

# ARTS' News

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Autumn 2003

Business Arts / Conservatory Gallery 6 Hills Avenue Cambridge CB1 7XA 01223 211311 www.businessarts.co.uk  
Email: pamela.barrell@businessarts.co.uk

## UNTAMED

JAN DAVIES - pastels

STEPHEN MURFITT - pots, large and small

JILL WALDEN - etchings and batiks

25th September to 25th October

Private View Wednesday 24th September  
7 - 9 p.m.

Open Thursdays to Saturdays and Sunday  
5th October 11 - 5 p.m.



*Oriental Poppies, pastel by Jan Davies*

## HERE AND NOW ...

The summer has been an exciting one with the Out of Africa exhibition here in the gallery including paintings by Beverley Gibbs, sculpture by Esther Joseph and baskets sourced by Sinja Streuper. Beverley's story of having been evicted from her farm in Zimbabwe at 4 a.m. at gunpoint and managing to bring some paintings with her to help her new start in Cambridge will by now have been documented in *The Observer*. As this column is being written the men from *The Observer* are here taking photographs. There are large canvases of working life on the farm, and small watercolour studies, often of women with children on their backs planting, talking, walking. Esther's sculptures are dramatic in black African serpentine or bronze. I particularly like her *Reclining Figure* which grows out of the rough stone and where the girl's hair merges back into the stone. The baskets are numerous, inexpensive, highly decorative and a bit of fun and - oh yes, practical too.

## OUT AND ABOUT ...

### TWO WEEKS IN BUDAPEST by Robin Stemp

This article is being written on a train travelling from Budapest to Szeged. We are travelling with slow deliberation through the suburbs, which are now thinning out to poplar lined fields, in a wasteland of scrubby grass and sheds. It is the hinterland through



which all trains in all countries pass and soon we are rid of it and heading towards the Great Hungarian Plain. We have left the pink and yellow houses and the apartment blocks, standing foursquare for Communist inhumanity. Soulless and uncompromising, the dinosaurs of a former life, they are as obsolete as the CCCP t-shirt worn by an American boy asleep against the window opposite. An old man with immaculately waved hair sits reading a tabloid. Compact and stocky, he looks, to my ignorant eye, like a man from the South. Outside the window small farms give way to even smaller and oh, look - is that a conical construction for drying hay? No, it's a children's play area. The landscape is familiar in the way that all flat land is familiar to the East Anglian, but it is only the linear slap of land against sky which we recognise. The architecture is as different from fenland building as Budapest is from Cambridge and it is these parallels of the familiar and the unknown which make both the



*Raku fired pot by Stephen Murfitt*

country and the art - which is the purpose of this article - so rewarding.

Yesterday, we spent a day at the National Gallery, a vast neo-Baroque edifice which, like many things in this remarkable place, is a living testament to the Phoenix-like qualities of the human spirit. Built by the Habsburgs and destroyed by the armies of Germany and Russia in WW2, it was rebuilt in the 1950s and finished only a few years ago. The gallery has a glorious Medieval section, but the great eye-opening revelation was the art of the 20th century. If the architecture elegantly dissembles, the art does not. On the surface all is gentle acquiescence, but look closely and the underlying intentions are clear. *A Young Pioneer* (1950) congratulates her grandfather on his birthday. A simple realist painting, of an old man and a young girl, but the unease in the old man's eyes does not quite engage with the solidly enthusiastic child. *The New Audience in the Box* (1952) shows a recently elevated family at the Opera. The mother, a hard old peasant woman knowing the price of everything, sits with set face, while a younger couple peer out uneasily. The new audience has, by implication, ousted the old. Irony is a cliché often applied to Central Europe and the Hungarians have it in spadesful, along with an innate sense of colour and design. The intelligence of the artists spins through the air, touching the best with a fizzing genius, the rest with above average competence. It is shameful how little the West knows about Hungarian art. The landscapes are dreamlike, but rooted in reality. In one of them, two flapping dark birds skid the surface of a view, one about to land. Below, the snowscape is of tiny dwellings, each heading a small farm, spots of domesticity in the vast spaces of the Great Plain. The portraits combine figuration with clear, rich colours. One of the truest depictions of adolescence I have seen, shows an

outwardly prim young girl with her cool dude of a brother, posing like awkward and exotic insects caught in a background of the most beautiful blue.

