

# Fellowship of Professional and Amateur Artists

## Summer Art Exhibition, July 2016

### at Wellingborough Museum

by David Rafer BA (Hons), PhD

Thank you once more to the Fellowship's organisers for the invitation to attend this year's exhibition and make awards. It's a pleasure to also have the opportunity to write up my thoughts on another exciting FPAA art show. The standard is always high and it was fascinating to have the chance to discuss some of the works with the artists during Preview night and gain insights into how they approached their art. The Society's artworks remain diverse, ranging through various styles, techniques and media and ultimately forming new objects of contemplation.

### Landscapes

Two stunning landscape paintings were exhibited by John Black this year, No 11, a magnificent, large canvas entitled 'The River Nene at Ditchford', oil, and No 12 'Fall of Lucifer', oil on wood. For his river painting, John explores a harvest scene with high corn and rolled bales of cut corn stretching along the foreground and near bank of the River Nene. John's broad horizontals of corn, bales, river, fields and sky create an immediately striking structure for his painting. On closer study, our eye is drawn into the dark spaces between the high corn that rises dominantly as we are treated to a close-up of uncut corn. Beyond this foreground area the corn rises to detailed corn ears which merge as they roll away into the distance. A ripe, harvest dryness is exuded. The river picks up the blue sky and reflects the trees and bushes ranged along the far bank as our gaze travels up into the chequered fields and hedgerows criss-crossing their way to the horizon. Clouds scud over this pastoral idyll, with pale yellow highlights and bodies of tonal purple suggesting their windswept masses. There's a painterly opulence to this delightful oil that offers a grand size large enough to step inside.

In contrast to 'River Nene', there's a much stranger, haunting beauty to John Black's No 12 'Fall of Lucifer', oil on wood, which shows a visionary landscape stretching away somewhere beneath the viewer. Painted on a wood support, this luminous work has a striking colour scheme with careful tonal variation creating lines of trees stretching away into a misty distance where the horizon meets orange and red sunlight. The title and the way this sweep of land has been realised suggest something Miltonic is in play. Perhaps this paradisaical, pre-civilised world has been recently created and is thus still untrammelled retaining a pristine wildness. Of course, these ideas are simply my own interpretation and it is one of the great joys of art that it can inspire meaning within viewers. However, certainly there's a psychological dimension brought into play. There's also, for me, a feeling that the viewer's raised elevation, eye-line and over-arching position to this landscape perhaps even puts us into Lucifer's falling position, seeing the world from his perspective.

April Booth's No 13 'Trafalgar', oil, shows us the London scene by the lions as people move about, their forms ranged within the three-dimensional space the artist projects. Large, blocky buildings crowd before distant church spires and a curious mood is projected as the large sculptures and rising buildings dominate the rather anonymous figures scattered below.

Hazel Britton exhibited two contrasting scenes, the first being a summery watercolour of 'Dinham Bridge, Ludlow', No 15, the bridge being dominated by the castle, and the second, 'Mumbles Train' No 16, is a striking, stark winter watercolour scene of a train in snow heading towards a winter tree. Ray Carter exhibited No 17 'Woodland Scene', acrylic, with two rabbits beside a lonely looking track leading our gaze up past high tree trunks to a field.

The fallen, dead boughs and broken, dilapidated fence add great charm to the scene, and Carter's blue bells seem to float on the woodland floor. Veronica Dopson painted a shocking, terrifying and hellish war torn landscape for her oil, No 23 'These My Little Ones'. In Alan Goodman's No 26 'Lost in Fermyn Woods', oil, there's rich detail and suggestion, even a little fungi on a piece of fallen wood in the foreground. In June Heath's No 35 'Moulton Meadow', the artist lets the blockiness of her acrylic medium imbue its qualities into her painting. There's foreground detail of dandelion and wild flower heads, possibly including Cow Parsley, and the church in the tree line forms a strong vertical.

