Northchurch.



As ever the fair involved a large team, lead by James Honour, Ian Jones and Catherine Archer.



Putting up the screens; checking artwork in and out; recording and handling sales; talking to school children and organising the children's painting table - there was plenty to do.

The private view on Friday evening was well attended by artists, their families and friends, with delicious canapes provided by **Anne and Ray Smith**.

**Catherine Archer, Bernadette Duffy and Lynda Clark** planned and managed school visits from different class groups at Swing Gate and Bridgewater schools.

**Jackie Henderson and David Satchel** were among the artists who enjoyed talking to children as young as five about the paintings on show.



**David Satchel** spoke to school groups about his “huge and weird” (his words!) painting “Rainy Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead.”

The painting, which is 127cm x 102cm, took David a year to complete.

Using trompe l’oeil effects, the artist is shown painting the view of pedestrians in the rain from a shop window in the Marlowes. Outside the scene is constantly changing with buses and people hurrying through the rain, but the artist has frozen his observations in time.

He has also included his own reflection, seen partly behind the raindrops on the glass.

The children’s table was kept busy with much demand for spaces.

Some children returned for a repeat session as they enjoyed their time painting so much.



There were two demonstrations on Saturday afternoon.

**Kate Wynne-Eyton** brought along a painting of St Ives that she was working on, and showed how she paints large studio based acrylic paintings based on watercolour sketches done at the location.

Painting a seascape using “anything but a brush” was the topic for **Louise Williams’** demonstration. Louise used sponges, old credit cards and palette knives to create the effects she was looking for

# What (art) I did on my summer holidays ...

ArtNews asked BAS members about their holidays spent with sketchbooks and paints.

## *Mitzie Green painted in Morocco*



“This summer I went on a painting holiday with Karen Stamper and produced a concertina book of Moroccan life.

Morocco is undoubtedly an exciting place and Marrakesh beats everything. The main square offers variety in every dimension and I was almost knocked over when someone did a somersault in the air and landed right at my feet. And then of course there was a person with an outstretched hand.

There was music, dancing, snake charmers, monkeys, acrobatics and exotic food.

Above all I loved the colours of the buildings and the narrow passages where you get lost and where one bargains for trinkets or stumbles across sublimely decorated arches and ancient walls or even donkeys and camels. I can't wait to go again.”

## *Louise Williams painted this oil on board scene of rocks in May this year in the Isle of Wight.*

It was a calm and bright day on the coast and perfect for painting en plein air.

The painting took Louise about an hour, with the tide gradually coming in, so that over time the dark rocks became submerged.



# Peter Hodgson reminisces ...

***“Sketching seems to be what my wife Jackie and I leave the house for!”***

“I walk the dog and Jackie says ‘I’ll sit in the cafe and do a drawing.’ When we go on holiday, I’m sunning myself on the beach, and Jackie is off looking for a view or new subject.



I remember her standing on the Great Wall of China, book and watercolours in hand while thousands of tourists nosily trudged by.

The lovely thing about sketching is the memories it captures. A photograph, of which we all now take far too many, is fine; a click and it’s done. A sketch is time, is concentrating on what is before you, what you’ve chosen to remember and a challenge to create.

I have a small book with quick line drawings done in Paris, when as a family we went to watch the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution in 1989. Another has sketches of masked people (like myself) miserably sitting in fear, waiting for our first Covid jobs.



More recently West Wales has been as far as we get, camping chairs and art bags packed in the boot of the car. We don’t tend to walk as we once did (J M Turner we are not) but we now rely on places where we can park. It is frustratingly difficult to find enough places to stop with an interesting view. We now rely on laybys, car parks, pubs, cafes and churchyards. Our sketches show St Mary’s & St Bodfan’s Church, Llanaber, Nr Barmouth.

Jackie prefers using watercolours and water pens. I like a fine pen and watercolour pastels with a wet wipe. Of course the quality of the work varies but it does not matter. It’s us. It’s ours. Our time and our memories. Ours to look back on”.



# *Plein air in France*

*Alan Gray painted in 40 degree heat in the Dordogne this summer.*

“Since starting art classes about 4 years ago I find that I now take many hundreds of photos on holiday in the hope that some will make a good composition for a painting (many of these photos capture my despairing family walking away!)

I have recently taken my easel on a few holidays, firstly sketching, using watercolours and latterly trying oils.

I painted *Dejeuner sur l'herbe en plein air* in 35 degree heat whilst my family went canoeing during our recent summer holiday. We have been visiting the area for years and this is a favourite spot where we have eaten many times.

I have only been using oils for about a year and this was the first time I had used them on holiday - so I was a bit anxious on how it might go.

I set up on a fairly busy path by the river with many people stopping to chat - which stretched my basic French somewhat! After 3 hours in the direct sun, I was very grateful for the ice cream and cold drink my family brought me on their return.



