

## LEN' MORE THAN 15 MINUTES OF FAME

Our short talk on the 25th October was given by Len Mackin, who had recently returned from a painting holiday in St Ives and, in particular, a two day course in landscape at the St Ives School of Painting. This had been a very enjoyable experience and an inspiring one. Students had been encouraged to work with their paint, applying it in different ways, scratching off and adding more, looking in different ways and, of course being spurred on by working alongside like minded people. There was further inspiration (or could it be intimidation?) in that they were working in one of the listed studios, which had, at various times, been occupied by Ben Nicholson, Patrick Heron, Terry Frost and Sandra Blow.



Len is known to AMA members as someone who paints still life subjects, using smooth brush work in an “old master” style. Following the St Ives experience, he is now experimenting with texture, light and applications of thick buttery paint with a palette knife. He brought along four unfinished pieces: A still life of fruit in a bowl against an uncharacteristically bold background divided into areas of red, yellow and blue; a larger work, a scene in Burano, capturing the brilliant colours of that location; an imagined sea scape with stormy clouds and crashing waves and finally a second still life, worked with a palette knife and showing a row of bottles.



It was the wild seascape that led to the most discussion. We all, including Len, knew that the sky was not right. Was it too bright and contrasty, too busy, not dark enough? There were various opinions, during which Len confessed that the whole thing had been “more difficult than painting dog fur”. At this point Clive Engwell spoke up and claimed meteorological expertise, the colours should be flatter, less variation, there would not be large dramatic clouds with a sea like that. And that was that, the conclusion to a surprisingly jolly and well attended morning.

But not only had Len been our artistspeaker, at the AGM that preceded his talk he had taken on the role of AMA Chair and had introduced us to many of his thoughts and ideas for the coming months and years. Len has always been our computertech person (most of the rest of us haven't got a clue!), setting up our web sites, email and producing and sending out the Newsletter. These, and social media, are clearly the way forward for us as an Association and it was good to hear his enthusiasm for potential developments. Not only is Len currently making exciting strides forward in his own art work, I suspect, that under his leadership, AMA will also be making great leaps ahead in terms of public profile and membership. I wish him the very best of luck.

Katharine Barker