

# PRISM

News of art & events

December 2019



[www.stalbans-artsociety.org.uk](http://www.stalbans-artsociety.org.uk)

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## THE HAPPY BLACKBIRD by Kim Lawrence

The Society was holding a printmaking workshop and Kim was keen to take part.



So many people say, "Lino cutting oh, that's something I did a school", well in my case until last month that was true. I mainly work with acrylics or watercolour pencils but recently I've been looking for other mediums to work in and have been watching YouTube videos and looking at Pinterest for ideas & tips.

We were asked to come with an idea or image to work from. I had the idea that I wanted to draw a Blackbird, as it had been my mums' favourite bird and I had come across the work of a woodcut artist Ian MacCulloch whose work inspired me and influenced my design.

We worked with a Softcut lino block, which is easier to carve, due to time constraints I drew my design straight on to the block and began to frantically carve, determined to get to the printing stage before the end of the day.

I was very happy with my finished piece, which has made me excited to continue to explore this medium further.

See workshop review on page 10

### Enclosed in this issue:

- Booking form Bridget Tompkins workshop
- Booking form Peter Keegan workshop
- Booking form Elizabeth Baldin workshop

## THE CHAIRMAN WRITES...

# Season's greetings!



I made an impassioned plea, you may recall, for more assistance in the running of the Society, when I spoke at the annual meeting in May. Seeking volunteers in any organization is always a problem, but on this occasion, the problem was solved soon after I had addressed the meeting! The result is that Valerie Chivers became secretary and Katie Telkman and Kim Lawrence offered to assist Sue Bergquist in organizing the life drawing sessions. Problem solved!

Well, not quite. The joint organizers of our flagship event – the Summer Exhibition – will continue to stage the 2020 show but wish to step down after that, although Janet King is offering to publish the catalogue and continue with Editorship of PRISM and Janet Blackham will carry on as Membership Secretary and will be on hand to advise new organizers. Somewhere out there in our 200-plus membership we are hoping that there will be a positive response. Please do not hesitate to speak to myself, the Secretary or the Vice Chairman if you are willing to help.

This year has been a splendid one for the Society. Lectures and life drawing sessions have been well attended and

the workshops meeting on occasional Saturdays have been oversubscribed. The Summer Exhibition made a profit and thanks to sound accounting and good housekeeping we should have our heads well above water by the time the 2020 AGM arrives. Very well done to all concerned!

And now we are in the middle of winter, with everything it can throw at us. But those of us who are captivated by the spectacular colours on offer in the fields, hedgerows and on lakes and rivers see this time of year as a sort of renaissance. It becomes so easy to shut out the outside world when sitting down before a canvas and paint brush at the ready, which reminds me of a constant theme that has dominated the several exhibitions, both local and in Ireland, Wales and Scotland that I have seen these past few months. That theme is landscapes and sometimes seascapes. There is an abundance of talent out there and it has been made clearer to me just how much we can really learn from seeing the works of fellow artists.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas

**Edward Bevin Chairman**

**EDITOR'S NOTE: Members' input is very popular so please carry on sending in your articles for inclusion in the magazine and your feedback.**

Firstly, the Committee is pleased to welcome Katie Telkman and Kim Lawrence who are now running our lifestrawing classes. A big thank you goes out to them for putting so much enthusiastic effort into taking on this work.

As you know from our last PRISM magazine our 2019 Annual Exhibition was a great success. We are always looking to build on that success, however, so we collect comments and suggestions from as many members of the visiting public as possible. This collection of views formed the basis of our discussions at a Committee meeting at the end of August.

### Visitors' comments

It is pleasing to say that all of the comments on the standard and variety of work on show were positive, with "excellent" and "brilliant" being used liberally. Perhaps the best accolade (or not!) was "better than the RA Summer Exhibition"!

There were quite a few suggestions too which gave rise to lively discussions by the Committee. The two most common suggestions concerned the display boards and the location of the exhibition.

There was general agreement by the Committee that white or light display boards would provide a better backdrop for the pictures. Unfortunately it would be too costly to hire a space large enough to paint the boards and to transport from and back to storage. Also the paint could easily be chipped in transit and there would be little time on hanging day to re-touch.