In No 45 'Stanwick Lakes', David C Hunt creates a gentle scene of lake reflections and reeds all through the medium of oil pastel. Barbara Jones's two entries show light on water, the first with the sea sending up spray on rocks for 'Sea Spray', No 54, and the second with red tonal colour falling and reflecting from the tranquil surface of a lake for her acrylic painting No 55 'The Lake at Sunset', her works reflecting either stillness or the incessant movement of water.

Brian Munton showed No 73 'Weekley' a watercolour of Weekley church in Kettering, Northamptonshire, working the details of stonework into the church walls and spire. For No 75, 'Standing Stone', Brian Mutton used a deep frame and boards arranged to give a three dimensional, striking quality to his rendering of ancient monumental raised rock forms. A luminous mood is generated by Neil Pengelly in his work No 86 'Nightsea', pastel. The artist captures the movement of waves rolling onto the shore picked out with a silvery sheen of moonlight that also lightens and reflects from the watery surface of the foreground beach sands. Marion Smart's No 106 'Abandoned Boats on Mull' is an acrylic painting of the titular boats as they list on their sides. These curving hulls point out of the painting. Smart paints in the character of these fishing boats, giving their appearance a rusted, working quality.

## Figure work and Portraiture

Joy Barry's No 6 'Tribute to David Bowie' is a large oil painting offering various persona adopted by the rock star during his lifetime. These aspects are set about a maze, perhaps even the titular labyrinth of the film he made of that name. A spiritual purpose of walking labyrinths was to allow the traveller to meditate upon their lives en-route and the artist may be offering this work as her meditation on Bowie's life. Brenda Hargreaves renders an action pose for No 31 'Serena Williams', oil, with racket raised to strike but her oil, No 32 'Lenny Henry' sees the comedy star and actor looking very debonair. Dawne Harpin exhibited No 34 'Motherhood', oil, showing a delightful sleeping baby presumably pictured with parent. Holden's acrylic No 38 'I Wonder' shows a child in thoughtful pose with big hat and dark background and large gazing eyes. Linda Jackson's No 50 'Daily Market, Danang' shows a crowded market scene with one of the figures in traditional head-wear bending over the produce. There's a more decorative, sweeping flow to the line of the gowns worn by the figures in the foreground of Jackson's second exhibit, No 51, a street scene entitled 'Elegance in Hoi An', pastel. Helen Olden's No 77 'Archangel' offers an angelic form realised in painted buff clay. Sunlight rays are suggested below and behind whilst cloud-like curves are shaped above and the figure stands within its sculpted environment on its own inner plinth. The angelic wings stretch away to the left as the figure looks over its right shoulder. A striking and absorbing sculpture results.

## Animals

June Heath's striking pastel, No 36 'Snow Leopard' shows the titular animal gazing intently, with mount and dark frame picking up the darkness of the leopard's spots. Michael McGuire's 'Raven' is a charming pencil and watercolour of the titular bird as it glances over its shoulder, big beak pointing back. Elsie Merris-Osbourne seeks to project the sense of an animal in thinking pose for No 69 'The Thinker', oil, in this case a gorilla, and captures also the characterful lines of the animal's face. Pauline Reynolds strives to capture some zebra galloping through water in her work, No 101 'Running Free', watercolour. There's great attention to detail in Ros Smith's No 109 'My Best Friend', an engaging pastel picture of a

dog with long fur and chain collar but it is with the eyes that a great sense of the animal's character is conveyed. Luminous owl eyes engage us from Jacqui Tomlin's No 118 'Night Watch', acrylic. Two owls are perched on a piece of wood that points up into the top left-hand space occupied by the disc of white moonlight, its light is then reflected on the rippling watery expanse suggested below. It is the full on engagement of the owls with the viewer that makes for a charming connection.