**Charmouth Beach, (Dorset).Watercolour, 2024**

Painted on site on a freezing day, accompanied by the gentle tapping of hammers from the fossil hunters.



**Le Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe (St Leon Sur Vezere, Dordogne). Oil on panel. Summer 2025**



**Our Holiday Rental (Dordogne). Oil on panel. Summer 2025**

This was painted on site from the grounds of the house on the same trip - 40 degrees that day but thankfully shade and cold beer were available during this one!

# French leave

Two weeks in the south of France gave **Penny Clifton** the chance to paint every day.

"I took a small watercolour kit and A5 notebook with me every day when I was out and about.

By the end, I managed over 30 sketches and paintings, mostly of seascapes and street scenes in Marseille and Cassis.

On occasion, I painted a scene several times over when it was particularly challenging. I had four attempts at painting an ornate Baroque fountain in Cassis, for example - then gave it up completely as a lost cause when I couldn't get it right.



*The calanques at Cassis.*

Even though I was there in mid-September, it was still incredibly hot and the main challenge was finding somewhere to sit in the shade.

The light was incredible; sitting looking out to sparkling turquoise sea with an intensely blue sky helped me understand why artists like Cezanne and Raoul Dufy loved the area so much.



*"Waiting for my moules frites".*

Mostly I wasn't bothered by passers-by, though I found the British woman who didn't speak to me but surreptitiously took a photo of my painting over my shoulder very annoying!



*Sitting on the dock at Marseille.*

# From Norway to Corfu

“During a cruise to beautiful Norway, we stopped off late afternoon for a brief visit to a small town called Vardo, close to the Russian border.

I normally carry a small A5 sketchbook but there was only a brief opportunity to rough out the main details of the scene.

That evening, I completed my sketch in ink and watercolour. I loved the colours and the atmosphere of the scene.

A few weeks later I worked the sketch up into a larger painting which featured in this year’s exhibition.

*Jane Fletcher always keeps her sketchbook to hand on holiday*



In contrast, a later trip to the gorgeous island of Corfu allowed me to complete a sketch at leisure on the beach – pure bliss!

I was inspired by the mountains of Albania, and the small wooden jetty leading out into the sea.

Again, I used my favourite sketching media of ink and watercolour which allows me to work quickly with limited equipment.

Looking back at holiday sketches always brings back lovely memories.

# *Spectacular cliffs, deep valleys and beautiful seas*

*Helen Saibil spent a week on a course organised by Mark Warner in North Devon.*



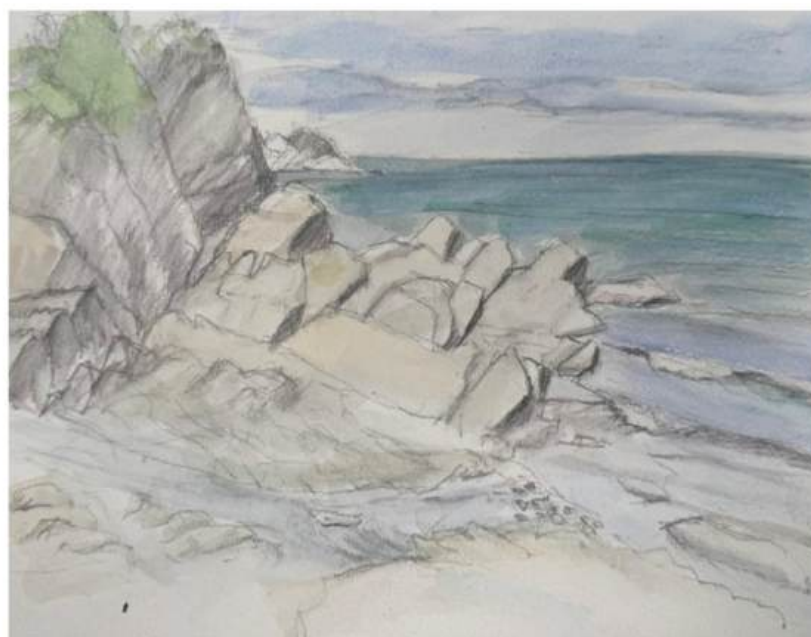
“The top one, done over two pages of a sketchbook with thick paper, was at the Valley of the Rocks near Lynton, with pencil and dilute acrylic paint.

It was a sunny, warm day in July and I was with a group on the coastal path. I guess it took an hour or two.”

“The second one was another day, along the coast at Combe Martin, using the same materials, but with more pencil and less acrylic, partly because it was cold and windy.

The slabs of rock and vegetation-topped cliffs caught my eye.

There was a little stream running down the beach, between the rocks. This was also done in an hour or two.”



# Demonstration by Peter Keegan

*Over 30 members turned out one cold evening in November for an entertaining and informative demonstration by portrait artist Peter Keegan.*

Peter gave a lively talk while painting a portrait in oils of BAS member **Andy Hill** who was in the audience.

