

newsletter

From the Chair

It is completely superfluous to say, but this has been an extraordinary year for us all. Its effects have been different for each of us, and in ways only each of us knows. On a national level, the public has suddenly found that it has put a huge expectation upon, and indeed depended upon, massive government financial and logistical interventions, putting logical brakes on the long run “small government” agenda. We have realised the importance of the largely poorly paid and un-thanked cohorts of shelf-stackers, care workers and fruit pickers. And society has been forced to realise that the arts – of every kind – are not the non-productive section of the economy that leaches upon the “real” money makers.

The arts have been what everyone has reached for to give them a sense of being human when life really does become utilitarian. And it is the artists who have been hardest hit – and for what will undoubtedly be the longest time. Ways of coping have been typically creative, finding new forms of events and ways of reaching audiences.

When this year started, we were faced with needing to find a new venue, for this year only, for the Annual Open Exhibition: Ipswich Art Gallery, you will remember, being closed for roof repairs. Considerable effort, in co-operation with the very helpful Commercial Development Manager from the Borough Council, was put into visiting and assessing alternative vacant venues in the town. We had booked the Town Hall for the Ipswich leg of the Borders joint exhibition with the Colchester Art Society – which itself had consumed much planning time in preparation for the showing at Colchester’s Firstsite. A run of events had been planned around the exhibition.

Amazingly, the Borders exhibition did happen – in a rather different form – a huge credit to the work put in by the volunteers in coming up with and managing completely different logistics. The grand opening, and the opportunity to socialise with our colleagues across the Stour, was however sadly lost. The Annual Open did not fare so well. All the Ipswich venues closed down and we had to cancel the exhibition for the first time since the War.

Meanwhile, the word “Zoom” has suddenly entered the vernacular, and the good old broadband network has kept many people in contact. Not least the Committee. Whilst the Society’s events have sunk from view, the Committee has been planning what we will be able to do when this epoch is over, and thinking through layers of contingency, since no end date can be guaranteed. There is well-placed optimism that a vaccine will be found – there is more than one serious contender in Phase 3 trial – but the actual date depends on the virus, not humankind. To keep everyone informed, the Newsletter contains a summary of the current position for each of the events that we had in our original sights. For unconnected reasons, we have very sadly lost several of our members during the year, including a past President, two previous Chairmen, and two fine artist Members. They are commemorated in the obituaries below.

Stephen Cassidy



Learning to Surf by Hannah Aria
from her Art for Wellbeing
project ‘Creative Change
Workshops’

Annual Open Exhibition

Having arranged the Town Hall Galleries, and a set of back-up venues in the town, everything shut down. The Town Hall Galleries are the those on the 'ground' floor (the one previously occupied by the Suffolk Craft Society) and the one on the mezzanine (the one that housed the Colin Moss retrospective and Valerie Irwin's famous charcoal record of the historic changes to the docks). We avoided the Council Chamber since it was not a successful venue when we used it for one previous Open Exhibition.

Dates had been pencilled in for us to move back to the Ipswich Art Gallery for 2021: 17 April – 31 May. However, when lock-down struck, the work to the roof of the gallery ceased, and when I called by the other day, there was no sign of it having restarted. The Museum staff had not been given any expectation of a new opening date. As back-up, we have transferred the Town Hall booking to 5 July – 2 August 2021. This is a safer bet, although of course not certain. My emails exchange with the Town Hall have rather dried up, and I suspect there might be some furloughing of staff. I am discussing a third venue as a second back-up, and we just have to remain hopeful.

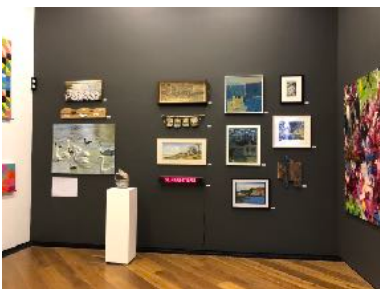
Borders collaborative exhibition with Colchester Art Society

We were lucky that Firstsite was able to open just in time, and the exhibition opened only a week later than originally planned. Slightly over half the number of artists who had declared an interest were able to submit work. Some isolating, framers not working and other understandable reasons. There was no grand opening, and the hang had to be managed with fewer, distanced, hangers.

The original plan was to show all the work between the Colchester and Ipswich legs of the exhibition, but since the number of works was fewer, they were all shown at Firstsite. The Ipswich leg had been planned to run almost in parallel, preceding the Annual Open in the Town Hall. It is our intention still to run the Ipswich leg, either before or after the Open in the Town Hall within the new booking dates, or at a later date at the Ipswich Gallery. This option, if it happens, may be much later since there will be undoubtedly a backlog of plans at that gallery when it reopens. We still intend to include the other events: the Big Draw, the making of the film record of the event, souvenir catalogue and a showing of Jevan Watkins' film of the Stour.

The Borders exhibition at Firstsite has been very popular and because of the distinct possibility of a 'circuit breaker' lockdown over half term the exhibition has been extended and will now end on Sunday 1 November 2020.