Rehearsals for a symphony concert were going on in the gallery and we lent over the top balcony to watch the musicians. No cameras were allowed and ultimately the images which will remain in my mind are those which I could not photograph. The paintings, the music ians, the grim faced women, whose faces suddenly crack into a smile, the quiet good manners of the people (men still giving up their seats to women on the trams). And those trams, snapping their coaches behind as they fling headlong downhill, the taste of the strudels, the smell of the coffee, the distinctive applause after an opera, like a slow chant, becoming faster, the sound of traffic under our apartment window, the priest in the Basilica, whose actual words we could not understand, only their meaning - and the lack of signposts. Why no directions? Because you are supposed to know where to go, apparently. Nor can we photograph the heartbreaking sight of elderly beggars, still with their dignity intact or the tramps peeing across the pavement. We could, but it would feel cheap, a cynical misuse of human misery. We have been here for only a few days, but already the visual stimulation which every artist craves has kicked in and we are sky high on the shapes and colours of this remarkable place. We have seen art from the middle years of the 20th century, painted when daily life had to be undertaken with caution. Do any artists working now in Budapest depict the hidden agenda with such fluid sensitivity? Does any artist working in England? Sledgehammer art is commonplace, but nothing is so devastating as a surface of calm simplicity, hiding quite another message underneath.

## **MUSINGS ...**

### ***THE FIGHTING TEMERAIRE* (1838) by JOSEPH M W TURNER: a review by Mike Roe**

*This national treasure, an oil painting on canvas that was first exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1839, hangs in the National Gallery. Turner was well into later life, a lonely old man at the age of 63 when he painted the picture entitled *Fighting Temeraire Tugged to her last Berth to be Broken up*. It measures 91 x 122 cms and immortalises the final voyage of the famous warship *The Temeraire* being tugged to the breaker's yard.*

*This was a 98-gun warship commissioned in 1798. She was the second ship in the line, and during the battle tried to position herself to draw the fire directed at Nelson's *HMS Victory*. She had become a well-loved national patriotic symbol of naval heroism by the time Turner executed the painting. Turner had in fact painted her previously in his 1808 picture *The Battle of Trafalgar*.*

*It is recorded that Turner must have seen the ship as it was towed down the Thames from Sheerness to Rotherhithe to be broken up, whilst he was staying at or near Margate. Contemporary newspaper reports mention that the ship, already stripped of her masts, sails, rigging and guns, was accompanied by two tugs.*

*Compositionally the two ships occupy the left hand side of the painting balancing, on the right, the sunset and the dark*



*Oryx at Night, etching and gouache by Jill Walden*

shape of a buoy in the foreground. Turner gives far greater prominence to the tug than the warship. He could have reversed the position of the two vessels and instead depicted the impressive high stern of *The Temeraire* being towed away into the setting sun to its demise - perhaps a more poignant but less symbolic alternative compositional approach, and one that would have avoided the critics' claim that Turner took too much artistic licence by placing the setting sun in the east, given that the two ships were proceeding up-river from east to west.

The painting's verticals (the masts, funnel and sails) are all contained within the left side whereas in contrast, the horizontals (the dark red cloud lines and the horizon) occupy the right.

The colours in the picture are limited to the primaries, with the predominant rich reds and golds suffusing both sea and sky, fusing together these main elements into a harmonious whole. Tonally, the dark bulk of the tugboat in the bottom left part of the picture is dominant. In contrast, *The Temeraire* appears ghostlike and insubstantial behind the dark tones in the body and smoke stack of the tug.

The painting is full of symbolism and contrast.

**John Ruskin** commented that the painting was symbolic of the great artist nearing the end of his life's work and relates Turner's fading artistic prominence and semi-retirement on the banks of the Thames to the famous ship's final voyage.

