

news from

185

bath street



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THE GLASGOW ART CLUB NEWSLETTER

## President's Column

**D**uring the period I have been in office I have been struck by the long history of the Club and the diversity and talents of our past and present members.

These aspects of Club life make us unique, and, as we forge ahead into the future, we have amazing opportunities to enrich the city in a manner which would have been unthinkable in the not-too-distant past.

Who would have forecast that the Club would provide a meeting place for so many different organisations which enjoy the pleasure of being in this wonderful building.

Since the completion of the refurbishment we have welcomed more and more people to the building. And what is more amazing is that many Club members have gone out of their way to make visitors feel at home.

The Doors Open Day Sunday was just such an occasion.

Members rose to the challenge of guiding visitors round the building and its contents. The weekly tours are now an essential part of Club life and I would urge members to consider being part of the rota. Those who already volunteer find it to be a rewarding experience.

Our art collection is enriched from time to time by donations of work from our artist and lay members. This year Shona Barr allowed me to discuss and help choose a painting of her own work into the collection. We were also pleased to accept from members of George Singleton's family a sculpture of George by Archie Forrest.

I recently visited Tramway to view the short list for the Turner Prize. As we all know Glasgow has provided a rich seam of Prize winners in recent years. Conceptual art challenges traditional views. On page three our own John Fowler gives his personal take on the entries. The Club is keen to encourage young artists to join: could they include a future Turner Prize contender?

Efric McNeil

# MAST hoists Club standard



*Dramatic improvement in the building's exterior*

**O**n November 22 2014, GAC held a gala dinner to celebrate the re-opening of the Gallery after the 18-month project to rehabilitate the listed building. Exactly a year later, the Club again hit the headlines with the announcement that the architects, MAST, had been awarded the top design award for conservation by the Glasgow Institute of Architects.

The judges made special mention of the sensitive treatment of the frontage. They quote a spokesperson from MAST, "The stonework was treated as lightly as possible, dressing back to sound and retaining as much of the patina of the masonry as we could, and repairs were done in natural stone and lime mortar."



# Shows continue upstairs

## Dovehill Artists

The Billiard Room Gallery, essential for exhibitions while the main Gallery was closed for major repair, continues to host a succession of more intimate shows, involving members and friends. Among them was a short exhibition by artists working in the Dovehill Studios, a WASPS base in the East end of Glasgow. It introduced a number of less familiar painters to Club members who mingled at the lively opening.



## Shona at Fifty



Gallery convener Shona Barr, seen with vice-president Joe Hargan, at the opening of Shona at Fifty, an exhibition of new paintings celebrating her long service to the Club and looking forward to new developments. There has been a tradition, not always observed, that any member who holds a solo exhibition in the Club is expected to offer an item to GAC's permanent collection. Shona was really thrilled when the President chose a large painting 'Towards Jura' as her contribution.



## Obituaries

### John Armstrong Lane

17/4/1935 to 18/10/2015

John Lane, who has died at the age of 80, was one of a long list of architect presidents who combined the responsibilities of office with a senior partnership in a Glasgow practice. Any difficulties this caused were masked by a welcoming manner and seeming nonchalance. He will be remembered by many for his efficient yet happy conduct of business, and for his ubiquitous bow ties.

John was born in Leicester, where he studied and was admitted ARIBA in 1959, During national

service with the RAF he worked in the buildings and work department, where he met the colleagues with whom he formed the practice Lane, Bremner and Garnett. In 1960 the firm won the competition for the Dunbarton County Council of offices which were completed in 1968.

Lane went on to win various awards, including the GIA Alexander Thomson Travelling Scholarship. He taught one day a week at Glasgow School of Art and gave a series of lectures at Strathclyde

University. He was a member of the team which compiled Glasgow at a Glance, the compact guide to city buildings for the 1965 Commonwealth Arts Festival.

John was GAC President 1991-1993. When he retired he moved to Gatehouse of Fleet with his wife Patricia. Both his daughters have followed in father's footsteps, one a quantity surveyor, the other an architect. To all we send our sympathies.