Many visitors thought that the exhibition should be back in the centre of town, in the new Museum where there would be more space. It was explained that the cost would be too high and visitors expressed the view that space should be freely provided or offered at low cost for local groups like ours. It was agreed that a committee member would look further into this matter. Most of the Committee were however happy with facilities at the Church and with the friendly and helpful welcome received

there. Plans to return to the Baptist Church next year are already in hand as their hall is in great demand.

There were minor suggestions that music should be played and that an award should be given for made objects (pots, figurines etc.) but there was no support for these suggestions by Committee members.

### The hanging of pictures

Suggestions were made that paintings should be hung in numerical order but pictures would have to be hung before numbering and there would not then be enough time to produce the catalogue. Our method is in line with other club exhibitions.

Prior to the exhibition a query was raised about any limit on the age of pictures put forward for hanging. It is not easily possible to date pictures. It was decided that only pictures that had not been displayed previously at our exhibitions should be accepted. Pictures which have previously been displayed by us will however be accepted for display in the browsers provided they conform to those conditions.

By the time you receive this PRISM, arrangements for the 2020 Exhibition will be well advanced and hopefully you will already be busy creating your entries for next year. Have fun!

**Valerie Chivers** Secretary

### SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL REMINDER

The renewal date is **1st October**, if you haven't yet renewed and wish to continue as a member, you should have a final reminder form inserted in this issue. Please complete and return this renewal form. When your subscription is received you will be sent your membership card with details of the programme for the coming year as well as names of committee members. Please include a **STAMPED SELF ADDRESSED ENVELOPE** with your renewal form.



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE 2020 SUMMER EXHIBITION

### DATE OF THE EXHIBITION

Here are the proposed key dates for the 2020 Summer Exhibition at the Dagnall Street Baptist Church Hall. Please put these dates in your diary.

**Friday 26th June** Last date for entries

**Monday 27th July** Handing in artwork

**Tuesday 28th July** Hanging of work followed by Evening Private View

**Wednesday 29th July to Saturday 1st August** Open to the public

**Sunday 2nd August Morning:** Closed  
**Afternoon:** collection of Artwork 2-4pm

### PICTURE SIZE RESTRICTION

Pictures must not be more than 30 inches along the longest side including the frame.

### Entry Papers and Rules

Inserted in May 2020 issue of PRISM.

### Framing

All framed pictures must be presented in a saleable condition. Full guidelines for framing will be given on the 'Exhibition Rules' that are sent out with the entry papers in the May issue of PRISM.

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

**Since the death of Jenny Blaxland, Valerie Chivers has kindly offered to organize the refreshments for the Wednesday demos and lecture evenings. So that no one person is committed to this duty every session, Valerie is keen to set up a rota of volunteers to help her. Please contact Valerie if you can help: or even better - have a word with her at the next meeting.**

*ELSPETH'S ART*  
At the Radlett Centre, Aldenham Ave, Radlett WD7 8HL.  
Car park over the road, free for 1 hour.




**3rd January - 30th January 2020**  
10am-5pm  
Paintings priced from £20 to £120  
LOOK for the painting with no name. Why don't you choose a name for it?



Member **Elsbeth Jackman** has an exhibition and sale of her art at the Radlett Centre (postcode WD7 8HL). All proceeds will go to 'Step' - a Christian schools work charity. 

**For more information:**  
website: [Elsbeth-art.sdwebstar.co.uk](http://Elsbeth-art.sdwebstar.co.uk)

### We are pleased to welcome the following new members

Sophia Laycock	St Albans
Mrs L Crumpler	St Albans
Stephanie Benbow	Hatfield
Sergi Gomez	Hemel Hempstead
Christine Cowlard	St Albans
John Briggs	Welwyn G C
Fiona Ashley	St Albans
Sarah Gidden	St Albans

### PICTURE FRAME OFFER

Betty Scammell, an ex member of the Art Society, has several surplus picture frames and wonders if anyone in the Society would like them. Betty's telephone number is 01727 850826 - anyone interested please give her a call.

# Winter Programme 2020

## WEDNESDAY EVENING MEETINGS

Marshalswick Community Centre 7.30 - 9.30pm. Venue maps see page 12

### DEMONSTRATION IN ACRYLICS by Mark Warner

Wednesday 5th February 2020

Mark is not only a respected artist but also a highly professional tutor with many years of teaching experience. "I adore using colour while interpreting the light, weather and a love for the materials. I work directly in the field (literally on many occasions!) from sketches created outside as well as notes/ photographs taken on location". He will be doing a demonstration in acrylics for us.