## Awarded Works

Commended was awarded to Brenda McKetty for No 66 'Just Looking', acrylic. Brenda McKetty's delightful painting opens a 'window' onto a harbour scene, placed as a backdrop to a cat gazing intently and all too closely at a goldfish in a bowl. The goldfish's eye suggests an expression of knowing awareness of its impending fate and realisation it cannot escape. Fishermen's houses are stacked up along the harbour wall suggesting, to this viewer, a curious amphitheatre of spectators to this scene of cat and fish illuminated by moonlight as two fishing boats chug out to sea. There is, of course, an irony in watching the microcosm of a cat contemplating fishing for a goldfish whilst trawlers are sailing out to sea to fish on a larger scale for humans.

Commended was awarded to No 64 'Elephantus Bambus', acrylic, by Allan McIntosh. McIntosh creates an interesting design in which his elephant peers out through the bars formed by bamboo canes beyond which there's light blue sky. In the foreground he gives us stylised plants. A couple of the bamboos tilt into diagonals, offsetting the verticals of all the rest.

Commended was awarded to No 2 'Cardinal Lory', acrylic, by Carol Alderman. In this work we're treated to an enlarged portrait of a magnificent tropical red parrot, its eye engaging and arresting those of the viewer. There's quality detail in Alderman's handling of feathers, eye and the sheen on her bird's beak. A striking image results, as though the viewer is zooming in on the bird, the painting serving to enlarge our view.

Commended was awarded to No 108 'Tulips in Amsterdam', acrylic, by Jill Smith. In Smith's acrylic, we're shown open blooms of tulip flowers surrounded by a tangled design of leaves and stems. Smith's artistry exploits these flowers natural grouping for her artwork, exploring also such details as petals and stamens. Something of the repetitiveness of such a crowded grouping within the picture space allows viewers to mentally project many more into the artwork's surrounding area.

Commended was awarded to No 63 'Marble Bust' by Michael McGuire. McGuire's acrylic painting of an imposing marble bust, shadows the eyes and right hand side of the face. The image McGuire creates recalls the way that sculptural figures were employed for artists to practice life studies in the 19th century. Light and shadow would play on these forms and artists could then realise form through the use of such classical casts often made with plaster. Also, such casts may only be around a foot high but this tonal portrait conveys, for me, a sense of nostalgia for classical antique statuary and the 'presence' of the subject McGuire paints.

Commended was awarded to No 120 'Boris Badger' by Sue Tomlin. The artist uses pastels to depict a badger, putting viewers into the creature's eye-line, with long grass suggested in the foreground whilst the badger's eyes lock onto our gaze and follow us. Light falls from somewhere above and to the right so that the fur on the edges of the animal are given a luminous glow. There's a sense of a rare moment captured by Tomlin.

Commended was awarded to No 20 'Still Life, Dried Flower' by Stuart Cooper. A single stem is depicted by Cooper with chalk edging, the dried flower is set against a plain golden brown background, the petals deepen into cad. yellow from chalky white highlights. The artist used both pencil, coloured pencil and chalk to render this picture, imparting a kind of achromatic chalky dryness. The normal sculptural curve of the flower's petals are here shown dried, possibly pressed, edges and tips jaggedly pointing.

Commended was awarded to No 74 'Split Rock' by Brian Mutton. Mutton's acrylic is rather tonal, describing the two halves of a split rock with grey and white highlights, the artist evoking a sense of the density of these forms. The two rock halves are conveyed through precise shadowing. We are not shown the entire rock, just the broken divide with cropped outer edges. The whole thing is presented against a light grey base, lightly shadowed below the rock halves, rising to dark brushwork above and to the top of the picture. The artist succeeds in creating forms that whilst sundered, nevertheless correspond to their pre-sundered unity. The black portrait framing enhances the work. His roughened contoured surfaces have a palpable grainy harshness evoking the rock's sculptural qualities.

