OPenArtLincs

Art News: Mar'24

Introduction

Welcome to the March'24 edition of Art News, and many thanks to everyone who has submitted the variety of items that make this newsletter possible. The readership continues to grow with a steady trickle of new contacts approaching five hundred in total.

This issue includes the launch of the first **Lincolnshire Virtual Open Exhibition** and we hope you will give it a try (details later in this newsletter). Unlike conventional open exhibitions this one is not preceded by a competitive phase in which art is 'assessed' before being selected for showing. Even with assessment, because the element of subjectivity is still present, when an exhibition opens we will still continue to hear people wondering how such and such a piece of art was accepted and why yet another wonderful piece was rejected….!

This is not to suggest that assessment (of the formal kind – not the default Yes/No) is unimportant in art; like all developmental disciplines it's essential in order to make progress. However, talent and creativity apart, getting known in art appears to have a large element of luck attached to it based on limiting factors such as wealth and who you know. The aim of the Lincolnshire Virtual Open Exhibition then is to give everyone an equal opportunity to have their artwork seen by a much wider audience. There is no paywall to entry and it is not limited by any art gate-keepers (other than the requirement for the art to be suitable for viewing by people under eighteen) Who knows? - this may be the first step towards a new art venture?

Being Present (or not!)

Susanna Lisle who will be the speaker at the April Art Talk recently sent me a rather sublime quote (which I believe applies not just to art, but to any kind of creative practice). It's by the Canadian American painter, printmaker, muralist and draftsman - Philip Guston - who said:

"When you're in the studio painting, there are a lot of people in there with you - your teachers, friends, painters from history, critics... and one by one if you're really painting, they walk out. And if you're really painting YOU walk out!"

I would argue that the latter part cannot be easily achieved under our own volition (but that doesn't mean we are not producing good work). However there are times when we are working in a quite different way and this has been described as 'in the flow' or 'being authentic' and the reference by Guston to these times as '**really** painting' has inspired the theme for the Virtual Open Art Exhibition **'This is Real!'** with the hope that this experience can be captured in the submissions.

The atelier in the Rembrandt Museum

Finally, thanks for all the supportive and understanding e-mails received, following the announcement of the cancellation of this year's open art exhibition at the LAC. A complaint was made about the failings of the LAC/University to the deputy Vice Chancellor, and a couple of replies

were received informing us the complaint had been forwarded to other senior members of staff, with the familiar message of 'lessons would be learnt!' On the LAC website it says "We are open to ideas!" - let's hope they mean it now…!

We are continuing to explore other venues for the open exhibition, and are determined to ensure that an open art exhibition becomes an annual event in order to bring Lincoln into the 21st century like other towns and cities.

Call for Content: Art News is largely based on contributions from the readership of ~500 people, and if you have anything (exhibitions, awards, stories, talks, poems, essays etc) that you would like included in the next issue, please send it by e-mail to openartlincs@gmail.com by April 12th. Many thanks.

The contents of the March'24 edition of Art News are listed below:

1. Open Call - Lincolnshire Virtual Open Exhibition:
The call for submissions to the 1st Lincolnshire Virtual Open Exhibition is now live! The theme is **'This is Real!'** and all the terms and conditions, and details on how to submit your work can be found at:

https://www.open-art-lincs.com/virtual-open-exhibition

The virtual exhibition space is called 'Georgia' and can hold up to 110 pieces of wall art and 6 pieces in 3D as shown below. If you would like to have a walk around the empty gallery space go to:

https://www.open-art-lincs.com/virtual-open-gallery-24

The deadline for submissions is June 14th'24 and the exhibition will go live as soon as sufficient submissions have been received. This is a great opportunity to try something different and have your work on show nationally and internationally. It's free of charge to enter, and there's no commission fees if you sell your art. All sales transactions are managed by the artist.

