

The Fellowship of Professional and Amateur Artists

Wellingborough Museum Summer Exhibition

29th July to 5th August 2017

Review by David Rafer BA (Hons), PhD

It is a delight to be reviewing and commenting on this year's FPAA art exhibition, hopefully striving for objectivity but perhaps inevitably only achieving a rather subjective response to the varied and fascinating creativity on display.

So, to begin. It is always a pleasure to have the chance to view and discuss the mature works of an artist of John Black's calibre once more this year. John's exhibition entry, No 12 'Daedalus XXIV', oil on canvas, draws upon the theme of Daedalus and Icarus which has inspired John since he was 17 years old. He still finds new inspiration in this subject and continues to develop the theme. Two of John's large works on the theme were recently sold for extraordinary sums and shipped to Abu Dhabi where they will adorn the walls of a new hotel. However, this exhibition marks the first occasion when John has shown an abstract at a Fellowship event. 'Daedalus XXIV' is a mixed media creation that includes a variety of techniques in acrylic, oil and gold leaf work, all combining to produce a large statement piece. The work captures an explosion of colour and form. The title of this work is intriguing as Daedalus was an extraordinary man in ancient myth. An arch-craftsman and the creator of the labyrinth, he was also thought to be a sculptor and artist-inventor figure who escaped his enemies and imprisonment on the land by fabricating wings to ascend and fly to safety. However, giving wings to his son, Icarus, Daedalus warned him not to fly too high as the heat will melt the wax that secured the feathers. Icarus, perhaps exhilarated with his new found power of flight, ignores the warning to fly with moderation and ascends too high into the heavens and the heat of sun melts the wax and he falls to his death in the sea that was named after him. Interpreting this myth in art, Peter Brueghel the elder's 'Fall of Icarus' shows Icarus as a rather insignificant figure in the landscape, whose death is largely ignored by people too busy in their mundane tasks of working the land to notice what's happening in the sky above. Michael Ayrton also enjoyed exploring the theme with works such as the sculpture 'Daedalus the Wingmaker'. In Ayrton's 'Icarus Falling', Icarus's body is contorted in the air as his figure is almost consumed in light. John Black takes the theme further with his abstract giving us the moment at which humanity encounters heavenly creational forces as the burst of molten gold sends out liquid gold drops that nothing terrestrial can withstand. Gold is amalgamated with red hues projecting a sense of a molten living form that seizes viewers' attention and continues to spark and burst upon the senses as we, like Icarus, dare to move nearer and explore this riot of light and form closer.

John Black's second entry this year is No 11 'The Waste Land in Winter', acrylic. This large painting explores a rough area of ground with ditches, usefully providing loose perspective lines into the picture, and a large overgrown hedge forming a grand horizontal at roughly half-way up the canvas. There are no leaves in this winter scene and the fields are snow-bound, the winter colour palette carefully chosen to heighten the effect of icy coldness. It's that stage of winter after snow has blanketed the countryside and pale warmth from the sun and sheltered tufts of grass struggle to break through and form small holes and edges to the snow. These are indicated with purplish-blue colours cut into the white surface paint layers. Pinkish hues also serve to help build the sense of form to the snow's underlying land undulations. Fine rigger brushwork has been employed to build the extensive forms of intricate bony hedgerow branches where they poke above the snow shroud. The tangled high grasses have been given gleaming highlights. A fine art work results from a master of landscape art.

Fauna

Allan Charles McIntosh took elephants as his theme for his paintings, No. 22 'Co-Existence', acrylic, and No. 23 'Man Casts the Longest Shadow', watercolour and Ink. 'Co-Existence' adopts a portrait view in which a herd of elephants pass beside high tree trunks beyond which a man-made structure of some kind is just visible above the jungle. The tops of the trees are given a rich impasto quality and the colour scheme, composition and theme all add a sense of exoticism.

Siân Brown painted No. 20 'Puffin' in oil, her solitary puffin's facial markings imbue the bird with a certain melancholic quality and the puffin is presented alone against a white background, webbed feet splayed.

Two ducks peer at us from Diana Swain's No. 115, 'Christmas Ducks', pen and wash, in which there's a sweep of ground and some holly suggesting seasonal connotations.

Stella Benford entered No. 6 'Cockerel', ceramic relief, in which surface presents a rather tactile quality, with dark gleaming glaze enriching the artwork.

There were various pictures of cats entered this year, the artists ably bringing out the characters of their subjects. Linda Walton's cat picture No. 122 'Schmoozie', pastel, presents a striped patterned, mackerel tabby, whose large eyes are intent upon something just to the right of viewers.