### DRAWING SESSIONS

We will be starting the New Year with life drawing on **15 Jan 2020**. Our drawing sessions are proving to be very popular, so keep an eye on your membership card or the website for the dates of these sessions. Katie and Kim are doing a great job sorting out the programme and we are grateful to them for organising it. See also page 5.

#### TUTORED DRAWING SESSIONS

We are very fortunate to have several talented tutors in our membership and two of them will be running sessions within the programme.

**Bridget Tompkins** will be tutoring life drawing session on **22nd January**.

**Jan Munro** will be tutoring another drawing evening on **18th March**.

**IMPORTANT:** Prior to a tutored session, please check our website for information of any extra equipment you will need to bring to participate fully.

**In the event of bad weather**, contact Kim Lawrence [ksbromwich@hotmail.com](mailto:ksbromwich@hotmail.com) to check if the evening has been cancelled.

### HANDMADE WATERCOLOUR PAPER Presentation by Jim Patterson

Wednesday 4th March 2020

Have you ever wondered how they make watercolour paper? Jim is from the Two Rivers Paper Compan and his presentation will cover the differences between rag and woodpulp, absorbency, surface textures, stretching, coloured paper, right and wrong sides plus more! His talk is illustrated by a short video sequence showing the making of paper at his mill, practical demonstrations of wash and lifting, and with art works from the mill's collection.

### PORTRAIT IN PASTELS Demo by Rob Waring

Wednesday 1st April 2020

Rob was born in South Africa. He became a professional portrait painter at the age of 23. Rob has painted numerous portraits of people of all nationalities. He has written articles for various art publications including The Artist.

Rob spends a large part of the summer and autumn demonstrating at various art societies in the UK. In the winter he returns to his beachfront studio in South Africa.

**If you would like to enter a draw to be Rob's model for 1st April send me an email Sue.bergquist@ntlworld.com titled ENTER PORTRAIT DRAW and I will put your name in a hat! Enter before 28th Feb 2020 to be included.**

## SATURDAY WORKSHOPS URC Hall 10am - 4pm.

### CREATE AN UNDERWATER WORLD IN WATERCOLOUR WITH ADDED PASTEL AND COLLAGE Tutor: Bridget Tompkins Saturday 18th January 2020

Bridget Tompkins is a member of the Art Society and runs her own weekly watercolour classes in St Albans. She is also tutoring our Life Drawing session on Wednesday evening 22nd January. She encourages a very loose, free style using lots of water, which lends itself readily to this theme of underwater images including, for example, fish and turtles.



### BRING TO LIFE A MODERN, ORIGINAL PORTRAIT IN ACRYLICS

Tutor: Peter Keegan  
Saturday 1st February 2020

Peter Keegan is an award-winning artist living and working in Buckinghamshire and has tutored and demonstrated in art societies across Hertfordshire coming highly recommended. His aim in portraiture is to always create a painting or drawing that reflects the subject's likeness and personality, as well as capturing those special elements which make the subject truly "them". Peter will both demonstrate and guide you through his approach to capturing a portrait in acrylics – looking at how to start the portrait, mixing flesh colours and getting a likeness.



### IMPRESSIONIST LANDSCAPES IN WATERCOLOUR AND INKS

Tutor: Elizabeth Baldin Saturday 29th February 2020

Elizabeth Baldin trained at Bristol Art College, where she qualified with a BA (Hons) in graphic design. Watercolours are her 'first love' in art, working with a loose approach, allowing the watercolour to flow freely to achieve dynamic and atmospheric results. She feels strongly that, with time and practise, anyone can learn to paint and draw and can improve and develop their own particular style.



**BOOKING FORMS** including more details are inserted in this issue of PRISM.



# The History of Pigments

In November, Aurora Spain gave us a talk on *The History of Pigments*. This article, taken from the Winsor & Newton website, adds some more detail, especially for those who missed the talk.

The story of pigments is a story about providing human beings with the means by which to express themselves, and this has helped create some of our greatest artistic movements including the Renaissance, Impressionism and Modernism.

