



# The Sketch

The newsletter of the Cambridge Drawing Society December 2025

## From the President - Could it be you?

*Susan Abbs*



As I near the end of my second year of three as President, it's time to start thinking about the next President-Elect - someone who could shadow the role from next March and then take over the following year.

### Could that be you?

The lovely thing about this role is that it really becomes what you want it to be. Each President shapes it differently. If there's something you'd love to see change or develop in the Society, this is your chance to steer things and make your mark. It's a wonderful opportunity to help guide CDS into its next chapter. The only 'qualification' is that you need to have been a member for at least five years (so four years to become President Elect).

When I took on the presidency, I knew what I wanted: a society that felt like a community, not just an exhibitions machine. I wanted us to connect more and feel part of a community we can be proud of. And I'm really proud of what we've achieved together.

We now have a lively WhatsApp group, sociable SketchTogethers and a general culture of openness and friendliness. The committee has been brilliant - I'm hearing lots of "how about we...?" and "why don't we try...?" rather than defaulting to "we've always done it this way." It's been terrific watching ideas turn into reality. Our Exhibitions Secretary, Monica Alikoviene, has taken huge strides in refining our shows, including introducing the artist's tour around the exhibition, which added so much engagement. Jane Taylor has helped keep CDS in the public eye through brilliant publicity, so more of the public are hearing about CDS, while Diane Firth has made our social media more creative, lively and engaging. Annelies MacIntosh also organised our first festive social which was buzzing with conversation and good cheer. All of this has helped CDS grow into a more sociable, outward-looking, welcoming society - one that feels truly part of a wider creative community.



Post sketching meet up at Mill Road Winter Fair

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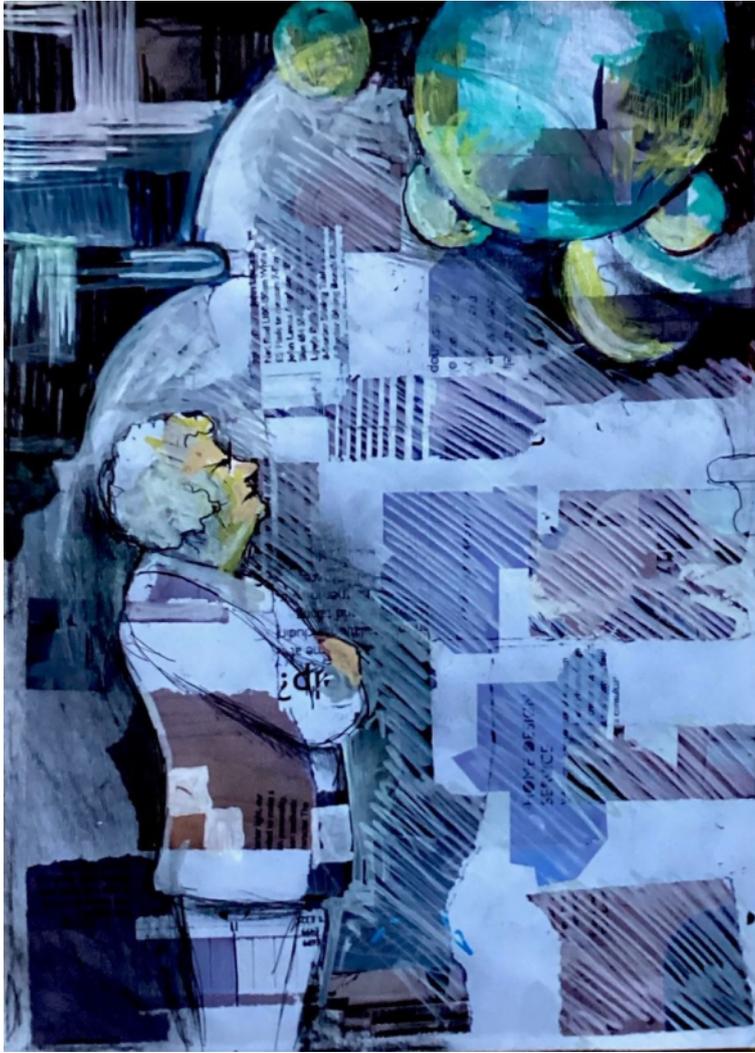
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'Publicity' Jane





*"Maureen Contemplating the Heavenly Bodies", by John Tordoff, at the Whipple Museum SketchTogether*

Before I finish, I want to give a big thank you to Maureen Mace, who has been absolutely brilliant helping me organise the SketchTogethers. She is stepping down from this role and I'm going to miss her energy on this, but I know she'll still be around sharing ideas and joining the fun.

I'm delighted that Jackie Leonard will be taking over from Maureen as the co-ordinator for SketchTogether.

So, if you're even a little curious about stepping into the President-Elect role, please do get in touch. I'd be very happy to chat it through - you might be exactly who we need!

Happy New Year!