Commended was awarded to No 119 'Deer Friends' by Jacqui Tomlin. Trees, ferns and light all come into play for Tomlin's acrylic. The titular play on words also helps to evoke our feelings of endearment for this group of five hind or doe deer. The artist captures the play of light on the backs of these animals and in the steamy air rising about them. They are caught by the artist in a moment of watchfulness, ears cocked and the viewer senses they are alert to any movement or threat. The strong verticals of the tree trunks behind are balanced by the delicate structures of leaves and foliage in the painting's foreground. A neatly executed, striking work results.

Commended was awarded to No 76 'Nigella Seedpods', watercolour, by Helen Olden. A curious plant whose ferny bracts form a kind of 'mist' (hence the name 'Love in the Mist') about the seed head, here forms the subject of Olden's watercolour, with three Nigella Seedpods illustrated against the pure whiteness of a sheet of watercolour paper. Their verticality, emphasised by the portrait framing the artist adopts, allows for delicate tendrils to 'climb' the picture. Having long since lost their blossom, what's left provides the artist with a sculptural subject for fine illustration work.

Commended was awarded to No 46 'Secret Snowdon', oil, by Lin Hunt. It was great to have the opportunity to discuss this work on Preview night with the artist who was inspired by a dramatic slate cliff edge with gushing waterfalls in Wales. Often inaccessible without walking/climbing, these falls offer spectacular views. Here Hunt uses oils to render the scene, her interpretation evoking, for me, interesting abstract qualities.

Commended was awarded to No 48 'Hydrangea', acrylic, by Juliet Illsley. Illsley's large canvas enlarges a hydrangea flower, a plant originating from Asia. For Illsley's painting, her enlarged flower is 'framed' by the surrounding crown of green leaves which are mostly cropped ensuring the dominance of the flower head. The many petals are various hues of blue and violet. Growing such a blue bloom is dependent upon such factors as the type of plant and whether the soil is acidic. A striking artwork results from using the hydrangea's sculptural flower forms building to the tight mass of smaller petals in the centre.

Commended was awarded to No 18 'Landscape, Dalwood Devon', oil, by Ray Carter. Carter's landscape of Dalwood, Devon, near Axminster depicts a rural scene of sheep grazing in the foreground field whilst the land drops down into a valley and then rises up into the distance. Light falls mostly in the foreground and the nearest tree tops and the mid-third of the painting's fields are given a warm glow. Sky is kept to a minimum, with the central two-thirds of the painting being devoted to realising the fields and hedgerows climbing the hillside opposite. Telegraph poles and wires usefully lead our gaze into the work from the bottom left corner giving us some perspective as the land falls away before us only to climb back up in the distance. Trees, buildings and other animals become miniature forms arranged amid the painting's central sweep. The result of this chequered pastoral landscape is a sense of imposed boundaries along and upwards to the horizon as we enjoy following the various lines these hedges form and journey into the virtual space the artist creates. (See also comments on Carter's 'Woodland Scene' above.)

Highly Commended was awarded to No 8 'Moonlight Corrugations' by Stella Benford. Stella Benford's mixed collage is a fascinating raised relief built up from a deep portrait frame with corrugated cardboard and various things such as the spokes of wheels and acrylic paint. We're given a stylised scene of water below various houses and sloping roofs, a washing line and steps and scaffold-like verticals and horizontals adding to the effect. The blue mottled hues impart the magic of a moonlit scene.

Highly Commended was awarded to No 82 'A Bit Choppy' by Michael Peachey. This oil painting has a power that comes into its own as the viewer moves slightly back, the clouds taking on a sense of volume and the rocks evoking Dali-esque bony forms. The rocks with their bone-like forms might almost have been revealed when the skin of land was worn away by erosion. There are steps which serve to both add scale and leave the viewer to ponder where they lead. This painting projects the monumentality of a rocky coast, a sense of the surreal, and also a still contemplative quality.