Here's some feedback from Kate Boulton who was the first artist to try out a virtual gallery on the **OP**en **A**rt **L**incs Website:

"It's a really interesting way to see the artwork so you can focus on each piece individually and see the detail and depth of the piece. You can take your time and see artwork from the comfort of your home." Kate Boulton

Kate's Virtual Gallery can be viewed at: https://www.open-art-lincs.com/kate-boulton

2 Art Talks:

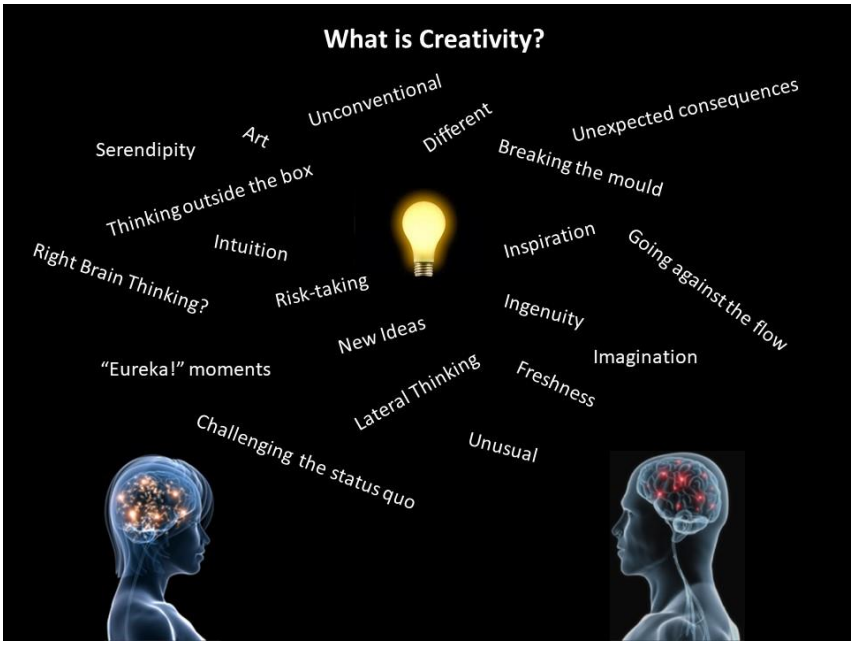
a) Peter Wood: There's still a few places left for the next Art Talk - 'An English Impressionist in France' by Peter Wood on 26th March at 7.00pm. More details and reservations are available at:

https://www.open-art-lincs.com/art-talks

To see Peter in action he has produced a number of YouTube teaching videos and here's one on the use of Acrylic Inks and Soft Pastels:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LT6DiUT0p5M

b) Kevin Byron will be giving a talk on 'What Inspires Art?' in the auditorium of The Lincoln Museum hosted by The Friends of Lincoln Museums and Art Gallery on 21st March starting at 1.30pm. This talk asks some basic questions about creativity and the creative process, and then describes some common perennial patterns of creative ideas appearing in a variety of forms from science to art. Then Dr Byron will go on to discuss his book 'What Inspires Art?' published last year that came about as a result of the Usher Open art competition in 2022. Any profit from sales of the book 'What Inspires Art?' will go to The Usher Gallery Trust: http://lincolnmuseumfriends.co.uk/progamme.htm



3. Exhibitions:

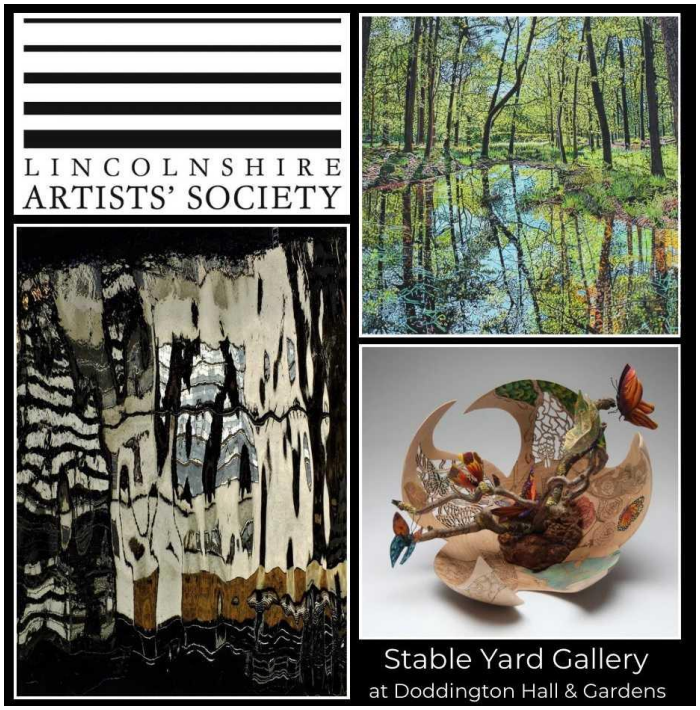
a) Last chance to see **Denise Hawthorne** and other members of The Nadin Art Group exhibiting at St Martin's Gallery 37b Hungate (LN1 1ET) March 4-17th.