In Fiona Hagger's No. 42 'Izzy, Queen of the Shed', watercolour, the artist adopts a sketchy quality for her regal green eyed feline with neon whiskers.

June Heath entered No. 50 'Kitten on a Cushion', pastel. Even with head in reclined pose we can see that Heath's cat has its ears pricked, its eyes watching, reinforcing the sense that cats are almost never caught totally asleep, always retaining an instinctive inner sense of alertness.

In contrast to domestic animals, June Heath's No. 49 'The Migration', acrylic, is a painting of a herd of wild water buffalo descending down an arid looking bank to a watering hole in a scene reminiscent of the Serengeti. Vast numbers of heavy forms are simply suggested by Heath as they disappear into the rising dust cloud backdrop.

April Booth exhibited No. 13 'After the Shoot', oil, a well painted image of a hen and a cock pheasant hanging by their necks having been shot. The theme of dead game birds has resonated with still life oil painters over the centuries and still makes for a powerful image.

Pat Matthews exhibited No. 78 'Nesting Birds', watercolour, showing three chicks looking keenly alert for the next meal.

Dorothy McGuire showed No. 79 'Song Birds', acrylic, a wintery scene of two birds, possibly a Blackbird and a Song Thrush, on snow coated branches, with tonally lighter twigs suggested in the background whilst the two birds are foreground and centre.

Jean Daker exhibited No. 29 'The Escape', watercolour, painting a gaggle of white geese looking inquisitive, restless and alert to their wintery environment of snow and leafless trees.

Flora

In Marlene Snee's No. 112 'Autumn Statues', watercolour, various plants such as teasels are painted against fascinating textures possibly of the kind that can be developed through the use of such texturing techniques as cling-film or salt etc. This allows for great creative freedom in the use of vibrant watercolour washes and the serendipitous textures that the artist then exploits and uses to enhance her main floral subjects. A striking work results.

In Siân Brown's No. 19 'Tulips', oil, two tulip flower heads are enlarged to fill the picture with beautiful curving form and colour.

Marjorie Phelps exhibited No. 94 'Anemones', embroidery, showing a spray of anemones. The black background certainly makes these colourful flowers stand out.

Sarah Janavicius exhibited No. 68 'Primary Triad', watercolour, dividing her work into three panels presented within the same large frame to set off large flower blooms, possibly sunflowers, against a tangle of green and brown background leaves. Whilst there are two flower heads presented in each side panel, only the central panel exhibits three, and these are each rendered in a glorious primary colour.

Landscapes/seascapes

David Low showed No. 75 'After the Storm', oil in which the bulk of his painting is given to realising a majestic sky with sweeping rainbows dropping down onto a pastoral landscape of hedgerow trees and rolling fields. This is the kind of painting in which the viewer can lose themselves, our gaze being drawn from the sprigs of poppies over the hedgerows to the further field, enjoying the sense of space.

Charles Bezzina's No. 7 'Azure Window, Taken by Sea' is a plein air oil painting. A successful plein air can be tricky to pull off but here Bezzina captures a great sense of drama as the sea pounds rocks that have already been worn into a hole, thus perhaps nature having carved the titular window, through the cliff-face. People and buildings are reduced to diminutive forms on the cliff top. Sky, clouds and the suggestion of a sail all add to the sense of action in this enjoyable work.

Hazel Britton No. 17 'Mullion Cove', watercolour, is a harbour scene of the cove in the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall in which fishing boats are at rest and light bounces from the waves beyond the harbour wall.

Bright pale blues inform Charles Bezzina's No. 8 'Boats of Marsaxlokk', watercolour, where sleeping dogs lie sunning themselves in a busy, complex scene.

There's a sense of enjoyment and naive abandon to Margaret Watts's No. 126 'Llangollen from Bridge', acrylic, in which the large bridge straddles the water and forms the main focal point whilst banks of trees rise away into the distance, following the river's meandering course. The artist thus differentiates her greens to avoid clashes to the overall colour scheme.

Craig Liam White showed No. 128 'The Fisherman', oil on canvas, a large canvas oil painting of a seated figure, with back to the viewer, fishing from a moored boat on calm, mirror smooth water that stretches across the expansive canvas, creating a great sense of space. There are nicely realised details of the inside of the boat, the jaunty angle of the fisherman's hat, all forming a strong, striking image.

Marlene Snee No. 113 'Fields of Gold', watercolour, a timeless scene is rendered in watercolour with wet in wet work for the background tree line and softer gold yellows coming to a nicely textured foreground in which the artist places red poppies and cow parsley. The whole picture evokes a rather ethereal, mystic quality.