Susan



## Upcoming Events

### *Annelies Macintosh*

We have some exciting events planned for the New Year, so watch out for emails with the full details. These include:

- Murray Edwards College Womens' Art Tour; 'The Sleepers'
- Talk by Jackie Burns, Fellow of the International Association of Astronomical Artists
- Talk by Prof. Simone Schnall, Director of the Cambridge Body, Mind and Behaviour Laboratory
- Gail Hoban Workshop: Drawing Nature's Patterns

*Jackie Burns, and friend*



# Art as Legacy: Documenting & Preservation Practises with Richard Farleigh

*Annelies Macintosh*

Recently, members and friends of the Society were treated to two memorable talks given by Richard Farleigh, a Conservator of Works of Art on Paper at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

My original aim had been simple: to discover what we, as practising artists, might do in our daily work to ensure that our creations endure. I was swiftly directed towards Richard who has long experience caring for drawings and watercolours including many of the treasures housed in the Museum



The event unfolded in two distinct parts. The first was a formal presentation in which Richard introduced the practical and ethical challenges involved in caring for fragile works on paper from the fifteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Through a series of case studies, he revealed the decision-making that lies behind each treatment, from routine repairs to exceptionally demanding interventions. His discussion of the balance between honouring an artist's intentions and protecting a work for the future was especially resonant. His insights into the effects of light, humidity and handling left me newly aware of how vulnerable such pieces are, and how crucial careful management can be.



The second part of the event proved equally absorbing. We were invited into the study room where Richard presented original works and examples drawn from the Museum's archives. Among them were pieces such as J. M. W. Turner's *Fluelen from the Lake*, John Ruskin's *In the Pass of Killiecrankie* and, more recently, Barbara Rae's *Red Hill*. To see these works at close quarters added a vivid immediacy to the earlier discussion and offered a direct glimpse of the care, skill and patience that conservation demands.

After learning so much and seeing such extraordinary work first hand, I left with a far clearer understanding of what we, as artists, can do to preserve our own creations, to think carefully about the materials we choose, the environments in which we work and the ways in which we store our pieces.

In appreciation of Richard's time and the insight he offered, the Society has raised funds and donated two hundred and sixty pounds to the conservation department of the Fitzwilliam Museum. It was a privilege to glimpse the often unseen world of conservation, and I was reminded once again of how fortunate we are to have such an institution on our very doorstep. We remain deeply grateful for the opportunity.



# Reflections on a Week of Art, Community, and Creativity

*Monica Alikoviene*



## *Autumn Exhibition Report 2025*

This year's Autumn Exhibition brought together a wonderfully diverse collection of work from across the Society. A wide range of pieces filled the Old Gym at The Leys School, offering a rich blend of styles, subjects, and approaches. Walking through the space, visitors could sense the creativity and curiosity that shaped the exhibition, from bold contemporary experimentation to traditional, contemplative studies.

The exhibition opened with a lively Private View, where members, guests, and friends of the Society gathered to celebrate the start of the show. Over the following days, a steady stream of visitors explored the exhibition, with around 810 people coming through the doors.

Sales were steady throughout the show, serving as a reminder why these events matter. They give us a chance to share our work, connect with others, and continue growing as a creative community.



*Members of the committee attempt pole dancing!*

This year's Favourite Artwork Winner was Katy Bailey for her beautiful piece "Last of Summer." Many congratulations, Katy, on this well-deserved recognition! See page 5 for more about Katy's artwork.

Behind the scenes, a great deal of work went into making the exhibition run smoothly. Many people contributed their time and effort in different ways, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who helped make the event a success.

We were also delighted to welcome new Friends who joined us during the week, adding to the growing community that supports the Society's activities.

Looking ahead, preparations are already underway for our Spring Exhibition at the Pitt Building next April.

**For your diaries, our following Spring Exhibition key dates:**

**Private View: Friday, 17 April 2026**

**Public Exhibition: Saturday, 18 April – Saturday, 25 April**

Thank you once again to everyone who exhibited, volunteered, visited, or supported the Society in any way. The exhibition was a true reflection of what we can achieve together.



*John Glover receiving his award for creating our poster image*

# Last of Summer

*Katy Bailey*

There is something rather wonderful about a walk that stretches your eyes. This walk in Eversden towards the Bluebell woods does just that. You walk up a slow incline towards the brow of a hill, there is a feeling of the passage of time here, a residual energy from the people that have walked here before. This slow pace upwards allows time to absorb nature on a deeper level, becoming more mindful and observant. Then as you reach the top you are rewarded by an expanse of yellow Canola fields, so vast, so bright, it makes you gasp. The smell also hits you, a heady, woody smell of the bright yellow flowers.

There are a few solitary trees here and there which break it up, tracks from the tractor undulating through which provide contours. A view of Cambridge on a clear day.

If you are lucky the skies are a dark, stormy grey, racing, changing, creating moving shadows on the fields. This colour contrast is what hit me, the grey made the yellow so much brighter and the yellow made the grey clouds darker and deeper.



I quite often carry a sketch bag for moments like these, scribbling notes and taking photos. I have drawn a series of these now. A large yellow fields painting sold in the Pastel Society exhibition and two large works have sold in the Drawing Society this year. There are just 3 left now out of a series of 12.