### George Macfarlane Sinclair

7/12/1928 – 3/10/15

George Sinclair who has died aged 87 was a pioneer of news broadcasting in Scotland who had a close connection with GAC. His wife Celia was one of the first lady members who joined in 1984 when the Club relaxed its rules to admit women. In recent years she has played a crucial part in the Club's rehabilitation as a hard-working trustee for the project, she is also responsible for the trust set up to develop CRM's Willow Tearoom.

When George joined the Club in 2001, he could look back on a meteoric career in print and broadcasting journalism which had effects

far beyond his immediate sphere. At the BBC he was known as a hard task-master but was equally hard on himself: a keen boxer, he preferred to spend his lunch break in the baths rather than the pub, but in the Club his dry wit sharpened lively discussions with people from different professions and interests,

For both Celia and George it was a second marriage, and a very happy one. Their six children enjoyed being part of an enlarged family,



and the couple shared many interests, including a great love of Italy. For them, the Art Club holiday in Garda in 2003 was a high point in over 20 years of marriage.

**Our sympathies go to the families of  
Hugh Kennedy – Joined 71, Died June  
Joe McCue – Joined 09, Died October**

# Turner turns up at Tramway



Above, Janice Kerbel's study of musical notation. Right, 'Assemble' from the Granby Workshop

John Fowler visits the south side to see what all the fuss is about

I liked the music. Four singers and a conductor, all dressed in black, stood in the cavernous white-painted space of Tramway in Glasgow and sang in a capella harmonies. It reminded me of music echoing in a great cathedral.

Tramway, Glasgow's Southside former tramcar depot turned temple of the contemporary arts, is currently hosting the four contenders for this year's Turner Prize, billed as 'arguably Europe's most prestigious visual art award'. So, a coup for our city.

Tramway itself, with its vast spaces, its towering walls and vaulting high girders, is something of a cathedral for our times, so the hushed reverence invoked by the high priests of Turnerama seems appropriate.

The music was part of a submission by the Canadian-born Janice Kerbel, who works in many mediums, from print to performance. I'm told she challenges herself to acquire new skills with each piece she makes, in this case entailing a lengthy study of musical notation. The full programme of nine songs for six voices (from Scottish Opera and the Royal Conservatoire) is sung three times in the week. In other versions programmed during the afternoons the number of items and singers varies.

Kerbel explains that the work, entitled DOUG, 'uses unaccompanied voice and the structures of music to give shape to a cycle of catastrophic events that befall an imagined body' – a curious concept. I have to say that Doug is accident-prone:

he falls downstairs, he's struck by lightning, he slips on a banana skin, and more. I confess that I found it easier just to let the sounds wash over me than to try to marry them to any theme. A second exposure might clarify things for me; I may go back.

The Observer's critic found the piece 'ear-splittingly loud, unimaginably dissonant and raucous', but not in my hearing it wasn't (pardon the double negative). In fact what I heard was quite ethereal.

Opinions differ. The Daily Record's Clare Johnston wasn't dismayed by any of this. In fact she drew attention to another aspect of Kerbel's piece, the poems she wrote as text for the music, in particular quoting these lines appertaining the banana skin pratfall:

Heel a peel  
To seal the deal  
Feet to sky  
Life slips by

Think about it. That's a nice verse. A winner. But art?

I didn't know what to make of Nicole Wermer's creation Untitled Chairs, which consists of a display of fur jackets apparently loosely draped over, but in fact sewn on to, the backs of designer tubular chairs. The unworthy thought struck me that a gathering of matrons from Giffnock or Bearsden had been rudely alarmed and forced to exit their tea room in haste. Nor could I appreciate Bonnie Camplin's video interviews with people whose delusions include encounters with aliens or experiencing the occult. Again, is it art? But to answer that you have to consider

the bigger question: what is art? and I shan't go down that road.

The fourth element in the exhibition is called Assemble, highlighting the work of a collective of designer-craftspeople – the Granby Workshop – helping local people renovate 10 derelict houses in a rundown area of Liverpool. Their space at Tramway is filled with artefacts rescued or reassembled or refashioned from the original structures and adornments, displayed eye-catchingly around the walls. It is surprisingly effective – witness the class of eager schoolchildren who crowded round the table while I was there, trying out designs for themselves.

