



## NEWSLETTER February 2010

### **Chairman's Report**

Letter from outgoing chairman

I am sad to be stepping down from the FCSA Chairmanship but I have served the maximum time allowed and it is time to move on. I have to say a BIG thank you to everyone who has served on the committee during the past three years; your support has been invaluable. I would also like to thank the members of the society who have been so helpful during my tenure.

It is unfortunate that no-one else is willing to step up to take on the role of Chairman at this point. The committee is planning to continue for the time being without a chairman a la New York Philharmonic Orchestra after Toscanini's death. Tom Moss, the Vice Chairman, is fairly fully occupied with running the Exhibitions Sub-committee. The 2010 committee is listed on the Membership/Programme card given to each member. You will see that the balance of committee differs slightly from previous years, due to the absence of a serving Chairman and the absorption of the role of Programme Secretary into the Executive committee. Instead of having three general committee members, this year we have five. This keeps the headcount of the Executive at nine, which has proved to be about right over the years. Should a suitable candidate from outside the Executive come forward to take on the role of Chairman, the rules allow for the Executive to co-opt them onto the committee.

I shall sign off with the reminder that 2011 is the FCSA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If you have any ideas as to how we should celebrate, please contact the committee.

Best regards

**Sue Thomson**

### **Secretary's Report**

I have now served three years as secretary and in the absence of a replacement and as allowed by the Constitution, I am continuing for one more year. It has been an interesting and rewarding three years and has thrown up some challenges, none more difficult than our recent problems, firstly with the weather and the need to try to inform the membership of the closure of the studio, then the cancellation of a demonstration due to the illness of Tony Jackson and its subsequent replacement with a demonstration which, through a lapse of memory on the part of the demonstrator, failed to happen. What all this highlighted was the need for a means of communicating quickly with you all when only about half have email. John Stacey has devised a telephone tree by means of which we should be able to cascade information to the membership with each individual only needing to phone about five or six others. Hopefully we won't need to use it very often.

Terry Ralph has done a splendid job designing new lightweight exhibition screens and is in the process of getting quotes for their manufacture. Tom Moss has applied for a grant to help with the cost of this exercise. Tom has also been instrumental in the setting up and administration of our display in the Heritage Gallery in Camberley town centre from which a number of paintings have been sold.

We are planning to participate in the Surrey Heath Show again this year and are expecting to have a pitch within a marquee which should mean that weather will not be a worry.

Sam Dauncey has been awarded Honorary Membership for his magnificent work on our website.

In conclusion, mention should be made of the quiet but significant contributions to the running of the Friday night studio sessions of John Stacey. He ensures that the fire door is unlocked each Friday and he sets out the coffee materials and gets out our notice board. Also in my absence he opens the studio.

A special tribute is due to Sue Thomson, our now ex-Chairman for all she has done for the Society over the years, most notably in the organisation and documentation for the exhibitions. Thank you Sue.

(Brian Richardson)

### **Note from the Treasurer**

It is the time when one reflects on what has happened over the past year, so here are my reflections. I am sitting with my Treasurer's hat on looking at my computer spread sheets with a calculator in one hand, a rigger in the other, reflecting on my tenure as Treasurer so far. I feel that it has been rather like watching three lighted candles burning down, one has Exhibitions written on it, another Members and the other candle Friday Meetings.

Let's look at the first candle, the one titled Exhibitions. Our Annual Exhibition at Holy Cross Church had your wonderful pictures on show, but sadly we only sold 14 pictures, which meant that we only just broke even (I will give everyone chapter and verse at the AGM). We have been through the deepest recession for 30 years (according to one analyst) so we should be thankful that we sold anything at all. Also we have been lucky enough to have the rolling exhibition in the Heritage Gallery Camberley, from which other paintings have been sold.

Our second candle that is burning down is our Membership Numbers. Like the candle we are still glowing bright but sadly our numbers are diminishing, so encourage your artist friends who are not already members to come and join us, full joining details are on the website.

The third and final candle that is burning down (and faster than the others) is the Friday Night Meetings. Be they "Do Your Own Thing" or "Demos", I am afraid to say that on the majority of nights we do not cover our costs. As they say in the theatre we need "More Bums on Seats". Let me give you a low down on the challenge we face – a Demonstrator Artist charges on average £130.00. Add to that £20.00 for the hire of the room, total £150.00. We therefore need 50 people at £3.00 per head just to cover the costs of the night. In 2009 we have had a really packed calendar with one sometimes two demos a month, yet the largest number of people that came and enjoyed the demos was 38. The DYOT can help subsidize the Demos, but sadly we are only getting enough numbers to cover the cost of the rooms – I am afraid to say that it looks like "use it or lose it". Like I say the lighted candle is burning down fast.