The Nadin Group is a collective of up to twenty four Lincolnshire based artists. It is named after Gill Nadin who worked and taught art in Lincoln. When Gill died in 1996 a group of her students continued to meet and work together. This group formed the basis of the current Nadin Group. Members of the group facilitate monthly meetings with a theme and we aim to present an exhibition twice a year for those who wish to show recent works. https://www.denisehawthorne.com/

b) The Artists of Navenby are holding their annual exhibition and sale of paintings and cards on May 11th and 12th between 11.00am and 4.00pm at St Peter's Church, Navenby. There will be refreshments and a tombola and proceeds and kind donations will go towards St Peter's Church fabric fund.

St Peter's Church, Navenby

c) Lincolnshire Artists Society are having an exhibiton on the theme of 'Reflections' at the Stable Yard Gallery, Doddington Hall and Gardens LN6 4RU from 29th March to 14th April (open daily 10am-4pm Free Entry). 'Reflections' will contain a diverse selection of numerous recent works including both two and three-dimensional art: www.lincolnshireartistssociety.com



d) Edie and Anne Mayes are having an exhibition of photographs and paintings on the theme of 'Relativity' at The Gallery at St Martins, 37b Hungate (LN1 1ET) from Monday 25th to Sunday 31st March.

e) The Harley Gallery: Hilary Bower has forwarded information on an open art competition at the Harley Gallery (near Worksop). The Harley Open 2022 showed 125 pieces of art made by 118 different artists, all living and working within 100 miles of the gallery. The deadline for submissions is 30th June 2024.

https://harleyfoundation.org.uk/whats-on/event/the-harley-open-2024/

f) Livingstone St Ives: We are excited to review submissions from artists working across all mediums – paintings, ceramics, stoneware, textile, photography, prints, jewellery, and more – and from artists of all ages and abilities. The gallery's favourite 30 artworks will be featured in a commercial exhibition in our Clifton gallery in late June 2024, from which 5 artists will be invited to exhibit in a future exhibition in the gallery. Submissions open now until 30th March, 11.59pm.

https://livingstonestives.co.uk/open-call-2024/

4. The Interview with Dave Kenyon (aka Hobden):

1. When and how did you first begin to express your artistic skills?

I guess I was pre-teen. Both parents were makers; mum was a seamstress working from home. Dad was a bricklayer. This created a good environment for my cardboard and wooden constructions. I carved a wooden sports car when I was ten. I drew recognisable objects from an early age.

2. What inspired your earlier artistic practice?

Well, speaking now about photography. I needed to put together an application portfolio for film school. I'd done a lot of amateur drama stuff, both on and off stage and wanted to make TV and films. You couldn't study that straight from school. But you could do photography, then transfer into film after a year (I could get a grant for this - which was an absolute necessity). My dad managed to get a mid-range Kodak and I used that. My sister worked for a pharmacist and he got my shots processed and printed for me. He backed me up if I wasn't happy with their results. I also submitted a film script, which I doubt anybody read.

3. Who or what influenced your artistic development?

Well, that's difficult. Different folks for different strokes (and at different times). When I worked in Devon at the art college, I guess it was the Critical Theory of photography people like Victor Burgin and Jo Spence. Also, I studied Cultural Theory with The Open University and that was very influential.