Dawne Harpin exhibited No. 47 'The Marshes', oil, showing a rolling view of watery salt-marsh sands, the ridges of which are exploited by the artist as perspective lines leading us towards a thin line of waves and sea beneath an atmospherically turbulent sky. A sense of isolated beauty results.

Jill Smith exhibited No. 109 'Wild Weather' using acrylic to capture a tidal wave breaking over the top of a concrete promenade. Her composition balances the enormous power of the wave on the right with the four diminutive figures clutching each other for support, and positioned by the artist on the lower left corner of the painting. The railing, partially obscured by the torrent of seawater, curves away along a perspective line towards a lamppost. There's nice textural work on the concrete prom with its pebbly detritus and reflections of the people in the water-slick surface.

Annette Elizabeth Sykes's No. 116 'Waters' Edge' is a unique monoprint, presenting a small intricately organised set of forms, largely in blue, with blue flowers to the fore. The shapes and patterns presented draw the gaze into following their contours, like a cross-section, suggesting a rather ambiguous piece.

Celia Wadeley's No. 120 'The View From the Reeds', gouache on board, takes viewers into the reeds in order to look back along a watery area towards a line of cottages with distant fields and more buildings beyond. The verticals of the reeds merge in some areas into masses of opaque colour, and the reeds are the main feature of Wadeley's painting with such aspects as the sky minimized to a quarter of the picture height above the roof-tops.

Barbara Jones's No. 70 'Olney Willows', acrylic, is dominated by large weeping willows with branches falling towards the water that loosely transports our gaze to the focal point of a watermill. There's reflected green in the water giving depth and the light breaking on top of the water in the lower left-hand side of the picture provides a useful sense of surface.

The Awarded Works

Commended was awarded to Joy Barry for No. 4, 'Harrowden Lane, Burton Latimer', oil. The artist's textural brush-marks or pallet knife work makes the grasses stand out as they travel along a perspective line following a watery ditch towards a field-side hedgerow. The vanishing point disappears as it curves around some trees or foliage. The rather ornate, raised relief work on the frame adds to Barry's creation of an invitingly tactile looking artwork.

The award of Commended was given to April Booth for No. 14 'Lyme Regis', oil. Booth's composition uses a semi-broken line of beach huts stretching away in a perspective view towards water, boats and a typical seaside scene. There's a misty, atmospheric quality to Booth's applications of oil paint, an effect that may possibly have been built up through the use of oil lifted on and off with a rag. The long landscape view forces our gaze to wander across the painting's shapes, from the foreground's rough, haphazardly placed pebbles on soft sand to the brooding sky that seeks to partially obscure distant cliffs. It all serves to inspire a melancholic mood.

Commended was awarded to Annabelle Paramour for No. 88 entitled, 'Chrysanthemum', watercolour. There's attention to flower petals and leaf work in Paramour's painting of this pot plant. A neutral background serves to ensure attention falls on the titular Chrysanthemum's sprays of colour.

Commended was awarded to Laurence Jones for No. 72 entitled, 'Pond Life', mixed media. There's an abstract feel to this piece and the artist may possibly have achieved his effect through wax resist or some similar method. Whatever the process, for me the work conveys a curious sgraffito feel. It has an enjoyably spontaneous, vigorous quality, the artist defies the temptation to fiddle with details that could undermine and detract from the loose spontaneity and freshness the work captures.

The award of Commended was given to Corinne Black for No. 9 entitled, 'Panther Chameleon', produced using silk. Colour and design clamour for viewers' attentions in this artwork. The chameleon's body picks up all the bright colours used elsewhere in a simultaneously garish yet unifying way. Panther Chameleons' bodies really can be neon bright and as colourful as Black suggests, being at once both fascinating and extraordinary creatures whose forms suggest living canvases, thus a great choice of subject for the qualities of silk work.

Commended was awarded to Shirley Smith for No. 111 entitled, 'At Rest', pastel. A boat at rest beside water makes for a tranquil subject for an artwork. Smith achieves close attention to detail in both foreground shoreline and in the delineation of fields, trees and skyline in the land she depicts across the water from where the boat lies at rest. A quiet sense of mood is evoked through this work.

The award of Commended was given to Lin Hunt for No. 60 entitled, 'Ibis at Sunrise', acrylic. Ibis birds and boughs are placed in stark silhouette to sunrise hues of colour in Hunt's acrylic painting. The birds display the Ibis' down-curved beaks and are set against the sunrise colours with deeper reds rising to lighter yellows and white. There's an interesting weave to the boughs cutting diagonals into Hunt's composition. A simple frame enhances her work.

