

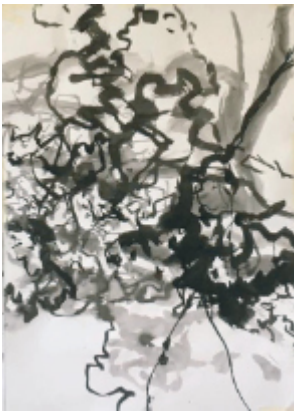


Dumfries and Galloway Fine Arts Society Autumn 2020



Cosmos Forms - Ruth Elizabeth Jones and Emma Varley

On the cover



On the front: Cosmos Forms, on porcelain, by Ruth Elizabeth Jones and Emma Varley.
On the back, a woodland painting in ink by Patti Lean

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From the editor

Art during lockdown “helped to keep me sane”...“I had to do something I’ve been meaning to do for years”...“gave me something positive to focus on” - some of members’ reactions to what must be one of the strangest times in most of our lives.

Without the usual demonstrations and workshops to report on or preview, this edition explores members’ coronavirus lockdown experiences, starting with some moving reflections by our president, Patti Lean. Thanks to all those who have shared their thoughts and their art.

We also take a look back, to a time when we were emerging from another dark period, the second world war - and when the society thought itself fortunate to have all of £168 in the bank.

Ian Irving
ian@dumfriesandgallowayfineartsociety.org.uk

Diary dates 2020-21

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| November 27 | Deadline for entries to virtual Christmas exhibition on the website |
| December 1 | Virtual exhibition begins |
| April 18-May 1 | Spring exhibition at Harbour Cottage Gallery, Kirkcudbright |

The chairman writes:

This is not an easy article to write as we have been in isolation for the last few months and I hope that it hasn't been too hard on you all. Even though the coronavirus situation may have eased off a bit these are still not normal times, with little to look forward to yet.

For many of us, though, this has been a good time to do some creative work and experiment with different colours, different media and different subjects.



Kathleen

We have had to cancel exhibitions, demonstration and workshops, but have tried to keep DAGFAS things going with our virtual exhibitions on the website. What should have been the Harbour Cottage Gallery exhibition in Kirkcudbright in the spring was the first to go online, with the gallery linking to it from their website as well.

The 93rd annual summer exhibition could not go ahead at Gracefield but was put on our website, Gracefield also showing it on theirs for five weeks in July. Both virtual exhibitions drew considerable interest from the public, with over a thousand viewers in April and two thousand for the annual show. We have decided not to go ahead with a Christmas exhibition at the Ottersburn Gallery this year but we will do another virtual show, so I hope you will once again support this way of showing your work.

Sadly, we have to remember Melville Brotherston, who passed away at Midpark in Dumfries on April 21. Melville was twice president of DAGFAS and set up and ran Moniaive Arts Association until his retirement two years ago. He was a great artist, tutor and friend. On July 22 Victor Henderson died at the Alexandra Unit in Dumfries Infirmary. His demonstrations and workshops were great fun and he will be sadly missed.

Davy Brown's role as honorary president ended in April this year and we are delighted to welcome Patti Lean in this position.

Hopefully we can soon have a normal council meeting and make plans for next year. I look forward to seeing you all in the not too distant future. Stay safe and well.

Kathleen Woods

Winter show will be online

It's going to be a virtual show again in the run-up to Christmas, so members can start sending in their images from November 1.

The online exhibition will run from December 1 up to Christmas (and possibly into the new year.)

Take photos or scans of your work - two items per member - and email them to the address below. As usual, paintings, drawings, prints and crafts may be submitted (there will be no selection process). Digital art is also accepted.

The title, medium and price (if for sale) of each work must be stated. The society cannot handle sales but inquiries will be passed on to the artists concerned. **Deadline for entries: November 27**

When photographing your work try to ensure it is evenly lit, straight in front of the camera and not at a distorting angle, and free from reflections from glass.



