

# Event Reviews

## Centenary Touring Exhibition

Stained Glass Museum, Ely,

September–October

Take the slow train from Liverpool Street or the express from Kings Cross, then trundle across flat farmland to the hill-top city of Ely. Enter by the great Cathedral door and turn right. There you will immediately see our BSMGP Exhibition in the form of a substantial wooden 'ark' designed by Andrew Taylor to display the glorious glasswork submitted by our members. After looking long and hard at these enchanting exhibits, you may have time to climb the twisting stairs to the Stained Glass Museum. This is a very impressive show. There are 60 beautifully made panels to examine. Give yourself time to look properly at the treasures on display. Ely is a friendly town and refreshment can be found just a short walk away.

How wise it was to choose 30 cm for the panels in our exhibition. This modest size is small enough to work on in limited studio space and easy to carry around and install almost anywhere! Furthermore, it's a good size for encouraging careful attention, while the square shape itself hints at postcards, illuminated fragments and book illustration, a child's book perhaps or a memoir, something private and detailed. This kind of panel is really a 'work of art' and here, in the sturdy structure of the ark, each one has acquired a magical personal quality of its own.

Thanks to the energy, enthusiasm and sheer skilfulness of the artists taking part, there are many delectable visual treats for the visitor to enjoy. No subject, theme, or concept has been suggested and there are no limitations concerning process and this sense of freedom has been seized with evident enjoyment by everyone taking part. But we live in difficult times. Almost all the panels were created during the long 'lock down' period when the Covid virus held sway and the vaccination programme had yet to swing into effective action, and it shows!

Notice the real sense of urgency to so many of these pieces, a sense of the need to refocus life. Nothing in this exhibition is 'just decorative'; everything has been thought about, worked and reworked to make up for that which has been lost through the dark and difficult time that had to be endured and may yet continue to be endured in the future. There's such a sense of determination in these small panels, with artists turning their experiences towards the creation

of really memorable images. I found the whole collection immensely moving and can only list a few in this short space. I much admired 'Metamorphosis' by Petri Anderson, and the powerful 'Self portrait' by Derek Hunt. I found 'Wish I was here' by Deborah Lowe both gloriously colourful and terribly sad since it was her 'last look' at the sea, while James Cockerill's 'London in recovery' looked firmly ahead. Look out for Min Edmonds' 'Unknown pleasures' and Mary Corkery's 'Overthinking it' to mention just a few. Indeed, the whole exhibition was so enthralling that it now seems unfair to make selections of any kind. The standard of workmanship was splendidly high and the subjects intensely interesting. Hours of work had indeed been well spent.

Some panels consisted of a single piece of glass. No lead lines. Just a simple square. Don't hasten past these 30cm squares when you see them. Enjoy the handiwork of Surinder Warboys, Pippa Stacey, Grace Ayson, Refia Sacks, Fabrizia Bazzo, Pippa Martin, Elizabeth Lamont, Wendy Newhofer, Caroline Small, Sasha Ward, Alan Davis, Julia Gonyou, Elizabeth Sinkova, Jude Alderman, Alison Smith and Wendy Stone, all of whose work I greatly enjoyed. Janine Greenburg's deceptively reticent and delicate painting I found really amazing. It's a strange panel whose subject was the artist's own method of coping with the daily mental and physical strains of the need to shelter from the threatful power of the virus, a pencil drawing in glass.

But while Covid lurked malignantly at the outer edges, the viewer was also invited to walk with the artist for a short while, along newly discovered roads, share enjoyment of favourite landscapes or pause for a moment to look at a plant, flowers, trees or the sea. Some of the panels reference happy memories of past enjoyment, while others suggest the need for a more enlightened future in mankind's relationship with the natural world. Look out for those by Tamsin Abbott, John Corley, Michael Stokes, Maria Carvalho, Isobel Brunson, Roland Mitton, Jane Ross, Catherine Day, April Pebble, Juliet Forrest, Peter Berry, Alisoun Howie and Helen Robinson. Alan Davis's panel 'Stars are people too' was a beautifully worked meditation on mankind within the universe, while Refia Sacks' 'Memories of Akmene' looked back at the lives of her ancestors. These sidelong glances at the depth, horror and hope present in things past and to come has always formed part of our stained-glass world. Our medium is expected to take things seriously and express them well.

Altogether this is a fabulous exhibition, a celebration of glass itself and the amazing things we can do with

it. Technically, we are in a very favourable position regarding the tools of our craft and this exhibition shows just how much we can all achieve in the making of beautiful things to cheer the passing day and bring light, colour and enjoyment to all.

Caroline Swash FMGP, Nov 2021

### Winchester Cathedral, November

The exhibition travelled to Winchester for November. An online report by ITN News quotes The Very Rev Catherine Ogle, Dean: *'It's really marvellous to have examples of beautiful contemporary stained glass in the cathedral because of course we've got so many examples of medieval and older glass.'*



John Barzallo with his panel. Photo ©Russell Sach.

In the panels on show, some of the glass is a direct reflection of recent events. One design, by Sophie Hacker, was inspired by the cathedral's West window, which was smashed during the Civil War then recreated from the saved fragments. Sophie explained: *'I decided to make a lockdown fragment window. The whole experience of life in lockdown was that it became fragmented. Things were disassociated and broken and in a way the point of making this window was to say we can remake it all and we can remake it with beauty and hope.'*



Sophie and her panel. Photo ©Russell Sach

See the ITV news report with videos here: [www.itv.com/news/meridian/2021-11-16/its-really-marvellous-winchester-cathedral-hosts-stained-glass-exhibition?fbclid=IwARocgf9zeZv8qwM5\\_72Mqnc2eDQrboC\\_LhXmA\\_7nYEE5ddNtCuWJHSZETII](http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2021-11-16/its-really-marvellous-winchester-cathedral-hosts-stained-glass-exhibition?fbclid=IwARocgf9zeZv8qwM5_72Mqnc2eDQrboC_LhXmA_7nYEE5ddNtCuWJHSZETII).