Anna Airy Award exhibition



Jan Watson and our generous sponsors, The Arts Society: South East Suffolk (TASSES), have devised a scheme to enable the Anna Airy exhibition to continue, albeit in a new form for this year. The Heads of Art from the schools who normally submit will be invited to choose their own winning artist, and send us an image of the one work chosen. These will be exhibited online on the Art Society website, and the prize money shared equally between the exhibited students.

As well as maintaining the momentum of this seminal event in the Ipswich cultural calendar, it should draw many new people to the Art Society website. Many thanks to Maggi Hayward for the wonderful website work.

Immigrants by Clarisse Hood
Oil on wood panel
170cm x 122cm
Northgate High School

Small Works exhibition

This will be postponed until next year. Sincere apologies to those artists who were expecting to exhibit. The receiving and returning of so many artists' works in short spaces of time proved unworkable and potentially unsafe given the tightening restrictions that the country is experiencing. Organising the rota of invigilators is a significant effort for our under-staffed Committee in normal times and of course made more difficult under current circumstances. The Committee would welcome new members.

The Committee attempted to hand the two weeks we had booked at the gallery to two independent exhibitions of one week each. The second of these fell at the last hurdle. At the time of the Newsletter going to press, a one-week exhibition of a small number of long term Members is being organised to fill the remaining week. This will run from 29 October to 4 November.

Talk series

These are sadly postponed until things become a bit more certain. The Committee has come up with some ideas for reinvigorating the format, but we are still in need of a volunteer to plan them.

Annual General Meeting

This was cancelled for 2020, as it was due during lock-down in March. We will have to put our thinking caps on for 2021. The Committee would love to hear any positive ideas from the membership.

New Members

We are very pleased to congratulate and welcome new Members: Jonathon Field, Sue Arnold, Simon Farr and Tammany Hunt.

Obituaries

Richard Scott (past President)



Richard straddled important roles in both the Ipswich Art Society and the Ipswich Art School. He was a well-respected Member of the former and a well-loved teacher in the latter for many years. It may be a cliché, but he stood out as a true gentleman: gentle, inclusive and supportive. I can well imagine how his students must have been given confidence and inspiration under his guidance.

I first came into close contact with him when I became Chair, and he became President of the Art Society. He was presidential in the best sense of the word, taking pains to put me at ease, carefully planning the AGM proceedings with me in his comfortable way. He kindly invited Jennie and me to tea in his lovely cottage in Walberswick as part of getting to know each other. He self-deprecatingly described it as “a glorified beach hut”, displaying the gentle wit that was his hallmark.

He was already suffering from kidney failure, and was being helped by his wife. He bore this ill-health with total equanimity. He seemed to find his thrice-weekly trips to Ipswich to spend the day on the dialysis machine no inconvenience at all. “I’m reading a lot of books” was all he said. Sadly, the illness eventually forced him to retire as President.

His period at the Art School covered colourful times when there was a famous rift in artistic tastes between the School and the Society. In another wittily expressed story he recounted at the tea, he recalled that the controversy had appeared on the front page of the local press during the last days of the war. “It displaced news of the D-Day landings – which it very much resembled” he said. This may or may not have been born of his ever-twinkling humour, but certainly those were different times. I feel privileged to have been able to have had a working acquaintance with such a towering figure, a pillar of strength, and a true gentleman from an age of gentlemen.

Stephen Cassidy

David Thompson (past Chairman)

David was an extraordinarily qualified Chairman of the Ipswich Art Society some years ago. I realised this when the Society organised its first exhibition at the old Art School Gallery in modern times. Rifts between the Society and the School (see above) long forgotten, and the School now entirely a Gallery, IAS was granted a toe-in-the-water room as part of another exhibition. I was stuck by a charcoal of Staverton Thicks, and made a purchase. Shortly afterwards a beautifully eloquent letter from the artist – David – in elegant copperplate, dropped on the doormat and I instantly knew that this was no ordinary person.

David had been Art Critic of the Times for seven years, and Director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. He won awards for his films on Francis Bacon, Turner, The Pre-Raphaelites, Monet and Bridget Riley. He knew Bridget Riley personally, and she had produced designs for the Tavistock Theatre – which he also ran. He was responsible for the promotion, and rise to solid international notice, of British contemporary art – organising a major exhibition in Milan in 1976, including figures such as John Hoyland, Peter Blake, Patrick Caulfield, David Hockney, Joe Tilson and a good deal more. Many of our membership will be familiar with his relatively recent book on the popular local artist Harry Becker.

He kindly donated a collection of art books to the Society (available to all the membership), amongst which is another from his own pen: “Raphael, the life and the legacy”. It is by a good margin the best-written book on art that I have ever read: acutely observed, imaginatively researched and written with a masterful turn of phrase. As a stellar previous Chair of the Society, a rather daunting act to follow.