The fire and fumes, man's fire, belching from the tug's funnel echoes nature's fiery clouds immediately above the sun. Turner has seemingly painted these two areas with exactly the same colour red - iodine scarlet - a paint that was newly developed only 20 years previously, but long enough in use for its fugitive nature to have become apparent. Like many artists, the attraction of the pigment's powerful initial brightness was irresistible, and overcame any concerns that Turner might have had about its durability. The fading colour is perhaps symbolic of the fading power of sail and the diminishing artistic power of the great master. Is the nearer ship, the tug, a chilling and foreboding symbol of an uncertain future or, alternatively, are we seeing a beautiful black swan heralding a wonderful new world of technological power?

The sun is setting and the world is changing. The painting captures this moment in a tableau of contemplative stillness. Turner has delivered up to the nation a stunningly rich picture full of majesty, poignancy, symbolism and contrast.

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"A man paints with his brains and not with his hands." (Michelangelo 1475-1564)

## **THE TEMPLE OF BASSAE BY EDWARD LEAR AT THE FITZWILLIAM: review by Mark Handley**

Edward Lear's large oil landscape, *The Temple of Bassae*, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1855, and subsequently bought by 70 subscribers and presented to the Fitzwilliam in 1859. I do not think many visitors pay much attention to it today. It has always hung above the eye-line, and the little gems by **Millais** and company below it distract the hurried tourist. It looks, at a glance, like a dingy and not very successful Victorian effort, now yellowing and suffering from curious concentric pressure ridges and cracks. Yet, it was the fruit of titanic effort on Lear's part in his mid-life struggle to be accepted as a proper landscape painter, not just a natural history illustrator, travelling topographer, purveyor of nonsense and sometimes grumbling guest at various country houses.

This was the last canvas that Lear painted partly in accordance with **Holman Hunt's** *plein air* prescription, on the spot, but not on the spot on the Peloponnese in Arcadia's limpid light, but in a Leicestershire quarry, in the rain. "Today it rains *al solito*. I hate giving anything up - it demoralizes one so. If I could only get the *leaves* done, & one little



bit of fern, I could get the branches and rocks easily. But the leaves are falling fast' he wrote in a letter to Holman Hunt (12.10.1853). He managed to finish the picture a year later, in the studio in London.

Lear, by this time, knew all about Mediterranean light. He was about to take up residence in Corfu, which he had first visited in 1848 and pronounced to be Paradise. But in this picture, his honest attempt to be as Pre-Raphaelite as possible has resulted in a sort of Scottish landscape in which the skeleton of Apollo's temple looks singularly odd and out of place, like a paper cut-out stuck on temporarily to see its effect. The weight of landscape tradition added to by Hunt's back-to-nature insistence lay just too heavily on Lear's shoulders for him to be able to translate the brilliant Greek light he had in his mind's eye into oil paint. The determination to depict every leaf and blade of grass in sharp focus has somehow prevented the myopic artist from achieving a grand overall effect. It is a moving experience to contemplate this gallant failure of a composition and to relish all its meticulous parts, such as the despairing turtle in the right foreground, stranded on the green and orange lichen spotted rocks painted with the utmost concreteness and fastidiousness in spite of the rain.

## THE UNMASKING OF MR SEWELL by Anthony Day

A friend of mine living in London seldom allows me to miss an article in the *London Evening Standard* by that arch denigrator of all things new in art, **Brian Sewell** (and I hope that's the last time my archaic typewriter prints 'Brain'). The friend knows that Sewell animates me principally for the scope he offers for contradiction, although he targets a common enemy sometimes. For I too shrink annually from the Turner Prize fiasco, although the prospect of an exhibition claiming to be its antithesis could never be a compensation. Such extremes inevitably leave out everything worthwhile in between the two.