## Creativity Born In The Caves

Early man used earth pigments on the cave walls such as yellow earth (Ochre), red earth (Ochre) and white chalk. Ochres are coloured clays that are found as soft deposits within the earth. Carbon (Lamp) black was also used, collected from the soot of burning animal fats.

## Getting Serious

Pigments were produced on a larger scale by the Egyptians and the Chinese. Earth colours were cleaned and washed increasing their strength and purity, and new pigments appeared from minerals such as Malachite, Azurite and Cinnabar prized as the first known bright red. Egyptian Blue was first

produced around 3,000 BC - a blue glass made from sand and copper which was ground into a powder.

Vegetable dyes were also developed by the Egyptians, who discovered the 'lake' making process of producing pigment and the basis of this process is still used by Winsor & Newton to produce Rose Madder Geniune. In China, the brilliant red that came from Vermilion was developed 2,000 years before it was used by the Romans.

Tyrian Purple came to signify power and wealth and was used by both the Greeks and the Romans. It was complicated to make, cost a fortune and involved using the mucus from thousands of Murex snails. The Greeks also manufactured white lead, the first fully opaque white - namely Flake White and Cremnitz White - which involved stacking lead strips in a confined space amongst vinegar and animal dung. Nice pigment, not so nice smell.

## Renaissance

With the rebirth of interest in artistry, the Italians threw themselves into developing the range of earth pigments by roasting siennas and umbers to make the deep rich red of Burnt Sienna and the rich brown of Burnt Umber. Earth colours featured heavily in their painting technique, Terre Verte (Green Earth) being the principle under-painting colour for flesh tones.

One of the most astonishing pigments came from the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli, found largely in Afghanistan, and used to produce Geniune Ultramarine. It allowed artists to create a deep rich blue and was the most expensive pigment in the world. Paintings that used it were considered a great luxury and led artists to use it to paint The Madonna's clothing as a way of reflecting her status and power.

## Modern Times, Modern Methods

The opening up of trade routes in the 18th century coupled with advances in technology and science allowed for greater experimentation. In 1704, a German colour maker Diesbach created Prussian Blue by accident in his laboratory and this became the first chemically synthesized colour.

In 1828 a low cost blue was created by Jean-Baptiste Guimet called French Ultramarine. The artificial pigment is chemically identical to genuine ultramarine but physically finer and has none of the impurities of the lapis rock.

The isolation of new elements in the late 18th century also played a part in providing new colours. Deposits of chrome in the USA in 1820 eased the manufacture of Chrome Yellow, a highly opaque low cost colour available in a variety of hues.

The isolation of Zinc gave rise to Zinc Oxide which was used as an artists' white

in preference to lead white as it was less hazardous and more permanent particularly in water colour. However it lacked opacity until 1834 when Winsor & Newton developed a method of heating the oxide to increase its opacity. This new type of Zinc Oxide was called Chinese White.

Alizarin is arguably the most important organic pigment of the 19th century. It was found as a colourant in the roots of the madder plant, but independent work in both Germany and Great Britain managed to duplicate it synthetically in the laboratory - the first time this had ever been achieved. This more affordable synthetic pigment provided a blue shade crimson of strong tinting strength and high transparency and was an immediate hit with artists.

## Impressionism

The explosion of new pigments during the 19th century, the invention of the metal tube and the arrival of the railways all combined to accelerate this movement. Bright new colours in portable, stable tubes and a method of easy travelling around the country helped give rise to some of the world's most beautiful paintings.

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## WORKSHOPS REVIEWS

Take a look at the front cover of PRISM - one of the excellent pieces of artwork produced at the October workshop. We were fortunate to have two tutors, **Susan Edwards** and **John May** and the Society provided much of the equipment.

This was a superb, full workshop that everyone thoroughly enjoyed and were very lucky to have two experienced tutors. A great deal of information was given by John May and Sue Edwards who started the workshop by showing the amazing prints they had created. Their knowledge and understanding of the



subject was appreciated by the group and gave everyone confidence that they were in capable hands. During the day,

participants were carefully guided through the different stages needed to create and produce a lino print. Starting with drawing for

a black and white picture which would be transferred on to the lino.

Having traced it, cutting techniques were used, followed by how to roll the ink, cover the lino and finally print. Some of the group went on to develop the skill of adding colour.

