

Jane Archer, Water Colourist. Our speaker on 15th November



Jane began by telling us that she is relatively new to painting and still finds it strange to describe herself as an “artist”. Sat, surrounded by greetings cards showing flowers and garden birds and a selection of similar framed originals it was then perhaps surprising when she revealed that she had spent four years at art school in the 1970’s, doing Foundation at Cheltenham followed by a Multidisciplinary Design Degree at North Staffordshire. This course gave her the opportunity to work with ceramics, graphics, textiles and many other media. She also explained how she came from a family where everyone was always making things from the family’s clothes to polished pebbles.

She married during the first year of her degree course and her first child arrived only weeks before graduation, scuppering plans to take up a bursary to work in London with John Lewis’s. She had, though, completed her degree and subsequently went into teaching.

Many years later, relaxing with a sketch book at her holiday home in France an artist neighbour suggested she took water colour classes with a local teacher and a new phase in her life began.

Jane explained that she invariably begins with a photograph, perhaps taken on a country walk. She then makes use of “Art Grid”, a digital method of composing an image, which allows input of paper size, the overlay of grids to define “thirds” and assist with proportions and conversion to black and white to show where the darkest and lightest parts of the image fall.

She works on a very heavy, almost cardboard like (350g) watercolour paper, which is both robust in response to water and easy to handle to allow controlled flow of paint. It does not require stretching. She tends to begin by defining and over painting the darkest areas, then moves on to the detail, which she may have practised first on a separate paper. The results are pleasant, colourful and readily saleable images, framed in white and also reproduced as popular greetings cards and giclee prints.



Magnolia take flight



Perhaps as a result of the teaching she received in France, Jane focuses on the technical and wished she could be looser in a her work and “splashier”. I wonder if she should set aside the photographs and “Art Grid”, take a very big piece of paper and a decorator’s brush and simply express her love and knowledge of flowers? (I know I was given the decorator’s brush treatment at college for similar reasons!) Though while Jane may wish to become more expressive in her work, she has clearly found a niche and something she enjoys. She regularly takes part in Warwickshire Open Studios, exhibiting in Offchurch village church, is part of a group who run “Love Hand Made” fairs and she now has regular commissions for pet portraits and sells her flower and bird paintings. We wish her well.

Katharine Barker.