

# TRURO ART SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

### SPRING 2019

#### THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

This was enjoyed by one and all. As usual the random festive spread was impressive and was soon polished off. We had an intriguing variety of raffle prizes and it was interesting to see what Christmas carols we chose to illustrate – “We Three Kings”, “Angels From the Realms of Glory”, “While Shepherds Watched”, “In The Bleak Mid-winter”, etc. And, of course, there was the usual fiendish art quiz and arty activities.



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In spite of careful planning on the part of the Programme Secretary, there were a few surprises in the talks at the beginning of the year. Unfortunately, Amy Albright, Ron Mooney and Peter Skinner were all unable to make it, so we missed out on semi-abstract rivers and seas, calligraphy and encaustic wax. We wish them well in their endeavours/recovery, etc. We were, however, brilliantly entertained by their replacements. Thank you so much to Sophie Capron, Wendy Parkyn and Victoria Hilliard for stepping into the breach at relatively short notice.

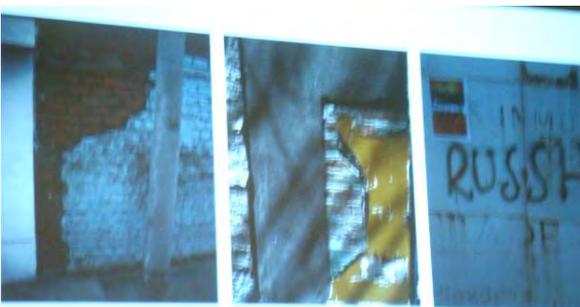
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## JANUARY MEETING



**Sophie Capron** has been a professional artist for nine years. She originally studied textiles and installation at Winchester School of Art and since then has taught and travelled, including Japan and Berlin. She is now located in the Old Bakery in Truro. She represented Cornwall in Lorient Interceltic Festival, Brittany, in 2015.

<http://www.sophiecapron.co.uk/artist/>



We have very few members who do any sort of **abstract art**, so we were very interested to discover how Sophie interprets the world and how being in Cornwall influences her work. She is interested in the interactions between

people, nature and the world around them, and is full of interesting stories. She also takes photographs. Her eye is caught by textures. She notices graffiti and weathered posters, finding beauty in things other people pass by. She is as interested in rust and rot and decay as she is in perfect surfaces, so she works textures into her pictures, building up and sanding back, scraping and scratching off, “revealing layers of the past”. Her pictures are not smooth. She recycles and re-uses materials. She says her work is a “tapestry of life”.



Although Sophie is not a figurative artist our eyes could not help but see images we ‘recognised’ – trees, lakes, details of buildings, landscapes, townscape, etc. Often now she does things in pairs or series.



She does not use paint brushes at all, preferring to use a palette knife to put plaster and paint and other things on big canvases and boards. Once she used rusty iron filings

(which will continue to rust) and cotton. There may be as many as ten layers in one picture, usually with a good deal of white covering colours, which are then revealed, with extra colours added on top. She can be quite brutal – even using an electric sander and a blowtorch!



transparent brown), plus raw sienna, cobalt blue (which can be dulled down with raw umber), primary magenta (for red), Perylene green, permanent sap green (good for a transparent glaze) and Payne's grey if colours need to be darkened (she never uses black).



## FEBRUARY MEETING



This was a welcome return from **Wendy Parkyn** to do a **knife painting of a landscape in acrylics**. This time she was working from a photo she had taken herself of a winter scene near Helman Tor. She trimmed the sides off to make the gate nearer to the 1/3 position.

Using a disposable palette, Wendy decided to use a limited palette of wintery colours – basically brown, blue, red and green, with lots of white. Her favourite is raw umber (a cool

The first thing to do for a knife painting is to put in an under-painting, so that no white canvas shows through any gaps in the knife work.



This background layer needs to go on thinly, like a bad watercolour. It can be put on roughly with a scrubby decorators' quality brush, but with no bumps. Canvas quality depends on price – get the best one you can afford for knife work. Thin canvases are OK for mixed media – sticking things on give reinforcement. For the under painting decide which areas are darker and which are lighter. Shut one eye to flatten things. Screw your eyes up to see tones better.

Let the under painting dry – use a hair dryer if necessary.



Wendy picks the size of the knife to go with the size of the picture, using only those with pointed ends. (Plastic knives are OK.) There are three ways to work with a knife; a multidirectional scrape, using the flat of the knife to pull up peaks, using the edge of the blade to print lines, remembering that the blade does not hold paint as a brush does. Curves need to be chopped round. For a horizontal straight line, flick the knife upwards.