But it had to happen. *Not the Turner Prize* was an exhibition (as to where it was held, I never allowed myself to discover) sponsored by the *Daily Mail* and *Weekend* consisting of 40 paintings selected rigidly from 400 and, if the eight prize winners' pictures reproduced to go with Mr Sewell's full-paged support were anything to go by, then I was glad to be spared the rest.

I had waited a very long time for him to commit himself to telling us what he likes as opposed to what he loathes in contemporary art and all he could manage to favour, it seems, were these grinding attempts at verisimilitude, each work failing to conceal the labour of its construction. Mr Sewell was won to this for its 'honesty'. His review, mark you, was equally hard-going wherein he missed his scope and flair for demolition as he plodded on claiming to have found something good.

In truth he could have found better in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition which he demolished unreservedly the week before. If he is so reactionary why slam into that? Just force of habit, of course, and the weekly need to confirm the doubts of commuters about modern art. It was no surprise to find these selected painters were part-timers using obvious influences, all of them misunderstood. Laboured nods to pre-Raphaelitism, **Andrew Wyeth**, **Lucien Freud** and even **Terence Cuneo** in a study of a train in a cutting, duller by far than the photograph from which it was stolen.

The other images are a despairing figure on a chair; a self-portrait in a mirror such as the ones that turn up annually in the *BP Portrait Award* show; two women preening themselves; two more at the pots and pans; one head and shoulders of a Friesian cow; a robin in a tree and the head of an elephant, all done to static photographic finishes. All diametrically opposed, indeed, to the Tate cartel's annual - but I have said enough on that.

These paintings may have spine but, like Mr Sewell, they appear to mistrust inspiration altogether. Only evidence of hard labour seems to swerve, that which any artist worth a glance would aim to conceal in the final image, an essential in the creative process. When viewers commend or quarrel with technique the artist has failed. The word 'clever' is anathema to us.

On the evidence of his support for these pictorial banalities Mr Sewell sacrifices credibility as an art critic. Art, it



*Bearded  
Iris,  
pastel by  
Jan  
Davies*



seems, is there primarily to stir his invective against it and there is no light at the end of that tunnel. So perhaps I should stop those cuttings arriving!

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## COLLECTIONS ...

### Continuing our alphabet of 'Collections':

#### 'C'

### COURTAULD'S GIFT by Mark Handley

In an age overflowing with unfillable gallery spaces of industrial proportions it is comforting to think back to those modest drawing rooms once crowded with masterpieces, but not with people, at the top of an unassuming building in Woburn Square. Standing alone in the creaking goods lift (there appeared to be no stairs) by which one reached the old Courtauld Institute Galleries (opened in 1958) one felt one was ascending to heaven.

It seems an incredible piece of luck for this country that **Samuel Courtauld** (1876-1947), heir to the silk business, in one decade, the 1920s, acquired so many superb examples of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, before the megalomania of the art market put such works out of reach even of many a national exchequer.

As a child Samuel Courtauld had been particularly impressed by **Turner's** *Fighting Temeraire* and *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus* at the National Gallery. As a young man he began to look for pictures that he felt inherited the truth and emotional vitality of the old Italian Masters. Fortunately for us he found these qualities in painters such as **Bonnard, Boudin, Cezanne, Daumier, Degas, Gauguin, Manet, Modigliani, Monet, Picasso, Pissaro, Renoir, Rousseau, Seurat, Signac, Sisley, Toulouse-Lautrec, Utrillo, Van Gogh** and **Vuillard**.

Of these, Cezanne and Seurat were the most acquired. The Cezannes were of outstanding quality and I spent a great deal of time contemplating *La Montagne Sainte Victoire* and *Le Lac d'Annecy* almost obsessively as though they contained the secret of eternal life. I was also put into a sort of trance by Daumier's mysterious monochrome study of *Don Quichotte et Sancho Panza*. Monet's painting *Antibes* with its dark sinuous pine in the foreground was the very essence of the Mediterranean to me, and Gauguin's *Nevermore* the apotheosis of that sensuality one was brought up to beware of, a more urban and less exotic version of which was also temptingly depicted in Manet's *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergere*.