How the virtual summer show appeared

Looking ahead

In the hope that conditions will once more allow a “real” exhibition, we have booked the Harbour Cottage Gallery in Kirkcudbright for April 18 to May 1 next year.

Full details will be published in the spring 2021 edition of the magazine and on the website.

Entries to: ian@dumfriesandgallowayfineartsociety.org.uk

Art in a time of uncertainty

Not Knowing

by **Patti Lean**

"The thing to be known grows with the knowing"- Nan Shepherd.

I won't lie: at times I'm gripped with fear. All my friends and neighbours have "stuff" going on: family concerns, work issues, isolation, all taking up massive energy and focus. Despite feeling lucky, safe and well, my mind has become increasingly scattered by relentless bad news, and the practicalities of re-arranging life to fit "unprecedented times".

This summer I recorded an abundance of wildflowers on the moorland, including wild orchid, tormentil, lady's mantel, birdsfoot trefoil, meadowsweet, devil's bit. Soon these flowers with their evocative names will disappear from this place, because the owner of the land will blanket the moor with commercial sitka spruce, despite local objections.

I'm literally forcing myself to switch off social media, and get out for a walk or cycle (even a swim if

the weather's decent). I stare at reflections in Mossdale Loch - willow, birch, reeds, clouds - and imagine the area in a few months' time. As Nan Shepherd puts it, "Bulldozers birse their way into the hill. Roads are made and re-made, where there were never roads before".

I've been drawing and painting there regularly, and my need to get to know the place becomes more urgent. I'm trying to forget about producing pictures or finished work; just responding to what's in front of me. I often paint with ink, using extended brushes, which puts control out of my hands as I follow moving curves, lines or ripples within the tangle at the loch's edge.

The painter John Skinner said to me once, "If you think you know what something looks like, try looking at it reflected in water". I like the "not-knowing" that challenges preconceived notions of appearance, because then you get surprises.

Repeatedly paying attention to the same place emphasises how much there is to know; how the place is in constant flux, never definitively



Photo: P.Lean

knowable. Back in the studio I relate the parts I've recorded, to make a new whole; editing and selecting, trying different media, seeking to define mood, memory and feeling.

So we make choices about how we represent shifting, uncertain experience, choosing materials, scale, composition, colour, trying this and that. Just possibly, amongst all the choices, we identify something that rings true or illuminates - going in our art from not-knowing to knowing, even if that knowledge is fleeting and contingent. In art as in life, "not-knowing" seems especially fitting these days.

Patti Lean, September 2020.
patti@pattilean.co.uk

With thanks to three sources from which I adapted the ideas outlined above:

Nan Shepherd (2011 edition) *The Living Mountain: A Celebration of the*



"I relate the parts I've recorded to make a new whole..."

Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland.
Edinburgh, Canons: p.108

Sister Corita Kent (2008 edition)
Learning by Heart: Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit. New York, Allworth Press.

Artist John Skinner <http://www.johnskinner.me.uk>

Hazel Campbell I was looking forward to running a painting day in June, but it was not to be. In accordance to lockdown rules I moved the bare minimum of materials to

composition more, as normally I use so much colour. I also had to address my problem with the bottom 1/4 of any painting. The top part seems to work, but I have trouble resolving



our kitchen table and worked there for a month. After that I gave up and moved back to the studio where I wasn't in contact with anyone anyway. A few crayons, pencils, one bottle of ink and one tube of paint with a couple of sketch books. That was my lot! Was amazed at what could be produced with so little. Maybe we all have too much stuff! The weather was lovely and I sketched often. The reduced materials made me consider tone and

the bottom. Maybe the discipline has been good for me. Recently I have been working on mount board primed with household paint. The little sample pots from any DIY store are good. The process gives a slight key to the board and produces interesting effects, and the use of ink can be interesting.

I miss my teaching and the chat it brings. Thank goodness for Patti Lean's mark making day in February!

Art in a time of uncertainty

Ruth Elizabeth Jones and **Emma Varley** have exhibited with Spring Fling for the past three years and have honed their collaborative process over time and by sharing best practice as Lecturers in Creative Industries at Dumfries and Galloway College.