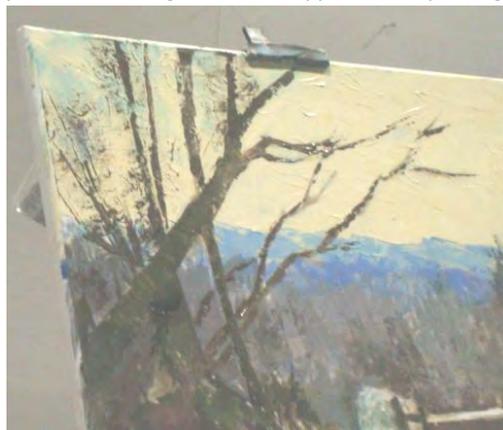
The sky went on first, in all directions. In the photo it is white, but Wendy gave it a bit of colour with some Naples yellow at the bottom and cobalt blue at the top. Then she worked from dark to light. “Don’t analyse what you are painting,” she says. “Do what you see. Don’t paint what you think it is.” Though you can change the direction of light if you want!



Cobalt blue, raw umber, red and white produced a blue/purple for recession in the

distance, then lots of dead tree colours (a bit of everything for the dark greens and browns). She said she would use a brush to put a yellowish glaze over the picture after completion to make it look sunny.

Grass, trees, vegetation are almost modelled with texture, but the part of the path that is walked on was kept smooth. The picture was built up in layers, so the first layer of knife work had to be completely dry before the next went on (otherwise it goes muddy) - hairdryer again!



Dark red brown for the branches in the sky was put on with the edge of the knife. For the little twigs, paint was rubbed onto the sky, the colour catching on the dry ridges – raw umber with a bit of green, maybe a touch of magenta. Dark on light for some branches, light on dark for others and for the “mossy” stuff.



The gate with its stone gateposts is the main focal point of the picture; Naples yellow, white and umber produced suitable beige. There are some highlights and not all bars are equally visible. Finally olive green “moss” is dragged

over and fallen leaves on the path are done on top of the spiky bits.

Final tips: if too much paint is put on it can be wiped off with kitchen towel, as long as it is still wet; scumbling with white is useful to soften colours that are too strong.

Wendy currently has an exhibition at The Institute, Padstow, until 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

You can see more of her work on <http://www.wendyparkyn.co.uk/>

## MARCH MEETING



Many of us are fans of **Victoria Hilliard**, whose work can be seen in Art Space Gallery overlooking the beach in St Ives. She is also a member of the St Ives Society of Artists. See <https://www.stisa.co.uk/artist-gallery/victoria-hilliard/>

Victoria comes from a creative Cornish family. Her father was a potter, but making pots did not appeal to her. Her mother was a horticulturalist, which might explain her love of flowers in her work. She went to Truro High School, but says she only ever wanted to do art.

At Exeter Art College she trained in graphic design, typography, illustration, etc., (and also worked as a typographic designer) and travelled the world and gained a love of colour.



When someone gave her some modelling clay she began making raised images to produce relief pictures, with crude framing. (She now uses smooth white earthenware clay that she bisque fires at 950-1000°C and has the frames specially made by a local carpenter.) A year on Scilly as a florist and gardener meant that her clay pictures evolved. Her first offerings were bought by Liberty of London and at the Chelsea Craft Fair. She has since further refined and developed.



Another area of subject matter - Punch and Judy - came into Victoria's work from her husband, a "computer man" and street performer. She also decorated their theatre group coach.

"Things change with children." She took a step back and didn't work for four or five years.

Then it was difficult to get back, so she did more horticultural work and slipped back into art, joining the Guild of Ten in Truro for a couple of years.

Now, for the moment, she is in a cooperative in St Ives, which has a heavy footfall but is high pressure – it has to be very commercial because of high rates and rent. The fruit and vegetables that we all love, spilling exuberantly over their frames, are “pot-boilers”.



Seascapes and sea themes (because the gallery is by the sea) and hearts are other popular lines.



Prints also sell, because she has never lost her love of painting. Sometimes creativity demands something new, like this dog with wings. First she used acrylic primer on cardboard, then the whippet in acrylic on a red bed, then scattered anemones in powder pastels. She doesn't mind the workings showing through.



Victoria is very drawn to mediaeval manuscripts, mediaeval land management and relief maps, and icons, with religious scenes like you see in Mexican retablos, and folding triptychs. She produces the latter on a variety of themes, along with boxes with 3D doors. The frames and boxes are made by the carpenter and she builds and fires all the clay components separately, painting and reassembling them (using good quality resin wood glue). She does lots of lighthouses. Entomologists like her moths. Now she wants to do more painting and botanical illustration – perhaps like her handkerchief tree.



## APRIL MEETING

**Zoe Burkett** is Education and Outreach Officer at Penlee House and Gallery in Penzance. She gave us a fascinating account of what is “**on the walls and behind closed doors**” – the work done by the various members of the team, in addition to the various collections. See

<https://www.penleehouse.org.uk/about-penlee/who-we-are>

Most of us have probably been to look at the paintings or the museum before, but Zoe made us aware of all their other offerings, such as workshops, school visits and family activities –

catering for all age groups – along with their foray into digital media.



The house and gallery have separate histories. The first collection started in 1839 with the Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society and was housed in the dome of the Market House building, moving and expanding over the years, via St John's Hall, to Penlee House, at that time in the rural outskirts of Penzance.

