

## REVIEW: DISCUSSION DAY, WEDNESDAY 9 MAY

### 'ISSUES IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND A DISCUSSION WITH LAMBERTS GLASS AND PEARSONS GLASS'

The day's programme comprised talks from practising artists as well as a manufacturer and a supplier of glass. Approximately 80 people attended, of which a large proportion were students. In the morning we heard from Derek Hunt FMGP and Helen Robinson AMGP, two very contrasting artists currently working at opposite ends of the glass spectrum. We were shown work which used a variety of techniques both modern and traditional.

Steve Clare FMGP chatted informally and took questions from the audience about conservation. A lot of the discussion was focused on advice for people who might be starting on a career in stained glass.

In the afternoon there were presentations from Lamberts Glass and Pearsons. The two sessions were linked by Tony Benyon's fascinating talk about the history and development of glass production and the close link between manufacturer and artist.

#### MORNING SESSION – THREE CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS BY FELLOWS AND ASSOCIATES ABOUT MOVING INTO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE:

Derek Hunt has developed a unique style working on large scale architectural projects for both church and secular sites. He firmly believes that the way forward is to work with laminated sheets of glass which are able to comply with the needs of architects and building regulations.

He is combining digital printing, air-brushed fired enamels and screen printing. He is able to produce layers of glass, some decorated by sandblasting and acid etching, sandwiched together in a secure unit. Some of his artwork is produced digitally. He is offering a highly contemporary approach to glazing solutions on a large scale. He believes that the use of leaded glass is under threat and that architects are looking for new ways to use glass in large scale projects.

Derek showed great determination to find a product and way of working which offers him a way of expressing his ideas. He is prepared to bid for contracts, design for competitions and keep up to date on public art commissioning websites. I didn't think men could multi-task!

Helen Robinson took us on a delightful journey into her studio where I hoped to get a cup of tea in a comfy armchair. She spoke on the necessity of being organized and keeping records, of those dull but very important words – accounts and insurance. She was open about the difficulties of making contacts, networking, getting commissions and being realistic about your expectations when starting out. Having seen all those neat boxes of glass in her racks, I suspect she is a hoarder as well.

Her work is traditional in technique – she produces leaded panels and works with acid, sandblasting and glass paint. Some of her work has an Arts and Crafts feel to it, with rhythmical lead work.

Her advice for students? Learn as much as you can, take courses, go to conferences and meet with other artists. Learn new skills – experiment, copy traditional pieces of paintwork.

Steve Clare also offered advice for student – Be organized! Keep detailed records of all aspects of a project including costs. Show determination and be prepared to be part of a team, particularly in conservation work. And, like Helen, keep your eyes open – keep learning.

There was some discussion about work within the conservation field and its suitability for students just out of college. In reply Steve felt that all students must know how to draw – an artistic understanding is needed to appreciate old glass and the making processes. Make sure you have good construction skills, know how a window is built. Be passionate about the craft.

The overwhelming impression I got from all the speakers was their commitment and dedication to their craft. However diverse they are there is one thing which binds them together: access to the materials that are suitable for their vision. This leads us into the afternoon session and the discussions with Lamberts and Pearsons.

#### AFTERNOON SESSION – A DISCUSSION ABOUT GLASS – THE MATERIAL AND ITS PRODUCTION:

Tony gave us a fascinating historical understanding of how glass manufacture developed in this country and how it changed as artistic styles and demands changed. Glass manufacturers and artist worked closely together and this resulted in some beautiful glass being made.

He gave us a mouth-watering catalogue of names: gold pink white, liney gold yellow, deep seedy white ... where are these now?

He warns us not to lose sight of the vision of what glass really is. The modulation of transmitted light is the essence of stained glass. Be aware of what we have lost – it is even more important for the artist to demand more choice.

Robert Christ from Lamberts gave a comprehensive presentation that explained the manufacturing process of sheet glass. It was interesting to know that there are nearly 5000 colour combinations available! However, it appears that as a business they respond to supply and demand. They seem to be supplying glass that is appropriate for the large scale laminated glazing schemes suitable for modern architecture.

However, some people questioned whether this was to the detriment of the artist working on a smaller scale who might be looking for that idiosyncratic quality of English glass that is so unique and possibly more suitable for leaded work.

Robert Beaver from Pearsons also gave us a business perspective on their supply system. There was some discussion on the range of glass available and about the possibility of being able to buy smaller cuts from a sheet. He seemed to respond to the idea of offering part sheets, something which many artists would appreciate as it offers them the chance to build up a stock of more colours.

He did make an interesting suggestion – 'Celebrity Glass' – the idea of a small and varied quantity of new and hopefully unusual glass being brought into Greenford every couple of months.

He seemed a little overwhelmed by our demands for a daylight viewing area at Greenford and possibly larger samples that could be displayed – with daylight!

However, everyone was pleased that Lamberts and Pearsons had been prepared to take the time to share their knowledge with us and we hope that they might be able to broaden their glass ranges and produce something different.

This was a highly informative and rewarding day – excellent lunch too.

*Nicola Kantorowicz*

## PEARSONS OFFERS

Pearsons are running two special offers until 29 June:

HEAPS – £104.95 per 25 kg box plus VAT (U, C, Arrow and Wideheart sections £10 extra)

LAMBERTS GLASS – 20% off 150 glasses.

First come first served. Call Pearsons to order or for details; tel: 0151 207 1474 (option 3).

Contributions for the next newsletter to  
Chris Wyard by 10 August