Commended was awarded to Diana Priscott for No. 101 'Robin', mixed media. This work involved the use of an oil on water technique akin to that used in book-binding end covers. A swirling, kaleidoscopic effect results with natural, random swirls of paint spread across the artwork in which the titular robin sits on a twig, simultaneously decorative and part of Priscott's colour scheme whilst also allowing viewers to appreciate the sense of being a small creature in a world of swirling forms.

Commended was awarded to Juliet Illsley for No. 61 entitled, 'Ancient Forest', acrylic. Illsley's forest painting takes our gaze down a curving path amongst bluebells and trees. Interesting texture has been developed on the tree trunks to suggest their forms and shadowing work establishes ground undulation amongst the grassy banks broken up by swathes of blue.

Commended was awarded to John Bailey for No. 1 entitled, 'The Watchers', pencil. Bailey's chooses a portrait view for his detailed pencil work, depicting a concrete World War II pillbox nestled beneath a large tree beyond which stretches rolling rural farm land. The distant fields are rendered tonally lighter. There's an interesting contrast between the natural forms of tree and hedgerows and the squat shape of the pillbox with its black rectangular viewpoints inside which would presumably be the titular watchers. The pillbox looks indomitable but presumably will succumb to disrepair and eventually crumble whilst nature hopefully will endure beyond this World War II relic. A world historical event becomes encapsulated here in this obsolescent feature of the landscape.

Commended was awarded to Celia Wadeley for No. 119 entitled, 'Study of Young Dancer', acrylic on canvas. Wadeley's study depicts a dancer, arms and body poised in graceful dance pose. There's a strong, invisible, vertical line projected through the figure whilst a horizontal reaches out toward the viewer along the shoulder and arm extended towards us from the model's left side. Her head is turned slightly from us. The painting conveys a certain lightness and gestural painting quality along with restraint in colour application and there's attention to proportion in realising what we see of the dancer's form as light falls from the left, shadowing the right of her body.

Commended was awarded to Gerald Porter for No. 100 entitled, 'Fairie Glen', watercolour. Porter builds the angular rockiness for this painting with pure watercolour, capturing a sense of energy, colour and spontaneity. The work is executed in a direct and confident style from a well established Northamptonshire professional artist and tutor, using his skills to project a sense of the ethereal and mystical power of this landscape formed through natural forces.

Commended was awarded to Anna De La Mare for No. 31 entitled 'Lily', acrylic. De La Mare achieves a beautifully soft realisation of the titular subject in this portrait with light skin tones and confident brush strokes for the subject's hair. There's a great delicacy of touch to the eyes, hair and features and beautifully captured sense of character evoked in this painting.

Commended was awarded to Michael Peachey for No. 89 entitled 'Hunstanton', oil. Peachey achieves a pitted, gnarled texture for this painting of zig-zag groynes disappearing into the sea at Hunstanton. The line is capped by a metal pole at the end and leads the eye into the painting with heavy shadowing on the dark sides of planking, adding to the sense of three dimensional forms pulling away from the foreground as they follow the perspective lines towards the horizon. Peachey's clouds also have an impasto texture, all imparting a rather elemental feel to this work.

Commended was awarded to Veronica Dopson for No. 33 entitled 'Tobermoray', oil on canvas. The view Dopson adopts of the waterfront on the Inner Hebridean island of Mull, appears to omit

some of the houses on the cliff above, emphasising instead the simple backdrop of trees that rise up towards a sky filled with brooding dark-tinged clouds and the dark shapes of birds. There's effective reflection work on the colourful stone houses along the waterfront, all adding to a bright oil painting.

Commended was awarded to Ros Smith for her Ex-Catalogue pastel of 'Wily Fox'. This is a very enjoyable, cropped view of a fox, projecting its power through the single eye gazing out from the fox's largely concealing fur. There's a world of dark wildness projected in that vertical iris. The animal has its nose buried in its tail and there's a sense of the artist adding to this wild animal's desire for concealment through adopting this cropped view that forces viewers to engage their imaginations in order to mentally realise the rest of the fox's form.

Highly Commended was awarded to Barbara Jones for No. 69 entitled, 'The Fisherman', acrylic. Jones projects her titular subject's character in this composition, suggesting his weathered face, yellow apron and thick clothing and cap. Her composition includes boats, a harbour wall and cottages beyond the main subject, all composing this typical beach scene. The fishing lines he's untangling stretch down to the sand and away at right angles from the vertical suggested by his standing stance, particularly if we include the placement of the artist's angled signature, that also contributes to the foreground planes. The fisherman's bright yellow apron dominates the scene.