Emma writes: Lockdown has slowed the collaborative process but not halted it. Conversations have continued. Collaboration is via Whats App, images and dialogue exchanged over video chat. When circumstance allows, the work will be showcased in both digital and 'new normal' exhibitions.

We share similarities in our meditative process, the layering of rolled thin skins of colour onto a plexiglass plate, borne onto paper by the rotating metal roller in the print press, mirrors the coils of pressed grogged clay layered and built into walls, which are scraped back to reveal form, born from fire and kindled by smoke to create lunar like surfaces.



Time and process through meditative repetition has become a reference point from which to collaborate.

United by time and process the 'Cosmos Forms' capture personal worlds suspended in form and colour, objects of meditation which reference the natural world. As a single entity with a clear focal point or as multiples they evoke the natural environment, radiating, vibrating and pulsing.

The black porcelain forms are wheel thrown, 'centres of energy', touchable

earth with throwing lines that evoke primordial mark-making. Trails of white glaze are brush applied, again referencing time and the natural environment; a spiral, a repeated motion, a circle, the globe, our planet the stars, sun, moon..... cyclical nature of time, the universe, the cosmos.

The digital drawings are created on an iPad, 'centres of energy' are locked in a cloud of technology untouchable like the cosmos. A finger tip trails multiple coloured spirals from the centre, edges meet, overlap, collide and dance on the backlit screen. Printed onto ceramic decals, water floated onto the forms and fired to become fused with the mature clay body.

Jane Howe I have done several online drawing sessions with Leith School of Art and life drawing at the RA. It meant I had to set up an Instagram account - something I



Brighter bin for Loch Ken



have been meaning to do for years. The painting (below) was done outside my studio in sunshine using all kinds of paint on canvas, rough allusions to Kippford area from memory.

I have been working on a project with the council to paint the litter bins at the North end of Loch Ken, hopefully to include all the bins around Loch Ken at some point.

The drawing/painting sessions with Leith were ideal as only supposed to be for half an hour every Monday and Friday and I used materials in a more disciplined way...like being at school again! Was good to have a routine and head space away from what was going on around and about.

Martine Berlemont

With such a lovely spring there were plenty of distractions at the beginning of lockdown but once the garden was at least partly under control I began to focus more on doing some painting.

Having recently taken on the role of Volunteer Artist at WWT Caerlaverock I had no lack of inspiration and decided to complete the various projects I had been assigned during lockdown.

One of these involved identifying individual whooper swans. This fascinating work was originally started by the founder of WWT, Sir Peter Scott. Having watched and recorded the swans over a period of time I found it extremely rewarding to carry on some small part of this work.

So this and the other work for WWT kept me busy as did the opportunity to exhibit virtually with the society, where again, my interest in swans came in handy and led to my painting of a mute swan signet.

Art in a time of uncertainty



It is to be hoped that the opportunity to really exhibit again and be able to mix again with like-minded artists will come again soon.

Maureen Edgar During the Lockdown, the Yellow Door Gallery (of which I am an exhibiting member) had to close due to government guidelines. I therefore focused on taking part in the on-line exhibitions with DAGFAS and Gracefield Arts Centre. I very much enjoyed taking part in all the virtual shows, and it gave me something positive to focus

on with my art during the pandemic. Here is my painting of Shambellie House, which has been sold in the Virtual Reality exhibition on at Gracefield until October 24. This is a selection of artworks which were shown on-line during spring and summer. I am very grateful to both DAGFAS, and the organisers at Gracefield Arts Centre for giving me the opportunity to exhibit this year, having only moved to Scotland last year. I have been self-isolating since March, and although it has been hard not being able to see friends and other artists, I remain positive. I have further prospects in the pipeline, and am looking forward to increasing opportunities in the coming months.

Judith Sauberlich At the age of 67 and mainly due to lockdown I have rediscovered my love of painting! This has been through joining an online art course with demonstrations and tasks set, and has reignited my interest again.