The whole day was a complete success, and the gallery of work at the end depicted amazing results - including this issue's front cover by Kim Lawrence - especially considering that not many members had done this before.

There were also a few new society members who were very impressed with their first workshop.

These are some of the comments made by the participants.

● Very good support and advice with lots of knowledge to add! Great results- must be down to the tutors! Great day.

● A great introduction to Lino Printing. The results were amazing & I will definitely continue at home.

● Nice to learn a new skill, very interesting. Had a wonderful therapeutic day

● Great day, my first time. So enjoyable, now I've got the printing bug!

● I found the workshop well organised, everyone was helpful with the tutors giving lots of attention. The hall was well laid out, I

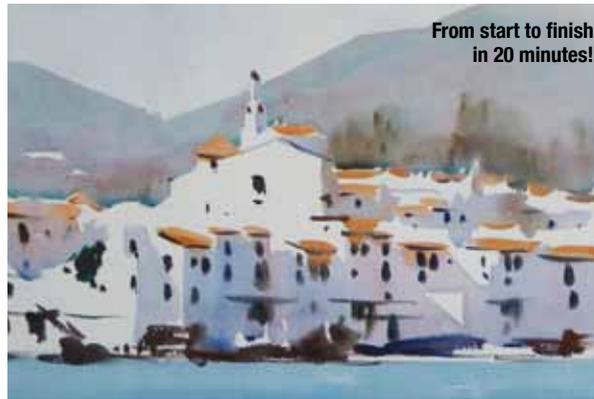


will definitely continue lino printing at home.

This is the first lino print workshop I have organised but thanks to its success it won't be the last.

## A painting in 20 minutes!

In this full-on workshop, tutored by well known artist **Jake Winkle**, the class completed two paintings in the day.



The aim was to develop Jake's style of watercolour painting in order to learn new techniques - he works fast and free.

To start the day, the class painted an image of Venice. Jake organised the method in

stages with each step demonstrated for 5 - 7 minutes and Jake giving constant comment on what colours were being used and reasons for painting in a particular way. After which, participants aimed to replicate his method.

Unusually for watercolours we were working from dark to light. Starting with buildings, (three different sets), the sky, the water and finally the gondoliers, boats and shadows. It was an intensely, rewarding experience, full of information with great results produced by all.

For the last hour, Jake demonstrated how to make a complicated scene into a twenty minute painting.

Again a great deal of clear instructions were given, starting with a drawing showing the dark shades and shadows. It was amazing how the picture came to life in a limited time with limited strokes.

When Jake wasn't demonstrating he was continually supporting individuals, offering suggestions and helping everyone to develop.

Feedback from participants all seemed to say the same thing: ● Very informative, ● enjoyable ● exhausting ● exhilarating ● what a great teacher full of help and guidance ● Jake is delightful to learn from.



Sally Griffiths Programme Secretary/Workshops

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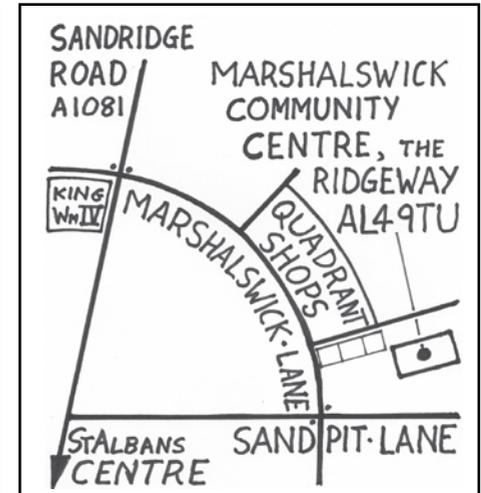