What to make of this exhibition? According to the Daily Telegraph, the whole thing – apart from Assemble 'who shouldn't be here anyway' – gives an impression of 'cosseted vapidty'. In sum, 'this is art that exists only to fill exhibitions such as this one.'

In contrast, the Financial Times spoke in a voice of high-toned mandarin approval: 'The show stretches the definition of art through astute, absorbing explorations of 21st century concerns beyond the gallery walls.' Can't you hear the astringent tones of the late Brian Sewell echoing hollowly round the great Tramway in the sky?

Well, you pays your money... No, it's free. The exhibition runs until January 17. The winner of the £25,000 Turner Prize was still to be announced when this newsletter went to press – but you can see the show and judge for yourselves.



# Hundreds pour through 'Open Door'

**T**hey were queuing up the steps of 185 Bath St on 20 September, taking advantage of Doors Open Sunday to pass through the Mackintosh entry and admire the newly refurbished Gallery. The clicker recorded well over 400 passing through and the pressure of numbers signing in at some stages meant that some were almost certainly missed, bringing the total near the half thousand.

Few had ever been in the building before – “never knew it was there” – was a common comment – and the size of the rooms, details of decoration and special features were all much admired. Volunteer members stood around to answer questions and keep the traffic flowing – doorkeeper Aaron Bassett was frequently diverted to guard the listed Gents’ loos when ladies requested a viewing, while in the Dining Room, Stan Kerr had to seek help to explain the Golden Pie reference on Lord Macfarlane’s glass panel. At first misinformed by an ignorant

fellow-member, Stan got the answer from the grandson’s mouth – evidently when Norman was involved with the Scottish Football League he made a point of sampling a pie at every ground he visited, and a special award was created to recognise his achievement.

Visitors keen to see artists at work climbed the second flight of stairs to watch demonstrations by Jim Davis and Paul Kennedy – and one very young art collector left with her own souvenir.

P.S. Following the interest in the listed Gents’ loos, member Alan Stewart has pointed out that a previous president saved the Club a tidy sum when it was discovered that the central basin in the row was badly cracked. To create an exact replica of the century-old design would have cost a small fortune, but John Cunningham discovered that the surrounding marble was still available, so a matching slab was placed over centre basin without destroying the symmetry of the line.



*A new guide for visitors to the Club doubles as a leaflet to promote our undoubted attractions*





# What a picnic!

A discouraging weather forecast added to the clash with Fathers' Day commitments bode badly for the Club's annual summer outing. In the event a measly half-dozen members arrived in bucketing rain to meet at the entry to Geilston Garden, a small National Trust for Scotland property just east of Cardross.

As they gathered under umbrellas to discuss alternative plans, there was a brief break in the clouds, so the sturdy six grasped the chance to view the kitchen garden, then a glimpse of sun tempted them to follow the winding path through the woodland, over burns and bridges and round gentle slopes and through a doorway to emerge in the spectacular walled garden around the modest house.

Back at the picnic table, various dishes appeared from baskets and a more than adequate meal was had by all, to everyone's satisfaction.



Left to right Robert Kelsey, Iain Currie, Jim Davis, George Innes

## Two to one on the green

An old tradition was revived on Monday 14 September when teams from Glasgow Art Club and the Scottish Arts Club in Edinburgh met at Buchanan Castle Golf Club. After a welcoming bacon roll, the players split into couples, three on each side, to play their opponents: after a close fight, the west triumphed over the east with wins of two matches to one. At the following dinner, a bottle of champagne was presented to the winning captain Michael Clark.

There was strong support for a return match in Edinburgh next year – and talk of moving the match to Pebble Beach at a later time. A special thank you went to Connie Simmers, who organised the event. Since the trophy for the competition could not be found, the winners were presented with a bottle of champagne and Connie offered another to anyone who comes up with information on the missing prize.

