

## Susan O'Grady, prolific textile and ceramic artist and our June speaker

Susan O'Grady is one of those whirlwinds of creativity. I suspect she draws, paints, assembles sketch books, stitches, creates collages, rolls and forms clay and applies glazes from dawn to dusk and beyond. She arrived promptly for her morning talk, accompanied by ever supportive husband, Bryan, and set up an attractive and extensive display of her work. This, we were told, was only a small portion of the work she was about to put out for her Open Studios show.



Susan began her art career in the 1960's on a Foundation Course at Leicester College of Art, where she realised ideas first, technique could then follow. Later, she did a post graduate course in Sculpture at Hornsey, where she worked in clay and much later, she joined the Access Course at the Mid Warwickshire College. It was after this that she acquired her own kiln and focused for a period on large scale

ceramic work. She began her talk by emphasising the need to be looking out to a wider world, not just losing yourself in your own concerns in a studio, but looking about you. Although she did refer briefly to recent terrible events in the world, I suspect that the lengthier references to "Springwatch" and to ducks on the pond, visible from her kitchen window, indicate what really inspires her.

ceramic work.

In recent years, Susan's inspiration has been birds, and particularly ducks, visible from her home, especially on the "cartwash" pond at the bottom of the garden. She began by drawing them and, "following her nose", they emerged as hundreds of painted and stitched works on calico, made using fabric paints, acrylic inks, soluble graphite and overlays of muslin.



Ceramic Birds

In the last two or three years she has returned to ceramics. No longer having her own kiln, she has to channel her creativity to the firing cycle of a class (run by potter, Alice Shepherd) held at the Stanton Guild House, near Broadway.

<http://www.stantonguildhouse.org.uk/>

Although referring to herself as "not teachable",

## Susan O'Grady review continued....

and providing most of her own glazes, she enjoys the friendship and stimulation of going out to a class once a week. Most of the work she is now doing in ceramics is based on birds, small and large, and could perhaps be fairly described as three dimensional versions of her textile work.

Although ceramics are a current focus of her life, Susan is still drawing and continues to make textile hangings. She is also producing some works which combine ceramic and textile, in the form of small masks or faces stitched to a softer, applique work and painted textile ground or small cushion.

Her main problem is fitting in all the things she wants and needs to do. When asked where she was going next in her creative journey, she began by mentioning the possible introduction of feathers into her collages, but then suggested that she would like to do more writing and research and that she was greatly (and perhaps rather surprisingly) inspired by the ceramic artist, May Ayres, <http://www.mayayres.com/> whose work is figurative and political.



It will be inspiring to us all to see how Susan has progressed and developed in another couple of years. One thing is for certain, there will be a large body of work!

Katharine Barker