One large collection now numbering between fifteen and twenty thousand, mostly historic, photographs includes a picture of the distinguished members of the PNHAS on an outing to Men-an-Tol. Apparently at the time they were thought to be a group of lunatics with their doctors.



<https://west-penwith.org.uk/pnhas.htm>

Objects were initially collected from all over the world – a Chinese junk can still be seen - but the remit now is to collect items related to West Cornwall. There is a fine archaeology collection in the museum.

Until 1940 Penlee House was the home of the Bramwell family, who can also be seen in the photography collection. The house was finally bought as a war memorial by the Borough Council. Since it was a family residence it is not a purpose built gallery and the rooms are small – sometimes posing problems for the curators. (The walls have false linings for hanging the pictures, so that the building is not damaged.)

There is a permanent collection but a daunting amount of work goes on to manage their five changes of temporary exhibitions each year – from sourcing paintings (often borrowing from other galleries in the UK and around the world), making sure that packing and unpacking is done safely, transport, insurance, etc. There is also a continuous search for extra funding to buy pictures to add to the permanent collection.



They concentrate on artists on whom West Cornwall has had a significant effect, between 1880 and about 1940 (though they do possess some later paintings, e.g. Penzance Harbour by Bryan Pearce 1963)



The latest temporary exhibition, till 8<sup>th</sup> June, is “Artists By Themselves”, portraits of one another, self-portraits and photos of the artists (who usually seem to be quite formally dressed and always wearing hats!).

The gallery is famous for the painters of the Newlyn School, who were breaking away from the academic tradition of studio paintings with a historical or mythological theme. Theirs was the school of rural realism. They painted ‘ordinary people’ and ‘plein air’. Many were fond of the ‘square brush technique’.



“The Rain it Raineth Every Day” is now one of the most popular exhibits, initially rejected as “too French” and hidden away in case it put off the tourists to Penzance. Norman Garstin said, “Your work cannot be really good unless you have caught a cold doing it.”

The artists had studios in sail lofts above fishermen’s houses and they painted many of the local people. Some feature in several paintings. One of Zoe’s personal favourites is Gotch’s portrait of a local child, “Ruby”.



When the fishing began to fail they taught the locals how to do repoussée work on copper, and “Newlyn copper” was born, several examples of which are in the museum. Their paintings are also full of social comment – they liked to tell a story, even if it wasn’t a classical one.

We had a wonderful whistle-stop tour through the changing personalities and styles. The earlier artists painted people with relevant backgrounds, the later artists went more to landscapes with people in them. Styles changed, figures became more monumental, often colours became brighter. Sometimes there are echoes of earlier genres, such as mediaevalism.

Apart from painting, there were connections with other forms of art, such as the Crysedde textile company of Alec George Walker and his wife Kay, enamels done by Ella Naper after a design by Laura Knight. Amongst the ephemera are examples of menus for meals together, concert programmes for entertainments they did together, cartoons and caricatures of one another.

## EXHIBITIONS 2019

**Chacewater Garden Centre** (which is under new management) will be our venue from **22<sup>nd</sup> June** (set up 21<sup>st</sup>) **to 7<sup>th</sup> July**. We hope this will continue to be a success.

A new venue, which we hope will also be a success, is the **Methodist Church** in Truro itself, from **23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> September**.

Our Exhibitions Secretary **Patricia Cunningham** is to be congratulated on finding us a venue that is actually in the centre of the city. Truro is sadly lacking in available community spaces.

There was small but successful exhibition in **Padstow Memorial Hall** from **6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> April**. It was too far away for some people, but there was a good footfall and some sales.



## COMPETITION

The call has gone out for artists to take part in **Sky Arts' Landscape Artist of the Year 2019** competition. Artists enter with a landscape artwork they have created within the last five years, via

<https://www.skyartsartistoftheyear.tv/landscape>

If selected to take part in the competition they will then be given the opportunity to paint a specially chosen, stunning landscape within the UK.

The prize on offer is a **£10,000 commission** for a major British institution plus £500 worth of art materials from Cass Art.

The deadline for applying to the competition is **11<sup>th</sup> May 2019**.

If you are feeling ultra-competitive (and you can afford the entry fees) you can find a list of all this year's art competitions with deadlines later in the year at

<https://www.moma.co.uk/uk-art-competitions/>

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

The call goes out, as usual, for more people to volunteer to take an active part in running Truro Art Society. Sometimes committee members have to drop out, for a variety of reasons, and it is always a good thing to have extra people who know the ropes, who can step in and give a hand. And a team to organise the teas would be good!

And entertainment this year will be provided by Vivienne Fraser and Jan Lobb in the form of a seascape demonstration with Cornish language commentary. How Surreal is that!

## COMING IN JUNE

Do you have a painting or other piece of art you would like critiqued? Bring it along to the last meeting of this season. We are delighted to welcome back **Sue Lewington** to give helpful advice and encouraging comments.