Highly Commended was awarded to Freda Warwick for No. 125 'Rushing Water', mixed. Warwick's painting uses tone to suggest a backdrop of trees whilst heavier, darker trees form a kind of inner 'frame' for the foreground. The brightness in the foreground suggests light on the water and there's a lot of fine brush work to fill the picture with a 'cats-cradle' of fine twigs and branches that keeps our gaze darting over the scene.

Highly Commended was awarded to Marion Smart for No. 107, 'The Cullin Hills from Elgol on Skye', acrylic. In this landscape box canvas painting, the jagged line of beach pebbles and water leads our gaze into the scene from the right, taking us to the formidable looking line of rocky hills on Skye. The red hues of a sunset or sunrise underpin the colour scheme and the brooding stormy looking clouds beyond the hills adding drama to the bleakness.

Highly Commended was awarded to Diana Swain for No. 114 'Still Life', oil. A bowl of fruit makes a classic still life subject for Swain. The darkness surrounding the illuminated contents of the bowl, adds a chiaroscuro effect to the work, adding form and depth to these sundry objects that include grapes, peaches and a pineapple. Flowers spill loosely about the bowl's pedestal. The colours are vibrant and there's an ornateness to the frame that complements the work. A lively, vibrant work results.

Highly Commended was awarded to David A. Hunt for No. 55 entitled, 'Ely', created with felt pen and wash. It is always a great pleasure to view a beautifully executed felt pen and wash from David. The picture makes a virtue of the simplicity of a tonal sketch and drawing, using water to create the darks of windows and in the shadowed areas of trees. Ely cathedral provides a fascinating architectural subject, with Hunt evoking detail through wonderfully loose line-work. A joy to view.

Highly Commended was awarded to No. 57 by David C. Hunt 'Berries and Squash', pastel. Hunt crops out any extraneous background to ensure the prominence of the fruit in this pastel picture. Various fruit, tendrils and leaves cascade over the side of a squash to form Hunt's still life. There's a bright, primary colour arrangement and a sense of three-dimensional volume suggested through retaining bright highlights on curved surfaces.

Highly Commended was awarded to David Miles for No. 85 'Tranquillity', watercolour. There's a great sense of atmosphere projected by both of David Miles's entries into this year's exhibition. 'Tranquillity' gives us a view across marshlands, with the water picking up a sheen from the sky as a flock of birds sweep in formation above. Miles devotes two thirds of his painting to the sky, with a band of yellow/orange warmth towards the horizon and broken cloud above. The

watercolour washes are controlled and channelled into large sweeps of harmonious colour broken by the reeds and a single post jutting from the darks of the marsh. A timeless evocative scene results.

Highly Commended was awarded to David Low for No. 76 'Cattle by the Lake', oil. Oil is a great choice of medium for this classically pastoral landscape of watering cattle beside a lake expanse. Viewers are taken into the picture from the cattle on lower right, up along the far side of the lake to where a grouping of larger trees rise up into the cloudy sky, thus acting to 'balance' the weighty forms of the cattle with this mass of foliage on the left-hand of Low's composition. Another field is suggested beyond the trees thus creating a rolling countryside view and completing Low's pastoral idyll.

Highly Commended was awarded to Stuart Cooper for No. 27 'Sea Voices', acrylic on canvas. This striking, ambiguous work has a neon 3D quality. The artist appears to have scratched into the paint, exposing the canvas surface weave. We have police outlines superimposed over fathomless water creating a visual metaphor for possible murder victims in what may well be a rather political work. Recalling the title, we might conclude that the voices of the drowned are echoing to us only in the sighs of the sea. The message of this work is particularly topical today as the crisis deepens as refugees sometimes drown as they attempt to cross the beautiful turquoise expanse of the Mediterranean. The white marks with their dark shadowing are plentiful, possibly indicating a rather bleak numerical scale to this tragedy. This is, however, only my interpretation of this intriguing work.

Highly Commended was awarded to Graham Clipston for No. 25 'Sands of Time', oil. Two-thirds of this picture are given to a dramatic sky with sweeping dark clouds funnelling down into the distance. Some carriage tracks transport viewers' along a perspective line that diverges away somewhere behind the abandoned ruin of a fishing boat whose tangled net trails towards the bottom right-hand corner. On the left side of the tracks we see an equally dilapidated hut and some cable winching gear, possibly used to haul the boat from the sea. There's detailed texture work in the discarded planks, pebbles and detritus laying about the beach. Time has ground down pebbles into sand and the boat, hut and fishing gear are fast heading to a similar state of erosion and entropic collapse. The painting is highly atmospheric, capturing the isolation of such a scene and the sense of an expansive, brooding sky and the discarded, buffeted flotsam beneath. Blue light from the sky is bounced back to viewers from the planking on the side of the boat and hut, making for an evocative, harmonious and somewhat electric colour scheme.