Peter used Rosemary brushes; Jacksons odourless solvent as a thinner and Michael Harding oil paints. His palette was warm white, yellow ochre, scarlet lake, French ultramarine, raw umber and viridian, with warm and cool colours placed at opposite ends of his palette. Peter prefers a limited palette, but brings in a few 'guest' colours that are particular to the sitter's colouring or clothing.

Peter worked primarily from a reference photograph on his iPad. He started with a thin layer of raw umber and immediately took off areas of paint with a paper towel to create highlights, adding paint to create eye sockets and other dark shapes. Very quickly an image of Andy started to emerge. Skin tones were created from yellow ochre, red and a little white or umber to lighten or darken the mix.

His approach was "fat over lean"; starting with thin layers and gradually building up to thick and working from mid-value ranges outwards. At this stage Peter was still blocking in shapes and tones, rather than worrying too much about details.



As the painting progressed he moved onto smaller brushes – but left the 'modelling' or 'editing' until the very end. A few final strokes added light behind the darkest darks to bring the subject forward.

Peter emphasised the importance of squinting to see shapes and blocks within the image he was painting; of standing back and viewing the painting from different angles and of making deliberate, single brush strokes rather than repeatedly applying paint to the same spot.

The art of dealing with clients and anecdotes about managing the expectations of sitters featured throughout Peter's talk. He provided an entertaining and illuminating reflection on the life of a portrait painter - for him it is all about honest, open, communication and checking with clients and sitters throughout the process.

Finally Peter mused on the impact of AI. He predicted that there will be a renaissance of handmade arts and crafts and a greater reverence for painterly art that is clearly made by a human being.

Let's hope he is right.

# David Satchel talks about his favourite piece of art

Almost everyone must have seen Vincent Van Gogh's paintings with his lively brush strokes and vivid colour. He must have spent a lot of money on tubes of yellow!

For me, his drawings are even more exciting, especially this one: "Peasant with a Sickle Seen from the Back."

He did it 130 years ago using black chalk on paper with a touch of white chalk around the hat. I think he drew the hat too big and corrected it. The picture is 38 centimetres wide and 56 tall.

Vincent has thrown all his energy into observing the details which I now list from the top to the bottom of the picture:

1. The peasant is obviously not a young man, His head and neck stick out from his chest, emphasised by the high collar and the bulge at the top of his spine.

2. His drooping shoulders cause his arms to hang down as if the sickle and the flail in his other hand are too heavy for him after carrying them all day.

3. Vincent must have been sitting on a stool with his eyes level with the man's bum and his glorious Gor Blimey! trousers. His viewpoint has the effect of looking up at the peasant's stature which shows respect, to me, anyway.

4. You can tell the artist is very close. The hands are drawn quite large, especially the right hand holding the sickle. Mind you, of course his hands wouldn't have been small and delicate!

5. The foot close to us looks even bigger because it is the closest feature. His legs equally support his weight - shown because the bones are in line. Vincent must have paid him a few francs to stand still for about twenty minutes.

*"Peasant with a Sickle Seen from the Back" by Van Gogh*



If you study the drawing for a few minutes, you can see how Vincent was thinking. He wants to show you the cut stubble at the man's feet and a vague suggestion of standing wheat or something in the background - also some tiny lines around the flail and the sickle to suggest movement.

He must have enjoyed making this drawing immensely. It is so full of life and, yes, fun!

I have been teaching people how to draw for many years and always show this drawing to my students. It is an antidote for those who worry too much about "getting it right." I tell them to draw what they like looking at.

# What's on this winter at BAS

*Here are a few dates for your diary this winter. More details will be published in the BAS website and weekly newsletter*

**Tuesday 9th December** - Christmas-themed social painting, open to all, Sacred Heart church hall, 2- 4.30pm

**Monday 15th December** - Christmas coffee morning, White Horse, Bourne End, 10.30am.

**Thursday 15th January** – Social painting, Sacred Heart church hall, 2 - 4.30pm

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January** - 'Watercolour landscape demonstration of a local scene' by Tim Wilmot. Online (Zoom), 7pm.

**Monday 26th January** – Life drawing with Cheryl Gould hosting. Online (Zoom), 7pm.

**Thursday 12th February** – 'Demonstration of seascape in acrylics' by BAS member Sue Gray. Berkhamsted Court House, 7.30pm.



**Thursday 26th February** – Life drawing. Berkhamsted Court House, 7.45pm.

**Thursday 12th March** – 'Demonstration of mixing the microscopic world with landscapes – Ink and gouache' with Kelly Briggs. Berkhamsted Court House, 7.30pm.

**Tuesday 31st March** - Life drawing. Berkhamsted Court House, 7.45pm.

Please note some dates are subject to confirmation. For more info: [www.berkhamstedartsociety.co.uk/2023-2/](http://www.berkhamstedartsociety.co.uk/2023-2/)

**ArtNews is produced by Penny Clifton**

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