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Autumn 2013 : Magazine No. 30

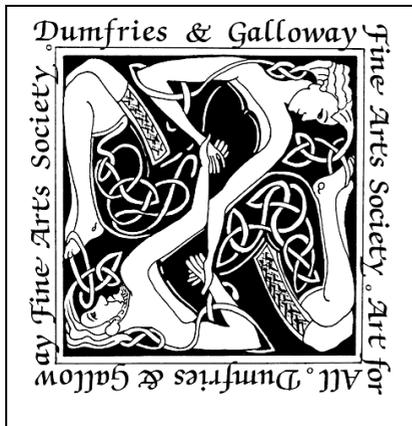
Cover

Double Yellow – acrylic on canvas, 101 x 152cm

Dougie Muego

www.mmvart.com

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Credits

Cartoon

Richard Whiting, Dumfries, Scotland

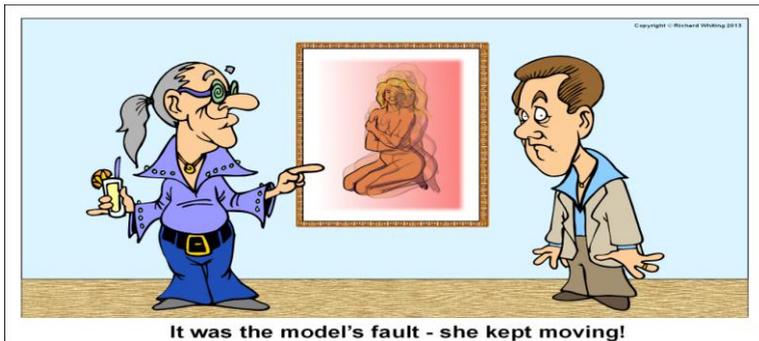
Technical Assistance

Richard Woods, Perth , Australia

Editor's Letter

In the long history of the Society there has been a persistent endeavour to keep everyone apprised of news and events. These efforts have ranged through forums, meetings, exhibitions and the printed word, each appropriate to their moment in time; but fifteen years ago the then Council introduced a Magazine which was in the format of a news letter. When Keith Dyson became editor in 2005 the format changed to a booklet; he introduced the first colour pictures and expanded the range of interest by increasing the number of articles. He then successfully edited five Magazines and set up the Society's first Web Site.

When Jane Parker–Clark took over as editor she kept the booklet but significantly altered the style and stamped her own personality on the following three editions. To a large extent that style was retained when Fiona Robertson was appointed but she developed the content and elevated her seven editions into a really professional publication. In addition she completely altered our Web Site appropriate to the status of a Fine Art Society and electronically modernised our organisational links and e-mail networks. Her reward was to become Chairman this year! The Web Site is now managed by Ian Irving and Bertram Aitchison writes this letter as the new Magazine Editor. Custodians all.



From the Chair

The phone call came out of the blue. When David said “Will you consider being Chairman of the Fine Arts Society”, I wondered what uniquely I had to offer the Society and really couldn’t make up my mind for some time.

However, as the AGM proved I decided to go ahead. My very brief thanks at the meeting meant there wasn’t the opportunity to pay tribute to the Chairmen who had been in the role before. Certainly since I joined in the late 90s each Chairman has brought a different dimension and skill to the Society, and because of this each has left the Society in better heart in their own particular way.

David Rose was very keen to take art to the community and this was achieved by encouraging young artists in our 2007 New Generation Exhibition. A further foray into the Dumfries & Galloway College followed and the idea of an ongoing Open Exhibition being held outwith Dumfries. You’ll be aware that for the past three years we have held a ‘Fine Arts on the Road’ exhibition firstly at Kirkcudbright and subsequently at Castle Douglas. Each year the exhibition attracts more visitors than the previous and it would be wonderful to say the sales increase similarly. Unfortunately in the current economic climate picture purchases are perhaps less important than other items but in this respect, our Society is not of course alone. It will get better.

I am fortunate to be working with a marvellous and hardworking committee and our successes over the past years are also due to them. Long serving Bert Aitchison as Secretary and Kathleen Woods as Exhibition Co-ordinator in particular were huge factors in my decision to take on the role. If you think I’m buttering them up to stay in post - you’d be right.

Going forward (as they say in some circles) I think we need to publicise the Society more. We're probably the South West of Scotland's best kept art secret. Ian Irving, who recently redesigned and revitalised the website has volunteered to keep the Press up to speed with our activities, so hopefully there will be more about us in the D&G Standard and other local papers. We can all help by speaking about our events (the talks and demonstrations, the three exhibitions, the workshops, the magazine) to friends. And we can persuade friends to become members. Don't let people be put off by the words 'Fine Arts'. After all, our subscription is still only £10 a year!

I hope you're all enjoying this glorious summer - weather/Lions/Wimbledon/The Ashes/weather - and I look forward to seeing you around at the Summer Exhibition. Next year we are promised a reversion to our usual July date and Gracefield has us earmarked for 2017 for our 90th Exhibition. Better start painting now.

Welcome to the new members and congratulations to those who have become full members.

Fiona Robertson
Chairman



Membership Announcements

New :- Ruth Drysdale, Adrian Eley, Vanessa Enos, Phil Gibson, Elaine Irving, Amanda Jones, Alexandra Little, Ms Lord, Iain Macgillvary, Wendy Swan, Elizabeth Tindal, Dorothy Winfield,

Full:- Miranda Neilson, Muriel Collins, Elizabeth Dagg, Ian Irving, Sandra Jaekel, Elizabeth Morrison, Sheelagh Nash, Pam Oliphant, Carollynne Paget, Sam Samson and Shirley Weatherup.

