

Presidential Address 2017

Hi to all members old and new

Here is a mini review of the programme from May up to last Monday. Then there is a survey of where the Society comes from, its major personalities and some of its history. And finally where we are now, where we exhibit and who the members are who actually do what is needed.

Since the AGM in May we have been entertained and informed by a wide variety of professional and in-house demonstrators and speakers. There have been sessions covering oil painting, the use of acrylics and, of course the most common material, watercolour. There has also been increased interest in the very versatile mixed media. The genres covered include landscape painting in various styles, portraits in acrylic and oils plus life drawing and wildlife painting. I think you will agree that your society strives to expose you to as many methods of painting as possible.

For the remainder of the Society year you have many other demonstrations, talks, appraisal evenings and workshop evenings to look forward to. The workshop evenings are extremely well attended and the work produced is very interesting. I hope that these upcoming events will be well attended and give you the opportunity to try out new media and methods for your selves.

I haven't singled out any particular demonstrator or speaker as they are all equally viable

wether or not they are professional or amateur. By the way, if any member wishes to give a demo or talk on an art subject please contact out Programme Secretary.

This very full programme does not happen by accident and I think this is an opportunity to thank our Programme Secretary Anne Brackenridge with the help of the Committee for providing such an excellent programme.

Now to our origins, this is quite a generalisation of the Society's history.

The Society began in the late Forties as the SAMA, The Society for the Appreciation of Music and the Arts, (that still exists as the Swan Theatre Group) SAMA produced its first play in 1945. It was housed in the Church of St Albans, Deansway, now Maggs help centre, It became the Swan Theatre Company in 1965 with the building of the Swan Theatre led by Dame Sara Knight, Chair of SAMA at the time. Many of our original members were also members of the Friends of the Swan and were active in its building.,

The WSA had exhibition space at the rear of the auditorium and the Coffee/Restaurant. This is now used mainly as a meeting room. On changeover days while a team hung the pictures others made tea/coffee and biscuits. Quite a social event. The pictures were suspended from rods and a dado bar in both rooms and we could accomodate almost 100 works. One bay at the rear of the auditorium was reserved and hired by single artists.

The WSA had use of this space plus our regular meetings in the Studio. We also had use of the Green Room for Coffee and we could store our equipment in a cupboard. I made a rack in the bottom of the cupboard to store uncollected works.

The Society also bought 24 chairs for the Studio and paid for a lighting track at the back of the theatre.

However, in 2002 the Council removed its £83000 Grant and the Theatre closed. It changed from a producing theatre that lost money to a mainly for hire venue.

The Theatre was rescued by Chris Jaeger and eventually he allowed us to return and exhibit our paintings as before, but now we give 10% of any sale to the Theatre plus 5% to the WSA. This is a very good deal. We then had to find new premises that we could afford, had storage facilities and parking. The only building that met this criteria was the Bromwich Road Mission, and here we are..

Returning to the Swan for a moment panelling was designed and fitted by members of the Society at our expense, to give us more flexibility on the hanging space. We can now accommodate up to 50+ paintings at the back of the Swan. Plus a few extra in the Meeting Room. Changeover paintings approximately every 2 months.

We also exhibit in a cabinet in The Guildhall, this venue takes about 12 paintings. We have just changed paintings ready for Christmas but from the next changeover in the New Year (approximately 2 months) the Committee has decided that one artist at a time can have a solo exhibition for 1 month. Details of changeover dates at the Swan and the Guildhall are posted on the website, the noticeboard and your personal programme.

Due to the work carried out by Steve Riley our Exhibition Secretary we also have been allowed to have window space in Crowngate. We must thank him for organising all exhibitions so well. Changeover dates in Crowngate will be announced on the website and our noticeboards.

To continue,

Notable Members of the Society included Denis Greenwood Ex head of Worcester Art College, Aubrey Philips, Pastel Artist and author of many instructional books, Leslie Matthews who painted large watercolours to Commissions for example, Worcester Cricket Club, The RAF and various military organisations. Also John Dodd who was an expert bookplate artist using woodcuts. Not to forget Margaret Tarrant, a farmer's wife who wanted a conservatory and started painting to finance this. I remember that she eventually carried out Commissions for various retailers like Harrods and finally she had a commission to produce a limited edition bound folio volume of all the roses in existence during the reign of Elizabeth the First. A very expensive production, I think it was at least £2-300, And, of course we have our own Val Briggs who has been a professional for many years. Long may she continue. These are just a few of some of our illustrious past members. In fact, All of the Past Presidents shown on your Membership Card have all contributed something special to their Society.

I know that quite a few members do not know why we have a Peter Spicer and Ken Candlin Awards. So here goes. Peter Spicer was a very notable figure in Worcester. I believe that he had been Mayor as well as a founder member of the Swan Theatre and Chairman and/or President in almost all the Arts Organisations in the City. When I joined the WSA he was a very active member, giving demonstrations in his own inimitable fashion, acting as Chairman or President. He was particularly responsible for encouraging young and older artists to take the opportunity to push forward and try out all genres and media. He believed that everyone should have the chance to exhibit their work because this gave them encouragement to improve. And this concept is still in operation in the WSA today. Peter has various works in the City Gallery, some paintings and collages.

Ken Candlin was a charming, amusing and talented watercolourist that shared his methods and styles with the WSA, Worcester College, the Worcester Arts Workshop and a Wood Green Church Art Class. He was

also responsible for the Gold Leaf Lettering Etc. on the Memorial Panels in the Guildhall. They both exhibited regularly and sold well, their work is in many collections here and abroad, Both of these artists were highly respected and unstinting in spreading their enthusiasm to other members so thought worthy of remembrance by the Society.

The legacy of all these past members is the Society as it is now. All members are equal whatever their level of expertise. All members have an equal right to exhibit their work in all exhibitions including the Annual Exhibition at the City Art Gallery. Our programme covers all media and genres and all members can attend whatever interests them most, but we actively encourage all to try out new methods. All our members are willing to share their experiences, their tips and tricks and their time with new and old members. All this for less than a £1 a session, Good value isn't it?

However, this equality works both ways, the Society is Self Governing and needs all its members to contribute something, Be it making Coffee or Tea, Setting out chairs and other equipment, helping out at exhibitions, or volunteering to give a talk or a demonstration if you have something new to show everyone. To enable the Society to continue to prosper and grow it needs to have an active Committee that can organise all these actions. We can't expect the same people to carry out the same jobs year after year. New people have new ideas and enthusiasms that can be shared with everyone. Not all will be practical or successful but nothing ventured, nothing gained. So don't be shy, put yourself forward when volunteers are required, you may learn a lot about how to run a society and at the same time enjoy being part of such a good group.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the Christmas Party. If there is anyone that can play a keyboard I have a quite good Yamaha that I can bring along. Also., if there is any member that can play an instrument, recite poetry or quote anecdotes you will be very welcome to add to the entertainment for the evening. Please bring tea lights and anything you think will enhance the room for this evening.

Thank You

Michael Howe. President WSA

If you wish to see the works of Brian Clarke (highly recommended) they can be seen on YouTube under the title " Colouring Light, Brian Clarke an Artist apart ".