Stephen Cassidy

Michael Norman 1933 - 2020

Michael, after 2 years studying architecture and then training and working as an art teacher and architectural modelmaker, earned his living from the late 1970s as an artist.

Of his landscapes and seascapes, the critic Colin Moss commented on "his fastidious craftsmanship...fine pen line, skilfully and unobtrusively simplifying trees and other natural forms, cleanly overlaid with washes of clear colour...which appeal to the layman, with a technical expertise which the professional must equally respect".



Michael was elected to the Royal Society of Marine Artists in 1976, and featured in *British Painters of the Coast and Sea* and the *National Dictionary of Marine Artists*. He had in excess of 45 one-man shows, 19 in succession in Aldeburgh during the festival. He took his sketchbook as far as Abu Simbel in Upper Egypt, to Venice and Florence, Paris, Rouen and Athens.

Michael ran one-week courses for the Field Studies Council at Flatford Mill and Malham Tarn, and since the 1970s courses throughout the year at his studio in Woolverstone until shortly before he died. In the last 20 years he devoted much of his time to larger paintings of cathedrals, churches and abbeys. Architecture, drawing, sailing, gardening, reading, classical music, cricket, birds and nature were his passions all his life.

Barbara Norman

Adrian Parry 1932-2020 (Past Chairman)

With Adrian's passing the Ipswich Art Society has lost one of its great supporters and researchers. Adrian had been a very active member of some five decades researching and assisting closely with the curators responsible for the Ipswich Borough Councils collection during this period. His dedication to the local fine art collections will enable future generations to enjoy for many years to come.

During his period at the Ipswich Art Society his widow Anne recently informed me that the family summer holidays were always arranged around the hanging and preparation of the summer exhibitions.

A few weeks prior to Adrian's passing he handed me the original minutes and a list of artists from the very first Society Exhibition, then known as the Ipswich Fine Art Club. These, along with other documentation are now being researched by John Day at the East Anglian Traditional Arts centre in Wickham Market and will therefore provide the Society with some very useful information for the records. Adrian was instrumental in securing some of the important acquisitions for the Ipswich Borough Council's fine art collection, including Gainsborough's Holywells Park and John Constable's rare Conversation Piece, saving it from being exported to the USA.

He made every effort for the town he loved and lived in. We have cause to reflect and mourn the loss of a great character.

Paul Bruce

Added note: Adrian was a meticulous archivist of the Society for many years, and had a very impressive command of detail. At every Annual Open Exhibition he would find pithy and informative nuggets from the Society's minute books, so that each catalogue would include two quotes – one from exactly fifty years before, and one from a hundred years before – adding a touch of amusing spice. [Ed.]

Ken Kempley

We are sad to report the death of Ken Kempley, a relatively new but enthusiastic member of both Ipswich and Colchester Art Societies. On leaving school, Ken trained as a commercial artist in Fleet Street but the necessity of a 'proper' job led him to a very successful career in shipping. However, stress and travelling took its toll and it was during an enforced period of rest following a work-related health issue, that Ken rediscovered his artistic talent.

After retirement, he was able to devote more time to art and developed a distinctive but gentle landscape style that proved very popular. Ken was always supportive of other artists and willing to help and share ideas.

We offer our condolences to Ken's wife Valerie and their family.

Sue and Colin Slee



Members Notices

Studio space to rent



Our newest Member, Jonathan Field, has studio space available to rent. It is in the prime location of Queen Street, central Ipswich – opposite the building that once housed the studio of the cartoonist Giles. It is two doors down from the famous 'Grandma' sculpture (by our Member Miles Robinson) which celebrates Giles' work. The address therefore comes with a fine artistic pedigree! Please contact Jonathan at jonfield1210@gmail.com if you are interested.

Visit Jonathon's online piece about his new work, which references the Hawstead panels in Christchurch Mansion. www.floromancy.org/submit/2020/8/2/the-painted-closet-of-jonathan-david-field



Online classes by Andrew Casey for the WEA

Subjects include -
Contemporary Design: Britain in the Fifties (4 week course),
Austrian Art (5 weeks),
East Anglian Artists (5 weeks) and
Women Designers in the 20th Century (5 weeks)
For full information visit: www.andycasey.com

Please send information for the next Newsletter on ideas, shows, news, details of exhibitions etc. to Stephen Cassidy, Newsletter Editor, 62 Constable Road, Ipswich IP4 2UZ.
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Website

For all the latest news and information visit our website www.ipswich-art-society.org.uk and follow us on Facebook [@ipswichartsocietyuk](https://www.facebook.com/ipswichartsocietyuk) and Instagram [ipsartsocuk](https://www.instagram.com/ipsartsocuk)

These will increasingly be used for regular updates which don't suit the Newsletter cycle.

Members are welcome to join the Artists pages and post images their work. New work will also be posted on our Facebook and Instagram sites. If you would like to be included please email ipswich.art.publicity@gmail.com for further details.

Recent updates to the Artists pages. *From top:* Hilary McPherson, Valerie Armstrong and Malcolm Moseley.