Highly Commended was awarded to Raymond Carter for No. 21 'Lerryn in Cornwall', oil. An evocative, atmospheric view of the Cornish river with white cottages on the right and tonally lighter trees and land beyond. Misty reflections are suggested in the calm water of this pleasing oil and a moored boat with mast rolled makes for a focal point. The darker central building in this scene actually stands in water at high tide. With its reflections and rising tree-lined hills, this beautiful area near Lostwithiel makes a great subject for a painting.

Best in category



The **Best Under 18 years** was awarded to Harriet Sykes for No. 118, 'Sheringham Stroll', acrylic on canvas. Two people and two dogs walk along wet reflective sand towards Sheringham, suggested in dark almost silhouette, beneath a turbulent cloudy sky that helps create atmosphere in Sykes's acrylic painting. The artist captures the sense of light falling on reflective watery sand and sea, the rocky groyne characterising this Norfolk scene and recalls, for this reviewer, the area down by the old fishermen's gangway.

The **Best Newcomer** was awarded to Pat Matthews for No. 77, 'Allotment', watercolour. Matthews's painting invites viewers to stroll along the path between ramshackle, dilapidated huts, greenhouses and runner bean canes in this watercolour of an allotment. There's attention to details such as water butts, compost heaps and skilful picking out of items through greenhouse glass. A great subject for a well realised painting that holds viewers' interest.



The award for **Best Drawing** was given to Paul Hill for No. 52, 'Life Drawing II', pencil. The model in this nude study is seated, her legs and hands crossed and long dark hair cascading down her back to merge somewhere with the chair in Hill's arrangement for this pencil study. The tones and form of her body fill the bottom left hand side of the picture making for a striking contrast to the bright, empty whiteness that casts light down on her from the top right hand corner. An elegant work results through this rather regal looking figure enthroned on a rather fantastical-looking chair that makes for strong supportive lines in Hill's drawing. The model is confidently rendered and executed with shaded tones that celebrate her sweeping lines.

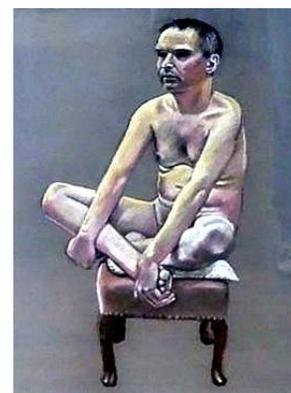
Best Textile was awarded to Dorothy McGuire for No. 80, 'Wheels in Motion', fabric, metal, paper and machine embroidery. This work amalgamates various fabric with bits of metal, employing machine embroidery, paper and strips of diaphanous fabric, all framing shapes such as cogs and wheels etc. There are long strips set against a textured surface evoking a sense of seeing inside a clockwork mechanism of some kind that would probably usually be hidden from view. It's as though we're seeing the work caught between movements, McGuire's cogs and wheels look set to move, a sense enhanced by the shimmery quality of the selected materials.



Best Mixed Media collage was awarded to Sarah Janavicius for No. 67, 'Winter Solstice, Flock of Birds'. The Winter Solstice marks the shortest day and snow goose flocks can number tens of thousands. For Janavicius's collage, various materials of differing texture and reflective qualities have been selected, fashioned and placed beneath the more formal structures she's created to mimic trees, branches and twigs. Projected from these layers, possibly on pegs of some sort, are a flock of geese, each goose being cut out in its particular

attitude of flight and placed in formation to suggest the overall illusion of motion towards the left of the frame. There's attention to tone and to the richness of the background that Janavicius creates, involving a lot of work making and fixing surfaces. A monochromatic effect results from having the black silhouettes of the birds against the largely white and shiny, silvery under-layers.

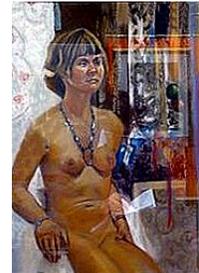
Best Pastel was awarded to Graham Plant for No. 97, 'Cool', pastel. Both of Plant's works in this exhibition were done from observation in two hours, capturing a certain spontaneity towards realising the subject. 'Cool' is a life drawing of a male model seated, cross-legged on a stool. The body is not a photo-shopped, beautiful product beloved of fashion magazines but a more realist figure here shown in a rather complex pose that belies the simplicity of the rest of the overall picture. Highlights on the forehead and collar bones are brought out, whilst both arms are stretched to the right leg and there's a concentrated intensity to the eyes and a serious expression on the model's face. The background is a muted, grey neutral, the hues of which are picked up on the model's skin, unifying the work and achieving an arresting, almost monochromatic, artwork.