The Glasgow team was made up of Robert Kelsey, Jim Davis, Johnnie Cuthbert, Alan McNeilage, John Kingsley and Michael Clark. Charlie Scott captained the SAC team, which included Iain Currie, George Innes, Colin Munro, Colin Daintith and Alan Shaw.

## New tasks for hanging judges

A new gallery sub-committee has been formed to share the growing work of organising all aspects of exhibitions in the Club. The volunteers were recruited during the hanging of last year's reopening show: Gathered round the piano are (l to r) artist Shelagh Campbell, volunteer Michael McLoughlin, artist vice-president Joe Hargan, president Efric McNeil, gallery convener Shona Barr, volunteer Felicity Grainger, and artist Paul Kennedy. Felicity has agreed keep the sub-committee's minutes and Michael will present a report each month to the full Council meeting.

"While we'll all be involved in selecting and hanging items for the four seasonal Club exhibitions, we've also taken on all the administration connected with the lease of spaces to visiting individuals and groups" explains Shona. "That means drawing up specifications and charges for the different areas, from £750 per week for the main gallery to £100 for the bar corridor, where members may be tempted by small paintings which can be quickly bought and usually taken away on the spot.

"Two weeks is the minimum period for a let, but terms are very competitive – the Club takes only 25 per cent from sales to members and 35 per cent from non-members. We still have to spread the message to attract suitable applicants and make the best use of the building.



"The sub-committee has also recommended the promotion of living artists by choosing a contemporary work each month for display on the web and in the circulation area."

# Novello shines through the years

The newly redecorated gallery acquired the elegant sophistication of a 'thirties salon for a special performance of 'The Ivor Novello Story,' written by actor turned writer John Cairney and presented by Classical Musicians Scotland.

It was an evening of nostalgia for an age of sentiment, with James Dinsmore giving a suave introduction to the life and work of the Welsh songster whose composing career stretched from the first world war until well after the second.

Operatic soloists Daisy Henderson and Elizabeth McCormack provided the songs, from 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' to 'We'll Gather Lilacs', accompanied by Bill Kean on the piano reviving memories of the changing moods of the past century – nostalgia, it seems, is as good as ever!

Club member Elma Douglas was specially pleased to see John Cairney in the audience: a long-term admirer of his work, she had brought along her programme from a performance of the show in the late '70s and was delighted when he borrowed it to make a copy.



## Our first monthly featured work

Beside setting up and publicising exhibitions in-house, the gallery sub-committee has been looking at the Club's website and decided that the choice of images tends to be rather too historic. For several months it has been selecting a 'Painting of the Month' by one of our most active artists, and this will now be hung in the bar area above the desk where members book events. As it happens, the first work to be hung there is another view of the Western Isles, 'Sound of Jura' by James S Davis.

## ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Annual Business Meeting of the Club will be held in the Club on Wednesday 17 February 2016 at 6.30 p.m. As required by the Constitution and Rules of the Club, members' attention is drawn to the import of Article 26:

No resolution, unless it relates to the business introduced by the Council, shall be moved at an Annual Business Meeting unless a notice, signed by the members who propose to move and second it, and stating its terms, has been lodged with the Secretary not later than 31 December 2015.

As required by Article 20.1 of the Constitution and Rules, I hereby intimate that the following Office-Bearers fall to retire at the Annual Business Meeting in February 2016 and are eligible for re-election:

<b>President</b>	<b>Mrs Efric McNeil</b>
<b>Artist Vice President</b>	<b>Mr Joe Hargan</b>
<b>Lay Vice President</b>	<b>Mr John Mulhern</b>
<b>Honorary Treasurer</b>	<b>Miss Kimberley Nelson</b>

The following members of Council fall to retire at the 2016 Annual Business Meeting:

**Miss Shona Barr (co-opted in 2015 and eligible for election)**  
**Mr James McNaught (co-opted in 2015 and eligible for re-election)**  
**Mr Philip Raskin (Not eligible for election)**  
**Sheriff David Smith (Not eligible for election)**

Article 20.2 of the Constitution and Rules requires members who desire to nominate a candidate or candidates for election (as Office-Bearers or Council Members) to deliver in writing to the Secretary not later than 31 December in each year a notice stating the name or names of those whom they nominate. The notice must, before delivery, be signed by the proposer and second order for each candidate nominated, and must also bear the signature of the nominee as evidence of his or her consent to be nominated.