Since then, I've rediscovered some individual photographers whose work suggests I'm not alone in my way of seeing. Lee Friedlander and Harry Gruyaert have been inspirational. P.H. Emerson and Walker Evans were early favourites who've stayed with me.

4. What do you regard as memorable achievements during your art career?

Before I graduated, I was an organiser of the first national undergraduate photographic show, VIDI, and that seemed a big thing for a 19 year old.

When I had my exhibition of large joiners in Devon, a local 'arts' reporter compared my work with David Hockney's 'mum joiners' - not to Hockney's benefit. I doubt the reporter ever lived that down!

In Lincolnshire I guess I'll never forget my first exhibition in The Library. The work and its display was very satisfying. Also showing in St Mary's gallery between lockdowns was an experience.

5. What are your thoughts/feelings about abstract art? Is it something you have experimented with?

For me, most of my work is first and foremost 'abstract'. This may seem odd for a photographer. Most people judge photos by their relation to the 'pro-photographic'; that which is recorded in the image. But for me, the photo of the pipe is a PHOTO. Not even simply a representation (as Magritte) but a culturally positioned composition. Positioned by viewers' notions (conscious or unconscious). I vainly hope that some of these might coincide with my notions at the time of 'exposure' and later processing.

6. What are your thoughts on the art scene in Lincolnshire?

I think there are many practitioners in Lincolnshire, but not many good venues for viewing.
I sometimes fantasize about a county-wide group who might spend their time arranging pop-up galleries in the shops which unfortunately stand empty on our High Streets. That would be a bit like how some cities have organised their permits so that film-makers find it easier to shoot scenes there.

7. Do you keep informed about current trends in art? If so what are your thoughts on this? Where is it going?

I don't think much that interests me has happened in art since the 80s. The cultural politics that inspired much art then has been turned in on itself, or dissolved into style.

Photography is very different in different genres. Social media has revolutionised documentary and fashion. Art photography is very much a curate’s egg to my way of thinking.

I'm very old fashioned in many ways when it comes to photography. An image either resonates with me visually - or I'm not really interested.

8. What are your artistic ambitions for the future?

I had nearly 20yrs away from making pictures 'seriously'. So, having come back to it in the last 10yrs, I hope to keep at it till I drop.

It would be nice if more people came to the shows in Lincoln's Central Library. Now we're without the Sam Scorer, it's one of the best venues which currently has open access to showing. I'll be there again in the autumn. This time with abstract street photography.

Photography by Hobden: https://photohobden.smugmug.com

5. News

Artists from Lincolnshire are having a lot of success in being selected to show at The Mall Galleries in London as detailed in the following three news items:

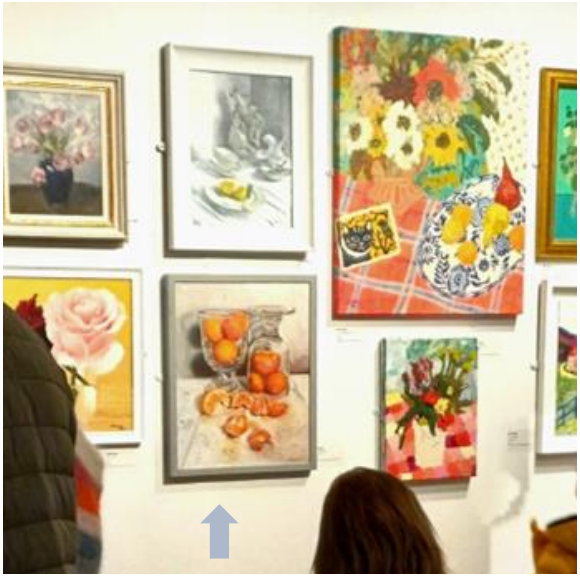
a) Lisa Tank has had one her pieces - 'Heathland' - accepted for the Royal Institute of Watercolour Artists exhibition at The Mall Galleries in London 28th March - 13th April.