Best Portrait was awarded to Dawne Harpin for No. 46, 'The Bosal Hackamore Bridle', oil. Harpin paints a horse's head. Her portrait captures the animal's character, imparting a sense of mood through the subject's eyes. The horse's ears are cocked forward and attentive, suggesting the animal's awareness. A hackamore is a type of bridle that doesn't have a bit but instead applies pressure to sensitive areas of the horse's face. The noseband here is a bosal with long rope rein, thus Harpin paints a bosal hackamore on this picture of her equine model. It is an effective use of the oil medium.

Best Life Study was awarded to Linda Jackson for No. 65, 'Trudy', pastel. There's a sense of integrity to this life study with attention to the figure's form and sense of volume. The picture was partly done in the studio and then finished off at home and is simply framed with cream mount. The artist has chosen to incorporate elements of the studio session with what may well be studio paraphernalia included in the background behind the model. The model is shown in simple, seated pose with the artist capturing a certain verisimilitude through the highlights on the planes of the model's cheeks, collar bones and body.



Best Watercolour was awarded to John Walton for No. 121, 'I know a Wood'. This is a great watercolour with a strong, mystical atmosphere projected through the sense of painting contre-jour. Through the misty background washes, we see tonally lighter tree trunks that suggest the impression of seeing through the trees of Walton's wood. We thus travel past the dominant darker trunks whose verticals serve as an inner framing device. It takes bravery to apply the darkest darks to a watercolour but they can really give a sense of grounding and depth to a work. Whether we're looking at the

soft yellows of the middle distance, darker foreground areas or very light background mist-work, there's a very confident handling of the medium in this watercolour. There's attention to details such as ensuring flecks of highlight liberally bounce back to viewers from the small twiggy blades of tangled foreground undergrowth and smaller grasses, possibly suggested through the use of a dip pen or fine rigger. There's lighter yellow-greens in the leaves as well as the darker shades, all serving to imbue the scene with a sense of enchantment. A beautiful artwork results.

Best Acrylic was awarded to Jill Smith for No. 110, 'Boats in Mousehole Harbour', acrylic. I found this a very confident artwork, taking an unusual angle on an often very familiar and overdone theme of moored boats. Smith employs a view from high up, looking down and out to sea, the mooring ropes becoming vague perspective lines, leading our gaze from the foreground beach with its translucent water and seaweed, towards the deepening blues that climb towards the top of the painting, thus taking our gaze at the same time far out into the distance. The boats have a great three dimensional quality, as though we've slipped on 3D glasses without realising only to find these craft jutting from the frame. A work of high quality results that really showcases the medium.



Best Oil was awarded to Robert Pearce for No. 92, 'Shive of Light, River Ise', oil. This beautiful oil painting exploits the Pointillist technique developed by Seurat and Signac et al., here used by Pearce to depict light falling onto the River Ise. Hundreds of small dabs of colour such as yellow and sienna are placed to suggest highlighted leaves on the trees on the river banks. Some of these myriad dabs are placed to show leaves fallen on the water where they merge with blue and white dabs, the latter

ones serving to depict twinkling light on the water surface. Apparently, Gerard Manley Hopkins invented the word 'shivelight' for lances of sunshine breaking through a wood's canopy. Pearce thus employs this nature-inspired word for the title of his spectacular image of such an illuminating shive falling towards us. The power of the work really comes into focus as we draw back a little from the painting and give it a certain distance across the exhibition hall. Its full force then emerges, reaching into our minds with its deep hues, carrying viewers along the perspective sweep towards the glowing horizon. Well done.

Prize winners



The **Peter Jenkyns Memorial Award** was given to Stella Benford for No. 5, 'Looking Back', mixed media. This striking work is all about the leather working industry synonymous with Northamptonshire's past. Thus Benford incorporates in her miniature shoe-boxes such shoe industry staples as a bradawl, hammer and pliers. The work has been given an overall black colour unifying the piece and there's an accompanying poem lamenting the loss of a thriving industry, with factories replaced by flats/houses

thus evoking the realisation of a town full of people without the kind of proud, skilled leather working industry the loss of which is mourned by Benford.

The **Vivien Schofield Memorial Prize** was awarded to Freda Giddings for No. 38, 'Corn on the Cob', Sanguine chalk. Sanguine chalk is reddish brown thus having a rather blood-like colour. It's a red ochre earth colour suitable for realising mid-tone drawings. It has been a popular media for artists over many centuries since unlike white chalk, it can be applied, as here, on a white surface. Giddings uses the media to realise the intricate detail of an over-ripe corn cob with remarkable close observation, capturing the sense of her subject's dessicated, perhaps decaying form.