Highly Commended was awarded to No 122 'Seascape, Triptych' by John Walton. Walton's oil triptych shows a sun setting over the sea as waves wash a foreground shore. Each section of Walton's combined work would probably make for a pleasant painting if shown alone, however together they create a striking combined effect. It was fascinating to hear the artist's thoughts on creating this work during a conversation struck up on Preview night. The work projects a haunting quality over the exhibition hall. Using tape for horizontals helped in the initial stages of the work's creation and the red setting sun is like an angry eye overlooking the horizon as it glares out from a collection of brooding black clouds on the central panel. It is a reminder that, despite the apparent tranquillity of the sea lapping the shore, storms will inevitably return to disturb such coastal areas.

Highly Commended was awarded to No 33 'Eye Grayn' by Dawne Harpin. Ostensibly, we view an oil painting of relatively densely packed fish, their heads forming intricate patterns as they crowd into the space between a simple plain white frame. However, the detail of the face, emerging through the patterning of fish bodies that's lost in the picture's centre recalls, for me, the kind of play on forms of which Hieronymous Bosch might have been proud. The title's play on words came about through the artist's migraine, or M I Greyne transmuting to Eye Greyne, which debunked many amusing theories I came up with before learning this fact. There's a rather scary red-eyed snake lurking just beneath these fish, its head poking up from the bottom of the picture, perhaps symbolising the tightening coils of pain such headaches cause.

Highly Commended was awarded to No 128 'Iceland', oil on canvas, by Craig Liam White. A striking contrast is achieved between the glow of white in the luminous sky of Liam White's oil painting and the slightly different qualities of the reflection of that light from water puddles in the bleak Icelandic landscape he describes. We cannot fail to be reminded of the rocky Icelandic terrain that harbours such pools of reflective water when viewing this work. White achieves the difference in light quality by what appears to be scratching into and scapping back his paint to get back to the primer and the unpainted ground surface of his canvas support. It's quite an effect the artist achieves as a result and viewers were amazed to see and appreciate the painting from a distance in the exhibition hall only to come up close and find an equally fascinating possibly even more intriguing surface to explore. Crazying and cracking of paint on the canvas surface are then revealed. A highly atmospheric and original picture results which commands attention.

Highly Commended was awarded to No 112 'The King' by Marleen Snee. This magnificent lion head peers out from high grasses, its mane forming a kind of inner 'crown' or framing device. Snee captures the lion's nobility using pastel on velour. The animal's intent gaze focuses on something to viewers' right, just over our shoulders. The colour scheme allows the background and foreground grasses to blend in, although the subject's detail remains crisp. A well executed pastel results.

## Best in Category

**Best Entry for a Young Member** was awarded to No 115 'Wolf!' by Harriet Sykes. A variety of animal forms crowd the head of Sykes's wolf but whilst the birds and lizard look away, the wolf's eyes engage those of viewers. The whole picture makes for a study of forms, the artist employing charcoal and pencil. It's a fantastic image, the talons of the hawk gripping the wolf's cheek and the whole design presented rather as though a torch beam has just picked out this bizarre moment whilst all about it lies in darkness. An inspired work for an artist who, I believe, was only thirteen when producing this work.



**Best Textile** was awarded to No 61 'Peacock' by Dorothy McGuire, chosen for its original design quality and superb technical skill. For McGuire's contemporary goldwork design she has a shimmering peacock with gold feathers on a delicate bough of various blooms with the peacock's head and crest turned back towards its tail. A sliver of intense blue forms the bird's down/breast feathers. Sequins, bugle beads and metal thread contribute to the assembled piece. The peacock is a great choice for such lavish thread work, here becoming the archetypal gilded bird.

**Best Drawing** was awarded to No 37 'Portrait' by Paul Hill. Hill conveys the elegant form of his model in this picture. She's in a casual seated pose, with long hair and long earrings. There's soft roundness to the foreground sofa or seating to the picture's bottom left corner, balanced or countered by square shapes descending from the top right. The model remains aloof from the scene, somehow elevated and otherworldly. It is amazing that Hill achieves so much simply through the use of pencil.