I am finding out about lots of different ways of drawing and painting using a sketchbook and many different mediums and tools - watercolours, gouache, oil pastels, inks, graphite pencils, collaging and bleach! As well as brushes, implements include sticks, cocktail sticks, bamboo pens, Ames plasterers tape, bubble wrap and of course fingers.

I can lose myself for a while and have no doubt this has helped to keep me sane during this strange period of time.



September Sunset Sky by Judith Sauberlich (see previous page) and, below, two more of her lockdown works.



Muriel Collins At the beginning of lockdown I was more focused on my fitness but as time went by I decided to focus on my painting.

I decided to paint some foxgloves that I had photographed in our local nature reserve. I got out my inks and to my astonishment it was purchased by a relative living in the south of England!. It now hangs proudly on her wall.

The next painting was an oil of the nature reserve, 1 metre by 80 cm. The latest oil 80/80cm is of the Paps of Jura with rising mist. This was requested by my other half!



So you see I have been quite busy. What next? Who knows. Keep painting everyone. Stay safe!

**Muriel's Foxgloves
and (above) Mist on
the Paps of Jura**

The 'missing' years

The year 1941 was the first since the society's formation in 1922 in which an exhibition of members' work could not be mounted. The reason was, of course, that there was a war on, although the society did manage a show in 1940, albeit on a reduced scale, as reported in the local press in March 1941.

arranging a series of lectures "by eminent authorities in the arts".

It was agreed that no exhibition should be held this year and that "endeavours should be made to arrange such lectures and that during the partial suspension of the society's activities the annual subscription should be reduced to 2s 6d."

The secretary submitted his annual report, in the course of which it was stated that despite war conditions the annual exhibition of the society was held in the Burgh Museum from July 6th to 27th. No opening ceremony was arranged and no catalogue was printed. The shrinkage in exhibits was very apparent, there being only five oils, 47 water-colours, nine black and white, 15 crafts, and two pieces of sculpture. These figures proved disappointing since the resolution to hold an exhibition was unanimous, yet so many regular exhibitors did not send in. No Art Union draw was held.

The treasurer reported that only fifteen fewer subscriptions were received during the year than in the previous year. He was very much astonished that they got so many in view in the activities of the society having been cut down. The support which the society had received showed that there was a great deal of loyalty among the members.

It was not until December 1945, with the war over, that the society began to resume normal activities. The Dumfries and Galloway Standard and Advertiser reported the intention to hold an exhibition in the summer of 1946. At a preliminary meeting, the chairman, Mr James Reid, said there was an increasing necessity for the resumption of all kinds of cultural activities, and none of these was more important to the life of the community than art.

At the AGM, members debated whether the society's activities should be suspended for the duration of the war or whether members' interest should be maintained by

The society was "in the fortunate position of having about £168 at credit in the bank." That being so, it was in a position "to risk a little in order to ensure a really good

FINE ARTS SOCIETY

Proposal To Hold Exhibition

The Dumfries and Galloway Fine Arts Society, whose activities from 1922 until the beginning of the war did much to stimulate a love of art in the south of Scotland, is to be re-started, and it is confidently expected that an exhibition will be held in Dumfries in the early summer of 1946. It is hoped that it may be possible to draw up a programme of lectures and demonstrations by prominent authorities, so that the members may have more frequent opportunities for discussion.

A meeting preliminary to the re-ascutiation of the society was held in the Municipal Chambers, Dumfries, on Wednesday evening, under the chairmanship of Mr James Reid. He was accompanied by Mr James G. Jeffs, Kirkeudbright, hon. secretary, and Mr I. A. Sim, Dumfries, hon. treasurer.

exhibition" in 1946. The society was formally re-started at the AGM on February 9, 1946. The December 1945 meeting heard from a Mr Hugh Somerville about the policy of the Dumfries Educational Trust's arts sub-committee, which had acquired five pictures and was looking for a place where they could be appropriately hung. This led to



**The Municipal Chambers in Dumfries
where members met to revive the
society after the second world war.**

AN ART GALLERY.