I love the challenge of working on a large scale. I use giant Hoxton watercolour paper which is 6 ft x 5 ft, usually starting with an ochre wash before using my wondrous Unison pastels. Strong earthy pigments, hand rolled in Northumberland.



# Focus Art Fair

Mariya Myronova



Participating in the Focus Art Fair at the Saatchi Gallery in London was a rich and memorable experience. The event brought together galleries from all over the world—Japan, China, Korea, India, the United States, Brazil, the Philippines, Malaysia, Venezuela, Russia, the UK, and many others. My two paintings, *Social Media* and *Insomnia*, were selected through an international art contest alongside works from artists from Hong Kong, Italy, Brazil, Turkey, and other countries. I was represented by the Los Angeles–based gallery Teravarna, with whom I had previously collaborated about five years ago during the Covid period, when two of my oil pastel pieces were exhibited digitally in a Miami gallery. This time, I could finally experience the process in real life.

The practical side of the exhibition was eye-opening. The gallery handled all communication with the event organisers, and I had a strict one-hour time slot to deliver my work. All hanging and placement were managed by the gallery team according to a digital plan prepared in advance. What truly stayed with me, though, was watching international exhibitors unroll four-metre canvases across the floor of a massive hall, stretching and mounting them onto freshly built frames with precise efficiency. Some artists did everything themselves; others used the services provided by the organisers. Either way, it all happened surprisingly fast. Large screens were mounted and connected in under half an hour, and several young, very capable organisers were always available for questions and support throughout the setup.



*Social Media*



The opening and private view were absolutely packed—tickets were £100, and there was a long queue outside. As with most large art events in London, the atmosphere was vibrant and full of bright personalities, which made simply being there exciting. I didn't have much free time, as the gallery owner preferred that the artists themselves were present and speaking directly with visitors interested in their work. The day began with a press and video time slot, followed by hours of meeting people during the private view as hundreds moved through the halls. The next three days had a slower rhythm, with a steady flow of visitors and artists presenting their work.

Sales were not the main highlight of this fair, but the networking was genuinely valuable. I met an artist working in a similar genre, and we are now planning to exhibit together in London next May. Above all, it was incredibly rewarding to speak with so many people who were genuinely curious about my art—connecting, exchanging ideas, and sharing experiences with artists from all over the world.



## Meet the Committee - Elizabeth Jane Taylor



Jane became a CDS member in 2004. Her favourite media are printmaking and collage. She has been our publicity manager since 2022

### How long have you lived in Cambridge?

I've lived in Cambridge for all my life, so 74 years. We built our current house in Cambridge nearly 40 years ago.

### Who is your favourite artist, and why?

Probably Van Gogh, I think he had a great sense of perspective and use of colour. I completed A level art as a mature student and for that I wrote an essay on the 'Development of Mark Making in the work of Vincent Van Gogh'.

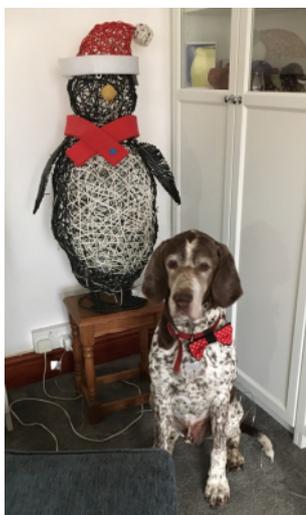


### What is your favourite type of holiday?

Currently I'd have to say caravanning. We've been every year for 10 years. There's generally something that goes wrong each trip, (bits fall off, things don't work and every time I touch something it breaks!), but once you have arrived and get set up there's plenty of relaxation. The only downside was our old dog Teddy, a pointer x springer who would howl for the whole journey, so was quite a trial. He was quite a character and a food thief, one Christmas he put himself in the naughty corner after stealing a cheesecake off the kitchen worktop.

### Do you have any hobbies?

I like Japanese Box making, cooking, and the allotment takes up a lot of time.

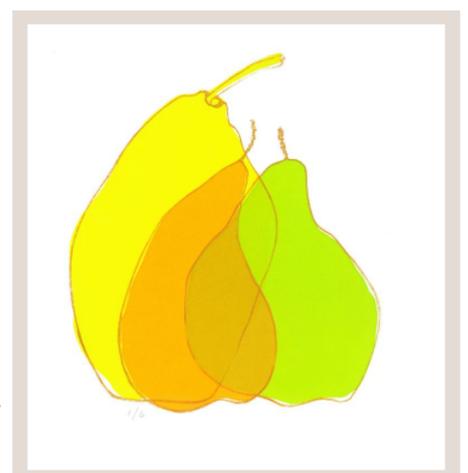


### What other jobs you have done?

In 1968 I left school at 16 and applied for a job at the Seed Testing Station at NIAB. I trained in seed analysis and crop inspection and in 2008 I became the first UK female Chief Officer of the Official Seed Testing Station for England and Wales. This may be why my art is often botanically themed.

### What would your superpower be?

I'd like a magic wand to wave at the washing up and housework.



*Trio of Pears*