**Best Mixed Media** was awarded to No 25 'Woodland Openings' by Margaret Finch. Finch submitted two works this year, the first, No 24 'Seaside' used acrylic and waterbased oil to depict a coastal scene with winding fence trailing the shoreline leading the eye between dunes and waves up the painting towards the focal point of a distant lighthouse on the horizon. Often painters use acrylic to provide a base or ground for their oil paintings. In her mixed media, Finch also mixes in flower paste, and in the case of 'Seaside' we're treated to a wonderful texture to her sea and clouds that made this particular viewer want to touch the surface of the work. For her award winning picture this year, No 25 'Woodland Openings', Finch creates a scene framed in portrait view with a path winding through woodland leading up to a 5 bar gate beyond which are open fields. There is detailed work painting grasses in the foreground, along the sides of the path and suggested in the fields beyond the woodland and the winding path's patterning is picked up and echoed in the shapes of the shadows mottling the ground beneath the trees. The heavy shadows of a couple of large tree trunks form strong horizontals across the path whilst the verticals of the tree trunks create a kind of inner framing of Finch's scene. However, it is to the fields beyond the woodland that our eyes are drawn and to the distant horizon. The overall effect is one of a leafy, pastoral idyll, a virtual space in which the viewer can enjoy losing themselves.

**Best Pastel** was awarded to No 93 'Portrait' by Graham Plant. Plant's pastel layers give this portrait a kind of shimmering vivid quality, with electric blue and orange adding a zing to the work as the background blue is worked over an orange base for the upper area whereas, it would appear, the artist works orange over a blue base layer for lower areas. There's attention to details of buttons and especially to the eyes. The expression conveys a kind of intent calm awareness. The artist captures the form of the model as folds of hair cascade onto her shoulders and light glances from her cheeks and forehead. However, it is in letting the little hints of under colour shine through that the whole portrait is given vibrancy.



**Best Life Study** was awarded to No 87 'Night-crawl' by Neil Pengelly. For his life study, Pengelly depicts a model in a crawl pose, long hair falling down obscuring the face whilst limbs and shoulders show some contortion. It's a tricky image to work to this standard of execution. There's extraordinarily good detail in the feet and the musculature across the back considering this was all done in charcoal, a medium not normally associated with achieving such precise results. The tonal depths and darkness of the

background and light falling on the body suggests a kind of chiaroscuro quality, helping to pick out the model's form.

**Best Portrait** was awarded to No 116 'Selfie Three' by John Taylor. It was fascinating to briefly talk to the artist on Preview night and learn that he has in mind many more such works, building up a gallery of self portraits perhaps with different head apparel. There's perhaps a certain Rembrandtian dedication to this fascination with self portraiture in Taylor's work. This acrylic image of 'Selfie Three' is projected with the artist posed with bright, possibly window white, light shining from behind thus casting a certain shadowy quality across the features that makes for a dramatic contrast between the dark of the hat and the whiteness beyond. We're full on to the sitter and it is a great way to bring out the three-dimensional quality of a form to concentrate on the interplay of shadows. We might think we're just moving into the realms of silhouette except for the fact that this portrait retains an extraordinarily lifelike, three dimensional quality that makes the image stands out on viewing. The harsh white light of the background is picked up here and there in little hints on the face, hat, clothes, along with the silver hair and the light's reflection in the wearer's glasses. It's possible that the artist may have under-painted with a wash of something like yellow ochre to achieve the inner glow of the face. However, it is with the eyes that the soul of this work is revealed, locking with ours and viewing us with a certain qualified knowing disdain, they are eyes that have seen life.