Jonathan G Lord, Secretary





## THE ART OF SKETCHING

GAC's longest-serving member Conrad T McKenna shares his enthusiasm for capturing quick impressions

**S**ketchn: preliminary, rough, slight, merely outlined drawing or painting.

I was admitted to Glasgow School of Art at the age of 16 by a sympathetic director, W D Hutcheson, on the strength of a few drawings of workers at Barclay Curle's marine engineering works at Scotstoun as they queued up to collect their bonuses on a Friday afternoon.

Since then I have always enjoyed drawing people in situations where they are relaxed and being themselves, as in conversation, reading a newspaper, or otherwise unaware of being observed. The drawings, one of which is shown here have been done in bars or restaurants, sitting in a corner, artist's sketching pen in hand, on the lookout for a subject. One had to be quick because people don't sit still for long.

Sometimes the subject would get up and leave at precisely the wrong moment, causing a promising sketch to be abandoned. More often an interrupted situation would recompose itself after a few moments and interesting body language would be resumed. Patience, and willingness to wait usually paid off. A cat watching a bird knows instinctively how to wait!!

A rapid sketch can sometimes capture character and action more effectively than a more sustained drawing or painting. For an artist it is also good training for the eye. The sketch, as illustrated here, essentially captures a moment in time – in the life of the artist and in the life of his subject. It can be a reasonably complete study or just a few lines, suggesting rather than describing what is seen.

## DIARY DATES

### 2016

**January 16th – Club Outing to The Queen's Gallery**

**February 5th – Burns Supper**

**Mar 12th – Call My Wine Bluff**

**April 15th – Supper Club**

**June 12th – GAC Summer Outing**

**Sept 16th – Supper Club**

**Oct 5th – Whisky tasting with Inverarity**

**Oct 28th – Sinopia Quartet concert**

## New members

Mr Anthony Armstrong, Blairgowrie  
The Hon Mrs Gail Allbutt, Glasgow  
Mr Keith Anderson, Glasgow  
Miss Roberta Bianchini, Beith  
Mr Stuart Brown, Glasgow  
Mr Thomas Cameron, Helensburgh  
Mr Neil Clitheroe, Glasgow  
Ms Sarah Cox, Glasgow  
Ms Cherylene Dyer, Glasgow  
Ms Alison Fitzsimons, Glasgow  
Mrs Denise Fraser, Thornhill  
Mr Ignacio Sanchez Galan, Glasgow  
Dr Kenneth Gemmell, Glasgow  
Mr Rafa Orbegozo Guzman, Glasgow  
Mr Christopher Hargan, Paisley  
Professor John Hume, Glasgow

Country Artist  
Town Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Young Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Young Artist  
Corporate Lay  
Young Lay  
Town Artist  
Young Lay  
Town Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Retired Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Student  
Honorary

Professor Tom Inns, Glasgow  
Lady Macfarlane, Bearsden  
Mrs Moira MacMillan, Glasgow  
Ms Miranda Marshall, Glasgow  
Mr Frank Mitchell, Glasgow  
Mr Kyle Monie, London  
Miss Katie Pope, Motherwell  
The Hon Mrs Marguerite Riley, Milngavie  
The Hon Mrs Marjorie Roberts, Milngavie  
Mr Thomas Ross, Paisley  
Mr Richard Taylor, Glasgow  
Ms Peter Thierfeldt, Glasgow  
Miss Helen Turner, Prestwick  
Miss Marion Venman, Glasgow  
Mr Andrew Wallace, Glasgow

Honorary  
Town Lay  
Town Lay  
Town Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Young Lay  
Young Artist  
Town Lay  
Town Lay  
Town Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Corporate Lay  
Town Artist  
Corporate Lay  
Young Lay

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