The Chairman said that the constitution of the society was somewhat optimistic. One of the objects of the society was to endeavour to secure for Dumfries a permanent art collection suitably housed, and, pending such an acquisition, to undertake the custody of works of art acquired by gift or purchase.

Mr Somerville said that the Trust found the dining-room at the Academy hardly suitable for the display of their small collection, and he understood that it had to be transferred to the Burgh Museum. The Museum, however, was rather out of the way and would not give the pictures the publicity which they deserved.

The Chairman said that the Arts Society would be only too willing to co-operate with the Trust in any scheme to establish and house a permanent collection of pictures.

Mr Jeffs said that it might be a good idea to institute a five-year or a ten-year plan to acquire a gallery.

Mr Somerville expressed a similar view.

a discussion of the possibility of establishing a permanent collection and even a gallery. Continued →

Back in business....

The first post-war exhibition was held as planned, as The Scotsman reported in May 1946.

DUMFRIES ART EXHIBITION. — After having been inoperative during the war years the Dumfries and Galloway Fine Arts Society was recently resuscitated. On Saturday an attractive exhibition under their auspices was opened at Greyfriars Hall, Dumfries, by Sir Henry Fildes, formerly M.P. for Dumfriesshire. Sir Henry said that in days to come we would all find it necessary to simplify our mode of living to a large extent. That being so, any attempt to induce a knowledge and inculcate an appreciation of the beautiful was to be commended. It was fine to think that after the ground had lain fallow for some years the society was setting out to cultivate the arts with renewed and reinvigorated purpose. The exhibition consists of seventy oils, almost eighty water-colours, thirty black and white studies, and an attractive selection of arts and crafts.

The remarks of Sir Henry Fildes that “we would all find it necessary to simplify our mode of living” might well have been spoken for our present pandemic times. But hopefully this time it will be a lot less than five years before we can resume “live” as opposed to virtual exhibitions.

● A bit further back in the society’s history, it was a DAGFAS member who designed a badge for the police

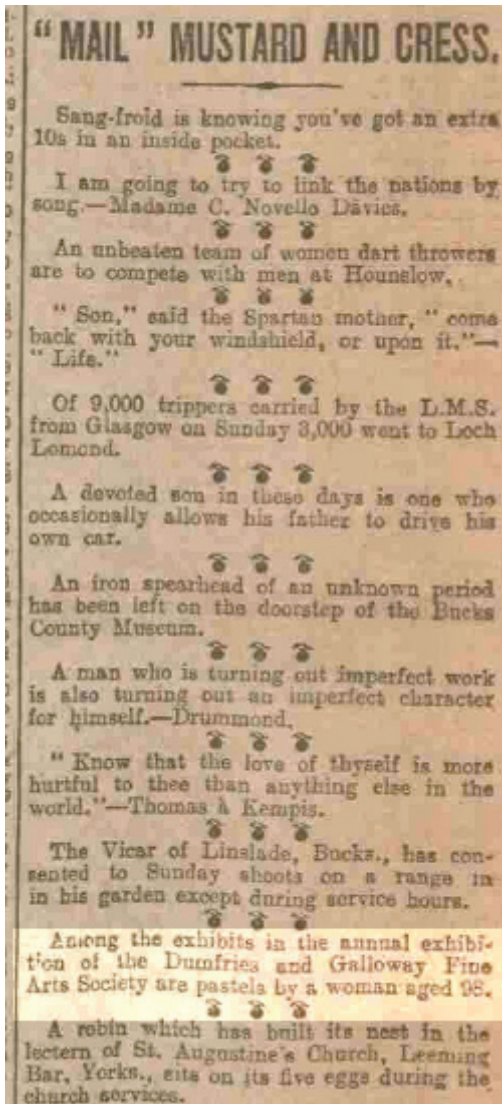
in the 1930s. **Dennis McCallum** recounts that the designer was Robert Dickie Cairns, art master at Dumfries Academy. His design has been modified over the years but is still in use today by Police Scotland. And it was the Kirkcudbright painter and DAGFAS founder Charles Oppenheimer who devised the chequered hat band.