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## INFORMATION

### TALK TO YOUR COMMITTEE

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**TREASURER** Tracey Gent  
**SECRETARY** Valerie Chivers  
**PRISM EDITOR** Janet King  
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**LECTURES:** Sue Bergquist  
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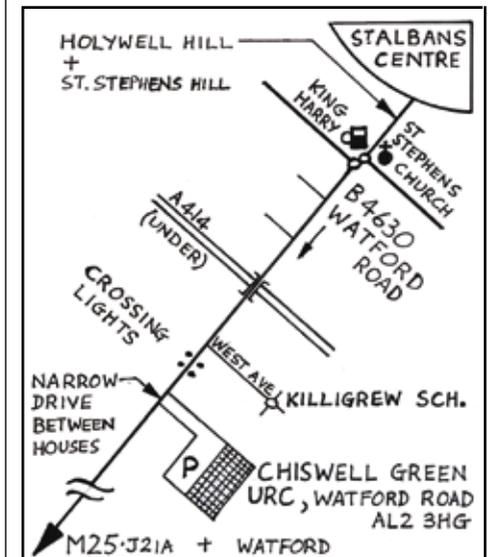


### VENUE for MEETINGS

The Society meets for discussions and meetings at **Marshalswick Community Centre**, The Ridgeway, St Albans, AL4 9TU. Most meetings start at 7.30 pm

### VENUE for WORKSHOPS

One day workshops are held at **United Reformed Church**, Watford Road, Chiswell Green, St Albans, AL2 3HG



[www.stalbans-artsociety.org.uk](http://www.stalbans-artsociety.org.uk)

Visit the website for regularly updated news of what's on at the Society.

Map illustrations by Peter Osborne



# The quirky world of William Blake

Edward Bevin reviews Tate Britain's William Blake Exhibition...

In the last room of Tate Britain's William Blake exhibition, which continues until February 2, the curators have installed a massive, wall-sized photograph of that lovely Wren church of St James in Piccadilly. This was Blake's family church, the interior of which we see now almost in real life. It fills an entire wall and includes an extraordinary enlargement of one of the artist's minute crucifixions. The beholder is dwarfed by the scene, which has a mesmeric affect and seemed a fitting finale to the exhibition, complete with its 300 remarkable and rarely seen works.

## Ability to shock

Of course, it must be stressed that finding one's way into Blake's head and all that was going on in it, is an impossibility. And there's more to come because throughout this grotesquerie, we see floating nymphs, terrifying monsters, serpents and giant snakes, Gods ablaze and tormented bodies everywhere. And there are his irreducibly strange, multi-coloured skies, angel, and lone bodies in profound convulsion. Unlike other famous paintings of, say, the Italian renaissance, which reaches out and glues us to the canvas, Blake seems to want us to move on and seek other terrifying scenes! One thing is certain about Blake is that he never ever lost the ability to shock and be dreadful!



Possibly the most anthologised poem in English, 'The Tyger' is from *Songs of Experience*.

Seeing these bizarre and often unconventional images, one sees premonitions of, sadly, present-day violence, stabbings, oppression and factionalism. Frankly, it all seems dramatically depressing. Imagine waking up one morning to see one of his weird paintings hanging from the wall, confirming last night's nightmare!

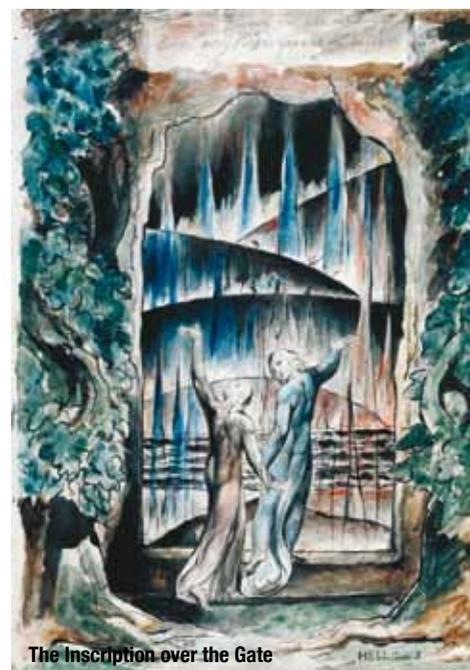
Fortunately, all this horror tells only a fraction of the image of this miraculous and prodigious artist, who remains

an inspiration to artists, musicians, writers and performers anywhere in the world. And how many of us will admit the shivers running down our spine when we join in the massed singing of his And did those feet in ancient time.

By now, I hope the reader has not been put off by making the trip down along the Thames because the organisers have carefully and thoughtfully put together a show which tells the complete story of a truly great English artist, poet and printmaker.

The exhibition shows a series of books produced by Blake, written in his

own fair hand and interspersed with splendid images carefully created. Two of his illuminated books are his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, 1794, believed to be his central achievement as a radical poet.