The **Maureen Lynn Memorial Award** was given to John Bracey for No. 16 'Transition Injection Burn', oil on canvas. Two beautiful abstracts were entered by Bracey into this year's exhibition. Both are extraordinary artworks relying for their power on striking sweeps of oil colour across canvas, the reds and yellows of 'Transition' seem to coalesce as though from a white mist suspended in space, projecting

energetic colour imagery into our consciousnesses as though we're witnessing high octane fuel injected into an engine.

The **Celia Hanbury Memorial Prize** was awarded to Fiona Hagger for No. 43, 'Favourite Toy', watercolour. This is a very apt winner of the Celia Hanbury Memorial Prize. Hagger uses watercolour to paint a sheep dog chewing on a knotted piece of rope. It somehow captures the character of the late Celia Hanbury's art, particularly reminding me of the Labrador she painted in the water meadows at Granchester. Simultaneously capturing character and the rustic-ness of animals is hard to achieve with the kind of conviction Hagger projects in 'Favourite Toy'.



The **Patricia Glen Memorial Award** was given to Jean Daker for No. 28, 'Flight Formation', oil. Cad yellow sunlight pours through a tree line to spill over water in Daker's oil painting of rising geese flying in formation into crisp, clear air as yellow bleeds into peach, possibly adding cad red to the mix before the sunlight colours give way to cerulean and darker blues. It's a treat to follow the line of the birds' wings as each are caught in a moment of lift as they struggle to catch a

thermal. Capturing the birds in these snapshot poses makes for a curious sense of stop-motion, like an old cine film whose frames are slightly disjointed but that describe the overall motion.

The **Founder's Award** was given to Ray Roadnight for his painting, No. 106, 'Dolly', oil. This superb oil was done in the studio and there's a strong influence of such artists as the expressionist, Chaim Soutine. There may also be an influence here of Edouard Vuillard and Pierre Bonnard who were much admired by the group known as Le Nabi (Les Nabis). The background has possibly been worked with a colour such as burnt Sienna and then over-painted with light brushwork allowing a lot of the under-painting to show through and provide warmth for the subject of Roadnight's model, Dolly. She's posed with hand on the arm of a large armchair or chaise longues and behind her is a portrait hanging on the wall that has been cropped vertically by Roadnight. Quality paintwork is used to realise the model's form.



Runner Up Best in Show was awarded to Alan Goodman for No. 40, 'A Walk Among the Bluebells', oil on canvas. A path meanders through a wood in Goodman's composition. There's a large tree trunk on the left providing a strong, large vertical and various trees mostly of thick foliage are ranged behind this and spread across the portrait view that Goodman adopts. A harmonious colour scheme ensures our eyes are ultimately drawn to the titular blue flowers on the woodland floor. Shadows creep diagonally along with a shaft of light that picks out leaves on the ground. Beyond this foreground and middle distance work, there's a highly suggestive background of yellow greens and misty white tones interspersed by thinner trunks and a dwindling path. Goodman's hallmark is often the inclusion of a little bit of fungi, there's some here round the log by the left of the path. However, this harmoniously green work

derives its power from Goodman's use of pointillist technique. Exponents of this technique found that small dabs of colour spread across the canvas can achieve a uniform, textural, luminous quality. To some extent, such a technique allows viewers to mix colours through their own eyes rather than have the artist accomplish blending on the canvas. We thus get to enjoy the optical quality of such works with the technique employed in this case to project the atmospheric qualities of a woodland scene and the way such colours impinge on our senses as we stroll through woodland.



Best in Show was awarded to Margaret Finch for No. 36, 'Seaside Groynes', mixed media. There's a fantastic trompe l'oeil feel to this work with its 3D textures taken to remarkable heights by Finch. Flour and water were used to mould and create the relief surfaces of barnacled, seaweed strewn wooden groynes which have then been painted with acrylic to achieve the greens, sand colours and shadow hues. The effect is enhanced by such details as the roundness of the pebbles beneath and the sea-carved sands and use of perspective in the shadow work that are all executed in minute detail to such an extent that the viewer feels they can put their hand through the 'window' of the work's frame in order to feel the slick, wet surface for themselves and smell the salt air that being on such a beach would conjure. There's a rusted bolt and a split in the wood and a great sense of all the forces of time, sea and weather erosion that have gone into forging this striking image. Thus the Best in Show award this year is a mark of the artist's achievement in imbuing her work with exceptional realism and for mastering her media to extraordinary artistic levels.