He was a special constable and his chief asked him to design something that would make his officers more distinct. His design is still in use and has been adopted by other police forces around the world. Dennis adds: My friend Nial McGill Duncan, whose family

were close to Charles Oppenheimer in Kirkcudbright, told me how the chief constable of the Stewartry was angered one day when a constable did not salute him as they passed on the street. He discovered that it was his mistake and the constable was actually a school janitor in his very similar uniform to the police.



Another glimpse of the society's past



It was 1928, six years after the society's formation, and its fame was apparently spreading...at least as far as Humberside and Lincolnshire.

The Daily Mail - no, not *that* one but the regional paper - informed its readers that the DAGFAS annual exhibition included pastels by a woman aged 98.

A bit before our time, but does anyone have any idea who that might have been?

The paragraph was included in a collection of brief news items and trivia - known as "fillers" in the trade. Only a part of the full broadsheet column is shown here but you could have read that an accident had ended the life of "a beautiful parrot of great age which was a link with the great Napoleon" (sic). And Culloden Wishing Well yielded nearly £25 for charity in silver and copper coins thrown in "to secure luck for the year".

It's a place for imaginary places, says William Neal of his new website, doodleloonz.com

William Neal, who made a name for himself as an album cover designer in the 1970s, is a firm believer in the value of digital art.

As his website illustrates, he can take an everyday object and transform it into something surreal, as in the image right, called *The House Where Darkness Couldn't Reach*, in which a different world emerges from the interior of an encrusted old paint kettle. Or in *Polka Dots by the Sea* (opposite) where a caravan is perched on a rock in an unlikely landscape.

William writes: "Although it may appear I've abandoned wetting a brush, my love of painting watercolours remains a constant aspect of my life. The graphic roots plus ideas from the 60s/70s remains a deep one. Also, making marks by every means available is surely an honest creative quest

"I recall my dear friend and mentor the late Stefan Knapp saying 'Michaelangelo or Leonardo would have got a lot more done if they'd used a spray gun!'



"A spray gun, once frowned upon, has become a most valuable and acceptable tool for certain essential avenues of the visual arts today.

"An iPad Pro and Apple Pencil during the 70s, especially for album covers, would have been stupendous, I'd have got a lot more done. So, in my 'old school' retrospective mode **doodleloonz**



has become a most pleasurable place to contemplate."

William, based in Stranraer, was born in Guildford in 1947 and brought up in the Surrey village of Bramley. He gained a Diploma in Art and Design at Guildford School of Art, and followed a diverse career in the graphic arts, working for the BBC, Ulster Television, Pitman Publishing and CCS Associates, a leading design group in London's West End.

It was from CCS that he met Greg Lake, and went on to work for Emerson, Lake and Palmer, producing cover designs for the two million-selling albums *Tarkus* and *Pictures at an Exhibition*. His work was also used by other rock

bands. More recently, he painted *Moonlit Dunes* for Keith Emerson's *Three Fates* album.

William also taught part time at Belfast school of Art in 1967 and in 1980 taught enamelling at King Edward's School in Surrey. Throughout his career he has given numerous talks to adult education centres, art societies, and taken art therapy classes for special needs in Stranraer.

Why the website name? "Most folk doodle at some point in their lives. If they don't, they should," he says. "Creative folk doodle lots - it's what they do."

<https://www.doodleloonz.com>

Painting from photographs

Bella Green explains the pitfalls and shows how to avoid them

In these days of the ubiquitous smartphone and tablet with cameras it is likely that we will want to use photographs at some point.

Since its invention at the end of the 19th century, many painters have used photography, and it has definite uses - but there are dangers, too. Here are some pitfalls and pointers to consider.