Samual and Elizabeth Courtauld's taste never extended to the Fauve or Cubist phases of painting. A Picasso with charm (a rarity) was acquired, *L'enfant au Pigeon* of 1901. His gift in 1923 of £50,000 to the nation for the purchase of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings made possible the purchase of such works as Seurat's *Baignade* and Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. The numerous small studies by Seurat were among my favourite objects of contemplation at Woburn Square. I must arise and buy a train ticket to London and go and see whether all these old friends, part of one's mental furniture for all these years, can be seen now on the somewhat grander walls of Somerset House!

*Ed: they can indeed, but more on that another time.*

## 'D'

### DULWICH PICTURE GALLERY

The Dulwich Picture Gallery was England's first public art gallery, and it continues to house the world's most important and oldest collections of European Old Master paintings of the 1600s and 1700s.

It owes its conception to the partnership of two Georgian art dealers, the Swiss **Sir Francis Bourgeois** and the Frenchman **Noel Desenfans**, who not only worked together but lived together, with Desenfan's wife, in Charlotte (now Hallam) Street. Their legendary entertaining was immortalised in a watercolour portrait by **Paul Sandby**.

In 1790 they were commissioned by the **King of Poland** to form a Royal Collection-cum-National Gallery to promote the arts in Poland. By the time they had achieved this, five years later, Poland had been partitioned and the King forced to abdicate, leaving them with the collection on their hands. Whilst seeking a fresh home for the collection, they continued to improve it by buying and selling individual works from their house. The Tzar of Russia and the British Government were approached, amongst other bodies. When it became obvious that they would be unable to sell the collection in its entirety, they sought suitable institutions where they could bequeath it. After Desenfans' death in 1807, Sir Francis Bourgeois became the sole owner and continued the search. The British National Gallery had not then been formed, and he found the British Museum too 'arbitrary' and 'aristocratic' (both loaded words in the era of the French Revolution), so he decided to leave the collection to the then Dulwich College, clearly stating that the paintings were for public display.

Consequently a new building designed by **Sir John Soane** in 1811 was planned as the first side of a quadrangle. This had three functions: a Mausoleum for the Founders' remains, a gallery for the collection, and almshouses for six old women,

since converted into extra display space. It is now one of the world's most famous interiors, inspiring both the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery and the J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. The high lanterns and coved vaults provide warm daylight for the paintings, and the perfect proportions and simple arches create a peaceful ambiance, contrasting with the dramatic effect of the low and dark Mausoleum.

The original building was damaged by a bomb in 1944; five new galleries were added between 1908 and 1938 and a new porch added in 1952. Recent building work has restored as much as possible of Soane's original space and his intention of completing a second quadrangle side. This new wing, designed by Rick Mather Architects, will house visitor facilities.

The permanent picture collection includes Italian works such as the nudes of **Guido Reni**, and **Guercino's Woman Taken in Adultery**; Spanish works by **Murillo**; French ones such as **Poussin's Nurture of Jupiter** and **Watteau's idylls**; Flemish works such as **Rubens** and **Teniers**; Dutch paintings by **Rembrandt**, **Gerrit Dou**, **Aelbert Cuyp** and **Lely**, and English paintings by **Gainsborough**.

Forthcoming changing exhibitions include *Shakespeare in Art* until 19 October, *Humphrey Ocean - How's my Driving* until 14 September, *Heath Robinson* 5 Nov to 18 Jan 04, and *Crystal Palace at Sydenham* 4 Feb - 18 Apr 04.

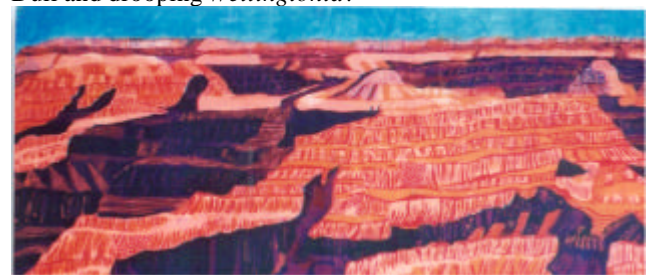
### TO THE GREAT HORSE CHESTNUT TREE THAT STOOD BESIDE THE WEST GATE OF THE BOTANIC GARDEN AT CAMBRIDGE 1840-2003: tribute by Mark Handley

All-conkering king,  
Giant chandelier  
In Spring,  
Autumnal bombardier  
Of Hobson's Brook,  
Beloved harbinger  
Of the season's look!



