

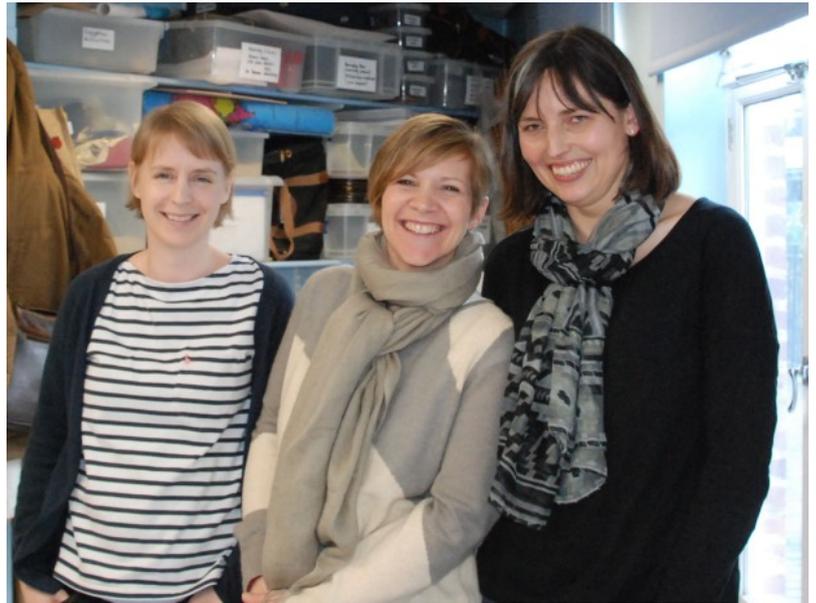
March 3rd Speakers Review by Julia Hayes.

The March meeting was in the new setting of the Leamington Art Gallery and we had three artists, who are brimming with new ideas to start us off.

VICTORIA SMITH

Victoria uses collage, cutting out intricate images, to make up the parts of her beautiful finished pieces of art. As an Environmental Scientist, Victoria likes the fact that she is reusing old materials, magazines and postcards for her work. She tells her children that, "throwing things away, means they are just, not here. It does not mean they do not exist"

Victoria divides her work in to three sections, commissions, web site and postcard pictures:



Victoria Smith, Sian Love and Sue Steward

Some 18 months ago, the AMA received a request from Flowers Brewery for work to be hung in the newly refurbished White Swan Hotel in Stratford upon Avon. Victoria's piece, an Art Deco styled Swan, was accepted and further commissions for hostelries followed.

Victoria also takes commissions for collages illustrating family histories. These take a great deal of work. She researches the family and then searches for cuttings exactly the right size and with the light coming from the same direction on all the cuttings, for the finished picture to read properly. We saw a slide of a beautiful piece, commissioned by a wife on her husband's life. In all there were over thirty personal references to tell his story included in this impeccably made, memorable piece of art. What a lovely present.

Victoria's website www.victoriasmithartist.co.uk sells prints, many taken from the original designs for the Brewery commissions. It works very simply. Victoria does not carry stock, images are printed to order, in the size required. Purchasers seem happy to wait.

Postcard pictures are Victoria's own work, for her creative fulfillment. They all include a setting, something living and a light source. She buys bundles of postcards, sold by families, dating from 1900 – 1950. They are very nostalgic and some are extremely touching. We all felt sympathy for the writer of a New Year's message in 1914, who had had a poor year in 1913 and hoped for a better year to come, little knowing that war would be starting in July. The images are immaculately cut out and appear in evocative settings. They are fascinating and thought provoking. 'Just be good till I return' was selected and hung at the R.A. Summer Exhibition and Victoria has also had work hung at the RBSA Open and Leamington Spa Open. She has produced a new piece for the Summer Exhibition this year and has also started taking painting lessons! With great results!

SIAN LOVE

Sian is a Textile Designer and as such she has a natural, well developed, knowledge of colour, texture and stitchery. She is inspired by a love of the Welsh landscape and the colours throughout the seasons. Sian enjoys sketching the landscape and then reduces the lines and colours to more abstract shapes. We saw the lovely sketches she had done of National Trust

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woods in Wales and the abstract she had produced from it, heightening the colours, using oil pastels to produce a vibrant effect. Sian is inspired by the work of David Hockney and likes the way he simplifies the landscape and his quirky use of colour.

She works on canvas often giving it a dark red undercoat before layering with different types of torn handmade paper and working in to it with paint, followed by embroidery and applique depending on the piece.

Her work as a textile designer was more obvious in the second section of work. These pieces followed a trip to the V&A Museum where Sian had spent time sketching in the ceramics and textile rooms. This led to a sumptuously coloured piece, more pictorial, with a lovely design of flowers and lines, painted in acrylic and worked in to with pastels and sewing. Sian made a further piece to accompany this, again with rich colours, blues and gold. It had a patchwork effect, being made up of small layered pieces, all painted, embroidered and stitched to the whole, like a series of rich intricate little pictures. There is great beauty in her use of design and colour.

Sian also showed us her felt pieces. Handmade felt is laid on a canvas background, as if it has been float mounted, the bright colours of the felt forming a landscape effect with flowers embellished with embroidery. The results are modern and contemporary.

SUE STEWARD

Ten years ago, Sue would not have imagined herself standing talking about her photography nor for that matter Photography being accepted as Art.

Sue, whose favourite subjects at school were science and maths, worked as a Computer Programmer. She bought herself a decent beginner's DSLR camera and inspired by the scenery of North Wales and the landscapes around her home produced some beautiful images. We saw seascapes in North Wales, mystical images of Oakley Woods, sunsets and a wonderful picture of Chesterton windmill. All were beautifully executed and taken by someone with an excellent eye for composition. She produced greetings cards from them, but did not take it seriously or think of it as being art until Victoria persuaded her to do Open Studios.

An interest in photographing flowers resulted in the purchase of a macro lens (for close ups) and developed into under water flower photography. The flowers are weighted down and left overnight in a glass vase of water. Bubbles appear on the surface of the flowers and Sue enjoys experimenting, placing the vase against different backgrounds and with varied lighting set ups.

The resulting close up shots have an abstract beauty, some looking like wonderful crewel embroidery and others appearing to be covered in pearls of light. Words cannot really describe the beauty of the images, so do look at her website www.newleafimages.co.uk

Sue has books of her images produced by Photobox, who she uses for all her work. To get the intense detail of the images she uses manual focus with a tripod. At first she used some cheap screw on filters for close ups, (Amazon) but has now invested in a macro lens and a wide angled lens for landscape. She uses "Lightroom" to load her work to the computer and enable her to 'keyword' the images. She prefers to work on the camera to get the images correct but will occasionally make basic adjustments to the contrast or colours of an image. Lastly we saw some of her latest work, very interesting images of skeleton leaves and some excellent shots where she had used 3 D folded paper shapes and then photographed them, producing a very new modern designed look. Sue has an artist's eye and is producing some excellent images with a fresh appeal to them.