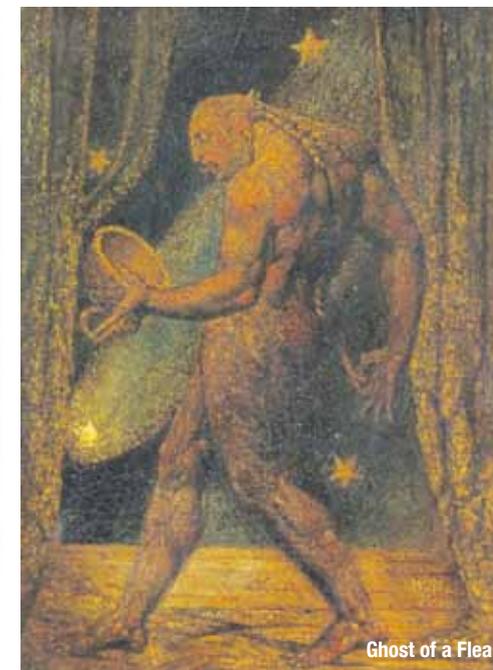


The Inscription over the Gate

Blake was an avid reader of poetry and was inspired to produce in graphite, ink and watercolour on paper a scene from Dante Alighieri's complex poem written in the early 1300s, *Divine Comedy*. Here is depicted Dante and his guide, the Roman poet Virgil who stand before the gates of hell. The backdrop is populated by souls trapped in alternating circles of fire and ice. Entitled *The Inscription over the Gate*, it is a masterpiece.

## Self portrait

There has been a retrospective of William Blake at about 25-year intervals and for the first time, we are given the chance to witness what he actually looked like. Experts believe that this is his only completed *self-portrait* and it is displayed alongside a sketch of his wife Catherine. Blake was about 45 at the time and it is said to be a fairly accurate likeness. It was produced in the early 1800s at a turning point in his career. Having lived in Sussex for three years and been falsely accused



Ghost of a Flea

of treason, he returned to his native city of London and was re-establishing himself as an artist. The portrait seems to give the impression of anxiety unlike the painting by Thomas Phillips (1770-1845) (who, as a member of the Royal Academy, painted the great and the good of the day including Blake and can be seen in the National Portrait Gallery in London), which shows him in a relaxed pose, complete with pencil in his right hand – a young looking 50-year-old.

If one wants to grasp the imagination of William Blake, one needs to look no further than his *Ghost of a Flea* c.1819-20 which is about as terrifying a painting we will ever see. It is bloodthirsty and frightening and has inspired many well-known artists – among them Damien Hirst and Hassan Khan.

Edward Bevin Chairman

William Blake: The Artist is open at Tate Britain until February 2. Tickets cost £18 and are available now from the Tate website.



Jan begins with a demo...

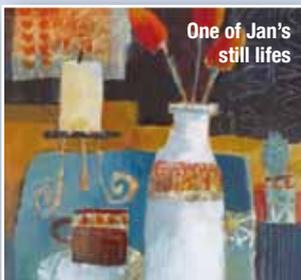


...and offers suggestions

# A different perspective

Member, **Jan Munro**, tutored our Wednesday evening, experimental, still life drawing session for the Society.

In October, the first of our Wednesday evening, tutored drawing sessions took place. Jan Munro gave us some insight into her design approach for creating her superb pastel still life paintings (see right), before letting us all loose to have a go.



One of Jan's still lifes

There was no formal arranging of the objects and no accurate measuring took place. Perspective was thrown to the wind as we drew the objects individually using different media. Choosing some of her favourite pots, Jan demonstrated how she drew using an array of different tools including pens, sticks dipped into ink and ruling pens. We

started by working in our sketchbooks, but to stop us getting 'too precious' with our drawings, we were encouraged to tape a pen, stick or brush to the end of a long stick, then, with a large piece of paper on the floor, we practiced this 'long-distance' drawing. This was quite hard to control and the end result was therefore loose, free and wobbly! We didn't draw the items in proportion to one another, making some extra big and some extra small to make a pleasing design on the page.

Young and old really 'got into it' - much fun - like playschool for grown ups!

**Janet King** PRISM Editor



Maureen, Sophia and Wendy



Susie gets down to work