Heathland by Lisa Tank (https://www.lisatankart.com/)

b) Esteban Pena Parga has also been selected to show at the same exhibition as Lisa. His painting is a result of his research into 'Invisible Light'. The process previous to painting requires a handful of photographs of the flower under ultraviolet, infrared and visible light. Through lights and filters, a spectrum of light is captured beyond what is visible, beyond the colors of the rainbow that we know. The surprising results reveal bright specks of nectar and pollen scattered across the petals and leaves, and concentrated most densely in the central carpels of each flower. This way we could see something imperceptible to our eyesight but that was right in front of our noses. Bees see ultraviolet light and therefore a flower's luminescent nectar is designed to glow so they can easily see it and be attracted to the flower. As they feast on nectar, they collect pollen which they then take with them to pollinate other flowers. The paintings are made by layering only the basic colours (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black), the colours are not mixed in the palette, they are mixed in the work itself.

https://estebanpena.com/portfolio/art-wild-flowers-salvajes-painting-photo/

c) Roy Summerfield Shapiro had a wonderful evening with Annie Samuel, Ginny Page and other artists at the opening of the RBA exhibition in London, where he had one of his pieces on show. Roy said *"It was great to see my painting so well displayed amongst so many really beautiful paintings. Quite an inspiration. The Mall Galleries is a lovely venue, not as large as the Royal Academy, so fewer paintings on display, a more intimate atmosphere even though it was crammed with people!"*



Mall Gallery exhibition featuring "DOWNSIDE UP" by Roy Summerfield Shapiro
(https://royshapiroart.com/)

For Sale: Mal Reynolds of Harlequin Frames has a number of offcuts of thick (3.5mm) mountboard for sale cut to a customers requirement for approx 50% of the normal cost. The maximum size is around A3 outside dimension and the aperture can be cut as required. Should any artists wish to take up this offer please e-mail openartlincs@gmail.com to be put in contact with Mr Reynolds.

4. An Essay on Art by Martin Moyers (Part 1)

SPIRIT OF PLACE -- PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

The Earth Beneath our Feet

Grounding - Balance - Stability - Gravity - Land - Landforms - Landscape
Landschap - Landswept - the Sublime - Place - Cookham - Pennsylvania - Wolds AONB -
Tennyson - Edward Thomas - Rolo - walking – pilgrimage

In an uncertain era where the world meets new challenges on all fronts it is natural to be fearful and seek some form of certainty. The force of gravity binds us to the surface of our planet. Paul Wellers' lyrics in a song called "Gravity" are,

"Oh gravity stay close to me wherever I am"!

For millennia unseen forces have gradually shaped our landscape together with climate change. Such forces are immeasurably powerful and not within our control. Nature is a force all of its own. It can be shocking, astonishing, devastating and unremorseful. We live in a universe that does not care one jot what happens to us on an individual and collective level. It does not care whether you win the lottery or not, whether you are rich or poor. Nature is just as uncompassionate and uncaring.

Life is precarious, always on a knife edge. Living and dying is the struggle and challenge representing the human condition on a daily basis. The land we walk through, travel through, and stand firmly upon thanks to the cosmic force of gravity is the connecting principle and offers us some form of stability no matter how unpredictable. It connects us all and can reassure us from our worst fears. And yet, the landscape itself is part of this struggle for survival and emblematic of the human condition. In his book about British 20th C landscape painters Christopher Neves refers to the landscape as committing suicide. In Edvard Munch's "The Scream" the artist wrote in his diary about feeling a wave of despair, and this encounter with existential dread and the overwhelming weight of existence became the driving force for this act of painting. The landscape personifies the human condition and sentiently screams a silent scream. Tennyson who lived in the Victorian era is known for his vivid and imaginative use of nature in his poetry using nature as a symbol for human emotion and feelings. Exploring the relationship between man and nature he depicts nature as a powerful force that can shape and transform the human soul.