**Best Watercolour** was awarded to No 70 'The Watchers' by David Miles. David Miles loves to walk with his dog across exactly these kinds of landscapes. In this painting, the figures of a dog and a man are shown in silhouette contemplating a brooding atmospheric sky and lonely horizon. The artist approached this sky using his Hake brush to lift out watercolour paint from the 300LB rough paper he used as a support. The work has a tonal quality, evoking a sense of confronting nature. Even Miles's act of applying paint was given a countryman's twist by using Woodcock feathers loaded with paint to brush on reeds.



**Best Acrylic** was awarded to No 105 'Lipizzaner Horses' by Marion Smart. In Smart's painting a sense of ground pounding equine galloping is achieved with dust billowing beneath hooves. This painting of magnificent Lipizzaner horses is neatly executed by Smart, the animals being depicted with bridles but without riders and set against a backdrop of high trees through which hints of sky blue struggle to penetrate. Bright light falls onto the backs of the two lead lipizzaners whilst those behind are cast in light shadow, and shadow is worked by the artist to help generate the form of these animals. It is a tricky task to convey convincing animal movement through the essentially static medium of paint, especially in the case of horses. The artist here captures a strong sense of power on the move with this herd's hooves, manes and tails flying.

**Best Oil** was awarded to No 27 'Winter in Irchester Park', oil, by Alan Goodman. A sense of chilling cold is immediately imparted to viewers of Goodman's painting, and this is an achievement considering how hot it was on Preview day when I viewed this work. There's frost or snow coating a woodland floor and suggested on tree trunks in this forest scene. The tree leaves are all gone and winter has descended. The artist evokes a three-dimensional space partly through the strong solidity of his foreground trees and the woodland detritus on the forest floor whilst those trees further away are suggested with sinuous vertical lines amid the freezing iciness of winter air. Thin stick boughs reach from these tree trunks but some are merely suggested with white frost/snow as are some of the struggling grasses on the woodland floor. This is a work the viewer can lose themselves inside, a Narnia-esque coldness exudes from Goodman's oil painting.



## Prize winners



The **Patricia Glen Memorial Prize** was awarded to No 113 'In the Leaf Litter' by Annette Sykes. A precise stylised design dominates the artist's black and white linocut image of two birds, possibly a starling and crow, and flowers, probably snowdrops. The titular fallen leaves are pecked at by the crow. To make this image, the artist used linoleum, cutting into the surface and printing the result. The design neatly employs curves that sweep and cross each other and are in-filled with patterned hatched swirls and stylised leaves and flowers. What might be a rather static affair is thus given a sense of sweep and movement.

The **Vivian Schofield Memorial Award** was given to No 43 'Winterton' by David A Hunt. It is a pleasure to again view a delightful Hunt felt pen and wash picture. The artist's line work comes to the fore this time realising this magnificent church on the East Norfolk coast. Tone is created through adding water to felt pen ink and allowing runs for shadows, clouds etc., with washes sometimes inside and sometimes outside Hunt's line work. He eschews the precise detail of the church's side windows and porch in favour of suggestion and foliage whilst the lamppost to the left adds a sense of scale and the perspective of the roofs works well to give dominance to the tower. The illustrative effect is heightened through Hunt's loose artistry and, as always with this type of picture, he achieves great charm and character.



The **Maureen Lynn Memorial Award** was given to No 44 'A Spring Bouquet' by David C Hunt. This pastel picture was exhibited with a simple blue frame, with the mount picking up the frame's colour on its cut, inward edge. A plain background heightens the bouquet's central positioning. There's detailed work in realising vibrantly coloured flower petals and a sprinkling of foliage adds verisimilitude, as the artist captures the image of spring fresh blooms.



The **Peter Jenkins Memorial Prize**

was awarded to No 21 'Autumn at Rushden Lakes' by Jean Daker. In this oil, Daker works from dark to light, meticulously painting the entangled weaving of foreground grasses, undergrowth and reeds.

The lake is the dominating subject, surrounded with high trees rising on either side, reaching up into the sky and adding a kind of inner framing device, whilst a beautifully executed line of undulating trees on the far bank evoke the sense of deeper woodland beyond.