For fear that you'd decide  
To lie down in the road,  
Before the saving grace of flowers  
From sticky buds explode,  
Chain-saws did in hours  
What gales for years had tried.

Whose throat has not a lump  
At your sawdust-shrouded stump,  
Revealing behind it only a  
Dull and drooping *Wellingtonia*?



*Grand Canyon, silk batik by Jill Walden*

## ART ON A PLATE ...

by Katharine Macpherson DA

A jar of home-made onion marmalade is a great store-cupboard standby. A spoonful magically transforms many simple starters into special ones with its lovely sweet-and-sour tanginess. The only problem is that this recipe is so delicious it tends not to stay on the shelf very long!

Most recipes for onion marmalade use white wine vinegar. The balsamic vinegar in this one adds richness, while the apple and sultanas provide extra sweetness.

I've shown it served with a slice of terrine, but it goes just as well with a platter of cheese or wedge of quiche.

### ONION MARMALADE

1 tablespoon olive oil  
5 onions, finely sliced  
2 apples, peeled, cored and thinly sliced  
30g sultanas  
100ml balsamic vinegar  
50g brown sugar

\* In a casserole dish, gently fry the onions in the oil for five minutes, stirring to prevent sticking.

\* Add the apples and sultanas and continue cooking for another five minutes.

\* Add the balsamic vinegar and sugar and bring to the boil.

\* Reduce the heat, cover the dish with a lid, and simmer gently for two hours - stirring from time to time - until the balsamic vinegar has almost all been absorbed and the onions are soft and dark and luscious.

\* Allow to cool slightly, then spoon into a sterilised preserve jar and seal.

This quantity is just enough to fill a standard size jar (around 340g) with enough left over for one meal accompaniment for four people. So you can use it immediately and save some for later.



*Ca'Doro, batik by  
Jill Walden*

*Pamela Marshall Barrell*

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Our wine correspondent **Paul Bowes** of *Bacchanalia* and *Jug & Firkin* (01223 576292) says: Go for something entirely different! *Pineau des Charentes*, most often served as an aperitif or a desert wine. *Chateau de Beaulon* would be a good choice. This is a white wine fortified with cognac, so be aware of the 18% alcohol content. A regional favourite in the West of France so if you have been to La Rochelle you may have tasted it. With the combination of cheeses and a forceful onion marmalade, the fresh apple nose and warm but not too sweet after taste, it would be a wonderful complement to such a starter. Serve chilled in small glasses and advise 'sipping'! The recommended wine is made by Christian Thomas of Saint Dizart du Gua.

### THE FRY ART GALLERY

6 September - 26 October:

*The Olive Cook Bequest and drawings for sale by Edwin Smith*

8 - 9 November: *Annual Sale by invited artists*

Castle Street, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1BD

Telephone 01799 513779

[www.fryartgallery.org](http://www.fryartgallery.org)

### ART CLASSES IN THE GALLERY RECOMMENCE

Thursday mornings  
25th September to  
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(half term 30th October)  
£8 payable whenever  
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### COMING SHORTLY

30th October to 22nd November:

**Pamela Hughes** - A Retrospective - watercolours, wood engravings, woodcuts and etchings

27th November to 20th December:

**Cambridge Drawing Society**

Don't forget that in between specific exhibitions the gallery is still open every Saturday and first Sunday in each month or by appointment. Also, if you do not see what you are looking for, please ask - we will probably have it in our store room.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS CHANGES. COLOURED VERSIONS OF THIS NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE £10 per year, £2.75 per copy.