Historically speaking the British landscape goes unnoticed in art until Capability Brown creates his rolling vistas of an artificial landscape, a garden countryside for the wealthy and privileged few. The perception of landscape from farmland to manicured garden in Claudian classical style to the 18th and 19th century Romantics relish for the extreme changed. The "Sublime" tradition where spectacular views demanded admiration and astonishment at the majesty, power, awe and beauty of nature became the currency. This movement gave rise to the pursuit of the "Grand Tour" which did not always turn out for the best. Some young men, rather than taking the opportunity to acquire as much cultural knowledge and polish as possible, gambled away fortunes, formed misalliances, or contracted venereal disease during their sexual exploits. These young men willingly engaged with the dangers of travelling in places where danger abounded. The landscape itself was dangerous and violent, viewed with astonishment and horror at its melancholy grandeur. This is typical of Tennyson's metaphoric and anthropomorphic view of nature in a great deal of his poetry and especially so in, "In memoriam", where he refers to;

"Nature red in tooth and claw!"

Julie Andrews in the musical "Sound of Music" sang against the backdrop of impending invasion from Nazi Germany,

"The hills are alive with the sound of music".

Beauty and the Beast! The magnificent beauty of the Alps betrayed itself because there was a creeping malevolent beastial presence lurking in the area that was sometimes hidden. A hidden threat of the worst kind.

Landscape has inspired countless generations of artists, musicians and writers. The underlying forces that create such inspirational responses to landscapes are the powerful forces of nature. Earthquakes, tsunami, volcanic eruptions, wave action, wind action, erosion gave rise to such places as the Grand Canyon, the Himalayas, and such catastrophic events as Pompeii and the levelling of Lisbon in 1755 which was one of the most destructive and deadly earthquakes in history, killing more than one third of the entire population of the Portuguese capital. Tens of thousands of Portuguese who survived the earthquake were killed by the tsunami triggered by the earthquake. So here we are, the “Earth Beneath our Feet” is not as reliable as you had expected!

The energies applied to landscape that bring about such dramatic events in the forms of erosion, fracture, movement and continual change make the durability of landscape and landforms somewhat dubious and unreliable. Landscape changes its forms over Time and yet the view can remain the same. In her book “Spirit of place“ Susan Owens *writes "artists and writers do not just describe our landscapes they make it too!”* Christopher Neves' thesis in his book “Unquiet Landscapes” is that by thinking in paint artists/painters have come to regard the landscape as *“representing states of mind”*. Through engagement with landscape a mixture of emotions, responses, interpretations, unconscious influences and contradictions conclude in the creative act of painting.

ROOTED TO THE SPOT

Cookham by Stanley Spencer 1914

For Stanley Spencer it was Cookham that held his lifelong attention. A place that he was rooted and grounded like an ancient oak tree. A continuing presence where nothing much happened in the natural idyll of its landscape. “Pot- boilers” he called the paintings that brought home the bread and butter, but Cookham also had its mysteries. Disconcerting

biblical events took place there in his imagination, *"The Betrayal"*, *"The Annunciation"* and the zombie like figures of *"The Resurrection"* where bodies erupt from the churchyard graves like converts to Dracula. Underneath it all, behind it all was the ever present meticulous observation of his surroundings. Cookham, a place to Spencer of almost rapturous spirituality which for him exuded that aspect of landscape amidst people, of Spirit of Place, of religiosity. Almost divine in spite of its very secular setting and dictated to by a rural romanticism. He is in pursuit of a form of realism led by objective seeing and recording yet underneath this picturesque village way of life there is a slight sense of foreboding as if things are too good to be true. Hence the later biblical "revelations" and visions set against bucolic Cookham. Christopher Neve writes *"it was an insistence on the continuity of the place. To be rooted is a human need. Seeing is believing when it coincides with your own soul".* The pot-boiler landscapes are optimistic in view yet his personal life was fraught with anxiety as personal disasters widened the gap between vision and reality. A sense of foreboding had always been just lying beneath the surface of the work.

"Such feelings can transfigure landscapes. It does not come from the landscape itself but seeps into it. Like any mood or humour such as elation or a sense of sanctity, it can be expressed with places as their subject." Christopher Neve.

Sir Stanley Spencer The Resurrection Cookham 1924-7.

***OP**en **A**rt **L**incs Mar'24*