Now I am not a gloom and doom merchant and I am the type of person who likes to get things sorted and I think the way to sort this "candle situation" is to turn the lights on! In other words let's make it our New Years Resolution (and it will be a resolution that will be more fun and easier to keep than giving up eating chocolate or going jogging) is to come along on a Friday Night to the DYOT or a Demo and enjoy convivial company; also let's create some suburb works for exhibiting in 2010 and finally let's encourage other like minded people to become Members of FCSEA.

Finally I look forward to seeing you on Friday Nights (with just my paint brush and not my calculator)  
(Jenny Colquhoun)

### **Membership Secretary's Report**

At the beginning of the year there were 132 members on the register. However, five members are not renewing this year and a further 15 have not replied to reminders by 'phone or e-mail. This means that we have a definite membership of only 112, which may increase slightly when all replies have been received. Some sort of recruitment drive will be needed by the new Committee when it is up and running.  
(John Stacey)

## Reviews

NOTE As always, except where otherwise attributed, all the reviews are based on Sam Dauncey's write-ups for the website.

### Demonstration "Loose Acrylics" by Mitch Waite, 27 November 2009

Mitch's home is in Saint Jeannet, 25 minutes from Nice airport. We were lucky enough to get him to visit us during one of his English demonstration tours.

He set up two easles, each with a 36" x 24" board. To one was clipped a full-size photo chosen by some of the audience from an interesting selection. He had taken it himself when he was out painting (in Nice, 'Rue de la Préfecture').

The woman in white, just to the right of centre (see picture below), was to be the centre of interest. Everything else does no more than provide a frame.

Atelier "InteractiveAcrylics" are "expensive but worth it". They have plenty of pigment, a clotted-creamy texture and drying is slower than ordinary acrylics. But above all they dry through, without forming a skin, and can be revived with a mist of water. If they have set a little too much for that, there is even a proprietary rehydrator. "Use oils if you've ample time, otherwise acrylics".

Mitch's big wooden palette carried enough paint for the whole evening: white; a transparent cadmium yellow; raw and burnt sienna; crimson; blue and burnt umber. He painted throughout with no more water than was necessary to moisten the brush. Dividing the canvas mentally into rectangles he started drawing raw sienna lines to take the eye around the picture and focus attention on the centre of interest (roughly, with quite a big brush). Then he began to put in blocks of tone and colour, drawing fresh paint into the centre of the palette so that he could always see the relationship between what he was about to use and what he had just been using. "Don't even consider, at this stage, what the blocks of colour represent".

Mitch uses good quality hog's hair brushes (filberts by the look of it) but he rarely rinsed or changed them until he needed a really clean one (for example for the very dark darks when the mixture in his original brush was loaded with too much white).

He frequently misted the painting and the palette with a spray to stop them drying.

Mitch stood well back, gripping the brush well away from the bristle end. He was softening edges all the while, not just to avoid being committed to detail too soon but also to eliminate hard edges or physical texture. Nevertheless, he did start dabbing in lights, like the shirts and the dress

He kept "pushing and pulling things around", repeatedly adjusting positions and dimensions and softening edges. All the time he was coming back to the aim of making the girl the main focus. Such adjustment was possible because virtually the whole demo was painted wet-into-wet, "wet" in his context being no wetter than what's in the tub". To give a feeling of depth, the colours and tones were adjusted, too, quite late on - darker and warmer in the foreground and lighter and cooler in the distance. The street surface was modified with some violet to give it more of a gunmetal look (compare below). A grey-violet bottom left complemented the grey-yellow top right. And he still kept softening edges, especially in areas further from the centre of interest.

Several times we were told not to do detail too soon. It's good practise, anyway, but if you're not working from a photo, people do move and you have to leave fine detail to the end.

Mitch just dabbed apparently random touches into the dark shadows to give an impression of faces in the cafe. The same technique added texture and interest to the buildings

He brought out a smaller brush for the girl at the centre of interest. He used raw white, but its harshness was killed because it picked up the still-wet underpaint.

After the interval came a mass of detail: the man on the right was raised a head-height and defined more; touches were added to all the people . . . . . the green canopy was extended to break the distant edge and the red one was strengthened; steps were indicated and street lights hinted at; the man at the back was linked in with a line of dark; extra light was thrown across the street. All done in a few minutes with a few strokes. Easy-peasy!

Mitch said that he would make his mind up about how to finish it when he got home. As though all this was not enough, Mitch finally produced a laptop and projector and gave us a 20 minute presentation of



Vence, the painting courses he gives there and his website.

The combination of the demo, his relaxed but enthusiastic approach and the presentation got several people thinking seriously about signing up for one of his holidays.

### **Demonstration “Water Based Oils” by Alex Roche, 4 December 2009**

Alex had more to say about the materials she was using than about the actual painting process.