Strong blue sky light is lightened as it falls away to the horizon and of course is picked up in the lake's mirror. Also reflected in the lake are the deep shadows of trees and banks that serve to anchor the image and to suggest to the viewer just how powerful the light is on the day this scene was captured by Daker. Two birds are the only animal life we discern, with one dramatically on the wing. A beautiful painting results.



The **Celia Hanbury Memorial Prize** was awarded to No 68 'Man of the Forest' by Elsie Merris-Osborne. Orang-utan means Man of the Forest in Malay, and in nature these creatures exist entirely amid forest trees. The Orang-utans have a seemingly close affinity to humans and the artist here strives to project a thoughtfulness to the expression of her subject. Her oil painting captures both intelligence but also sadness leaving the viewer wondering at the uncertainty of the fate of such creatures with steadily decreasing world habitats. There's attention to details of fur and features by Merris-Osborne. The figure of the creature in this frame-free canvas evokes a sense of a slice of the natural world peering in on us with some regret.

The **Founder's Award** was given to No 103 'Jonathan', oil, by Ray Roadnight. In Ray Roadnight's large portrait of the titular model, thick impasto brush work models the form of the sitter's face, hair and shoulders. The background is similarly suggested with thick oil paint, giving the work a textural quality. It's part of the appeal of the work that we want to follow the play of the artist's brush strokes. Soutine and Max Beckmann may be possible influences. The model's eyes gazing just past the viewer leave us in no doubt that this person's essential character has been captured by Roadnight.



The **Runner Up Best in Show** was awarded to No 28 'Fallen Tree, Dartmoor' by Tim Hagan. Hagan's oil painting of a fallen tree on Dartmoor, exerts an extraordinary power over the viewer. As I walked about the exhibition I found myself drawn to view the work from a certain distance, finding the best vantage point to be a few yards away to the left of the painting. A 3D sense emerges of the tree, its stump forced over and bowed, possibly as a result of continuous high winds, over the desolate Dartmoor terrain.

Somehow, the tree is still growing branches filled with leaves that struggle upwards as though the tree is trying to right itself. The painting is arranged so that the tree's leafy boughs climb up from the bleak moorland into a sky dominated by an enormous cloud formation, probably a cumulonimbus, a cloud type that has a flat base quite low to the ground but that rises up into higher levels and carries with it the threat of impending bad weather conditions. There's thus a certain ominous power to Hagan's cloud and the undulating, sweeping moorland and the extraordinarily distorted lone tree are all elements that serve to evoke a surreal enigmatic power, even a spiritual appreciation. A numinous result.



**Best in Show** was awarded to No 84 'Banks of Green Willow, Wellingborough', oil on canvas, by Robert Pearce. Pearce's shimmering oil painting captures our gaze, drawing us to track along the banks of green overhanging tree boughs wending along the river bank leading us off towards cooler, bluer looking trees in the distance. Possibly achieved through pointillism, the multiple dabs of paint build up an extraordinary image. The bank on the right is a more open affair with fewer trees blocking light's ingress into the picture so that Pearce's lighter dabs suggest light bouncing from nearer trees to the left and are also spread liberally upon the nearer foliage and water. There's a dream-like quality to this gently meandering scene, it doesn't feel that there has been much intrusion of human management. Instead it is as though nature has largely taken control. The artist's choice of a more impressionistic interpretation

thus lends itself admirably to realising the haphazard, rippling flow of water and the struggle of vegetation to push into the water flow at every opportunity. There's deeper shadowing beneath the overhanging boughs and bushes to the left that establishes the darkest tones whilst giving the eye a hard diagonal to follow directing us to the broader horizontal of water suggested in the distance below the bluer bank beyond. Above that, Pearce offers a muted sliver of sky to the top right. Pearce's painting exudes all the factors requisite for Best in Show.