Pitfalls

- Don't trust the range of dark and light values in a photo. They can be under or over exposed. They can be adjusted on a computer to reveal more variation.
- There may be insufficient detail for visual analysis, no discrimination or selection within the subject.
- No options regarding viewpoint or interpretation of depth. Fixed composition.

- Colour may not be accurate.
- The idea that "realism" is photographic leads to copying rather than interpreting.
- It can be difficult to cultivate your own artistic voice if you never work directly from the subject, learning the visual skills of composing, mark-making, using colour and materials expressively.

Pointers

- 1** Understand that representational painting and the genre of photo-realistic painting are different. In the latter the artist is a copyist. In the former there may be a high degree of realism but the artists interprets reality and brings something of their own vision.
- 2** Don't be seduced by the composition in the photo. Look for more, choose a wider angle and select later.



Bella painted this quick mark-making study in oils in just 20 minutes. "It was done from memory a few days after a visit to Cardoness. I used the photo (below) just a little bit. I usually do sketches as well but in this case, just memory and the photo." 30x40cm approx.



3 The colours in a photo should not just be copied but interpreted. The human eye sees much more than a camera does. Use the photo for the general mood of the colour, for capturing particular shadow shapes (but not tones). Either observe directly or invent - or a mixture of both - to make the colours your own.

4 Work from a black and white, two or three tone photo to help with massing and simplification.

5 Remember to simplify the mass of details a photo gives you. Look for the big shapes and subordinate details to these. Do not give everything equal visual weight just because it is there.

6 Be aware of edges and vary these according to your medium and how you want the visual space to work in the painting. Do not just make everything sharp-edged because that is how it is in the photo.

When used with care photos are very useful. But at some point you should put the photo away and allow the

work to develop and take on a life of its own, making space for your own creative choices.

Bella writes: These notes on photo reference are an excerpt from my course Colour and Composition.

I always like to back up face to face teaching with notes to take away so students can work at home at their own pace. These days that is all we can do, as all face to face tuition is cancelled for the foreseeable future.

I have been on a steep learning curve to take all my teaching online. I am not quite there yet, but am busy preparing free tutorials for my You Tube channel, **Art School with Bella Green**. I'm also learning to start using social media. My Instagram name is the same; on Facebook I am just Bella Green and my website is www.bellagreen.co.uk So watch these spaces for when it all goes live or, in the meantime, if you would like to be on my mailing list please just let me know at mail@bellagreen.co.uk

Art School with Bella Green will offer traditional knowledge and contemporary practice. The online classes will be for beginners or returners who want to learn from the ground up, and who value a



A photo reduced to four tones and black and white. Below, Bella's painting from the photo and memory. Acrylic and oil, approximately A2 size. Casole d'Elsa, Tuscany.

structured and flexible approach. There will also be workshops for more experienced students who want go deeper with understanding and technique to develop their own artistic voice. Online options will include, a membership group with monthly themes, classes of one and two days, to longer summer school workshops. Themes for 2021 will include: Understanding Colour; Composition Method; and Approaches to Drawing and Mark-making.



Melville Brotherston 1942-2020



Twice president of the society, Melville died in April aged almost 78. He was also vice-president, treasurer and secretary at various times during his association with the society which began in 1975. Melville left a career in the civil service to become a full-time artist in 1983 after a serious illness. His paintings were exhibited widely and were always a looked-for feature of DAGFAS exhibitions. He was made an honorary life member of the society on the occasion of the 90th annual exhibition in 2017.

Victor Henderson

Victor died in hospital in July, having fought illness for a long time. His workshops and demonstrations, illustrating his "anything goes" approach to art, were greatly valued by members. He attended Glasgow School of Art in 1965 but confessed: "I think in retrospect I was too young and spent the time devoted to pleasure rather than work and left after the third term." Victor spent his working life in the NHS in mental health, retiring in 2007, and developed a successful second career as a painter.



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Last-page laugh With thanks to Richard Whiting





Patti Lean