She was using Winsor & Newton Artisan Water Mixable (sic) Oils, finding them to be a good alternative to conventional oils, particularly for "*en pleine air*" work:

- . Paint from the tube remains workable for several days.
- . Since it can be stored in a watercolour box/palette there is no need to take tubes with you for a weekend's painting.
- . There is no smell of turps.
- . Retarder mediums are available if the weather makes it dry too quickly.
- . It can be diluted right down to watercolour texture - particularly useful if you want the effect of paint running down the support.
- . It's cheaper than ordinary oils.
- . Ordinary semi-matt or re-touching varnish can be used to bring up the colours.
- . Lacks the "plastic" look of acrylic

Her support was canvas, bought as a pad, perhaps 16" x 12". Tonight's was from Italy but you can get it from Jackson's. Again, this is very convenient if you are working away from home. When she's about to come home she tapes completed work to bits of cardboard, separating them with small slices of cork, a few mm thick, to avoid smudging.

The composition of tonight's still-life arrangement and its interpretation had already been determined when Alex was doing the original painting. The canvas had been prepared with pencilled outlines of the whole picture, although she sometimes prefers to do the initial drawing with a brush, in thin paint. She originally used hog brushes but now prefers something softer, relying entirely, as far as I could see, on Pro Arte flat brushes of up to a couple of cm width, even for the tiniest of marks.

Alex uses a limited palette: a couple of blues; a couple of reds, 2 or 3 yellows; magenta rose and white.

Unfortunately she had pre-mixed the colours that she was going to need this evening so we got no advice on how they were achieved but this did mean that she was able to start painting immediately, almost by numbers.

The paint seemed to behave much like slow-drying acrylic. New layers did not pick up dried underneath colour but highlights on top of fresher paint had to be applied with light touches rather than strokes. At the end of the demo (below) she confirmed that she would be continuing at home, re-painting the background in a colour nearer the original green and making a few final touches.



### **Christmas Party, 11 December 2009**

Those who organised the party must have had foreknowledge of the cold weather to come because, by having it at an earlier date than usual, the timing of the party avoided the freezing conditions that shortly followed. The studio had been transformed into a cosy, warm space for the members and their guests who attended, and a sumptuous selection of hot and cold dishes brought by the same members, generously met their inner needs. The people at the different tables formed teams under artists' names and were kept puzzling by a testing Christmas quiz devised by Jenny Colquhoun. The Turner team were the winners. A raffle of prizes donated by the attendees raised £61 for the charity Disability Challengers.

(Brian Richardson)

## **Society's Exhibition 2010**

In a departure from recent years, the Annual Exhibition is being held in July. The setting up and private view will be on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> and the taking-down on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>. We are very fortunate that Tom Moss, exhibition sub-committee chairman, has been able to engage Sandi Toksvig, the writer, broadcaster and very humorous lady, to officially open the exhibition, so that will be an evening to remember. Mark it in your diaries.

The **Theme** for this year's exhibition competition is "The End of the Day" so start thinking of how you will interpret this subject and get painting.

## **2010/2011 Programme**

Anne Thalmessinger has stepped down as Programme Secretary. During her time in post she has arranged some interesting demonstrations, most notably introducing us to the work of Chris Forsey, and also given us some fascinating talks of her own. We thank you Anne for your sterling work. In the absence of a volunteer to take up the position of Programme Secretary, this year's programme has been generated by Sue Thomson and its management will be in the hands of the executive committee who will share responsibility for hosting, introducing and reminding speakers of their dates.

## **FCSA Virtual Gallery**

The FCSA website has a virtual gallery on which members can exhibit their work. If you would like to take advantage of this, have a look on the website for advice on the requirements for submission. You will find some interesting displays of paintings already there.

## **LIBRARY**

The Society has 60 pre-recorded DVDs and video tapes of various artists demonstrating their techniques. These are available for members to borrow against a signature. The DVDs and tapes are kept in the cupboard in the lobby of the studio and have been painstakingly numbered and catalogued by Maureen Hayward. The book for signing the items out is kept in the library cupboard in the resource room. The loan system operates on trust so please don't abuse it.

There are also three boxes of art related books in the resource room which are taking up space so you are invited to help yourselves to any that interest you. Those left after a reasonable period for you to have a chance to look will be recycled.

## **A Selection of Current Exhibitions**

**Tate Modern:** "Arshile Gorki; A retrospective" until May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Royal Academy of Arts:** "The Real Van Gogh; The Artist and His Letters" until April 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Halcyon Gallery:** "Bob Dylan on Canvas" until April 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Courtald Gallery:** "Michelangelo's Dream" until May 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Dulwich Picture Gallery:** "Paul Nash: The Elements" until May 9<sup>th</sup>.



A reminder of the recent snowy conditions.

### **Contributions**

Any contributions you wish to make to the newsletter are always welcome. Ones with an art-related theme are preferred but others will be considered. They should be sent either by email to; [BRicha3691@aol.com](mailto:BRicha3691@aol.com), or by post to Brian Richardson, 6 Spring Woods, Sandhurst, Berks, GU47 8PX

The advertisement below is published in exchange for a contribution towards the costs of producing this newsletter from Andalucian Holidays.

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# Leisure Painter

Holiday of the Month December 2009



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