Cover Story by Dougie Muego

" The painting is a self sufficient work of art. It is not connected to anything outside." - Kurt Schwitters

My work has undergone major change since the last article I wrote for this magazine in Spring 2011.

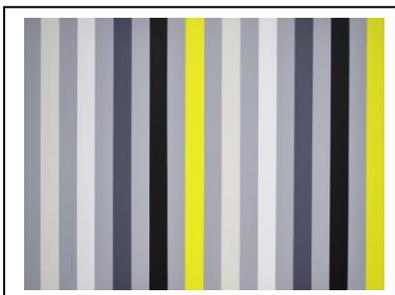
Previously my work was fairly conventional and respected existing norms and tropes about what a painting should be or should contain. It was expressive and illusionistic, it wasn't demanding enough, and I felt that I wanted to stretch myself. These niggles unsettled me, and change comes from being uneasy. I also wanted to move away from improvisation; my new work would be made by forming concepts, then making examples.

So then, to a new way of working, with fresh ideas and approaches. I wanted to subvert the old ideas and leave representation behind. I thought about what new meaning a work could have. Aesthetics didn't seem to matter. A work could be read, rather like a text. Instead of presenting a fait accompli, a work could offer the opportunity to the spectator to explore the space for themselves.

I had already begun using simple, repetitive abstract forms in both two and three dimensions, such as **Block Wood**, discovering how ideas could travel through different media. At the same time I was experimenting with installation and video, and making collaborative work with my wife, Morag.

Double Yellow followed the making of **Double Black** for a show last year. I spent a lot of time working on the finish and look of the pieces. I tried to remove as much evidence of my presence from the works as possible. If the artist takes himself out of the work, perhaps the audience can occupy it.

Each piece has a repeating theme and each engages with and answers the other. It was enough that they seemed potent, in some mysterious, unfathomable way.

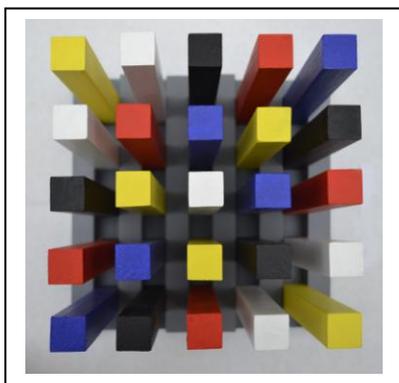


Double Yellow



Double Black

Acrylic on canvas - 101 x152cm



Block Wood (top view)

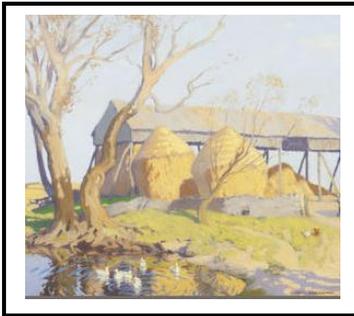
steel and paint - 20 x 20 x 20cm

Oppenheimer for Sale : Editor



Charles Oppenheimer is much in our minds because of our references to him in the Anniversary year and the coincidence of a new publication about him by Euan Robson. It is an apt time, therefore, to review his prices in the art market as his pictures have been auctioned at Bonhams in Edinburgh five times in recent years and once at Sothebys in London.

The high view point at *Rockwell Bay*, near Whitby, (above c. 1930s) has sold twice; in August 2007 for £960 and April 2011 for £1320. Modest indeed!



Oppenheimer seldom dated his work so the rural *Ducks by a Hay Barn* (left), probably in Galloway, is painted in soft and subdued tones much in use in the 1930s. Some contemporary critics felt them insipid; but this gentle ochre farmyard scene fared well when it was sold for £9000 in April 2013.

Exhibited in Paris in 1934 *Soleil de Matin* (right) lives up to its title where a light filled windowsill holds a still life of vase, book and blossom in perfect harmony whilst depth is given by discrete shadows and a glimpse outdoors over the net curtain. It made a good fist of itself by selling for £11,875 in August 2012; but not in Peplow's league. A flower still life of his sold at Bonhams in April 2013 for £349,245!

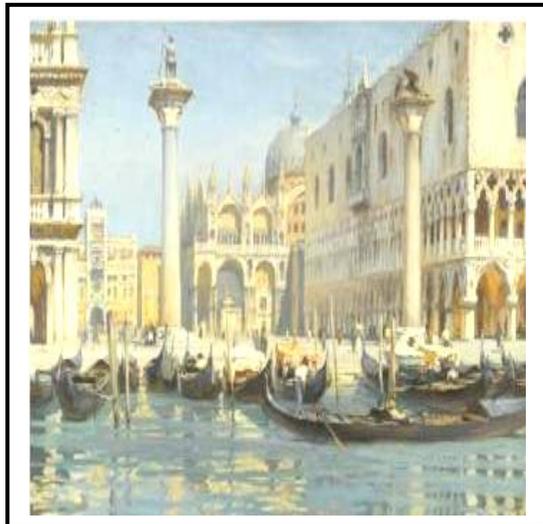




The naturalist depiction of *Old Bridge at Gatehouse of Fleet*, (left c 1940) has a timeless and evocative edge to it which is signified through the adoption of a stronger pallet giving the picture life. It featured in a frontispiece plate from a private collection in Robson's book. It sold at auction in December 2012 and reached £13,125.

Oppenheimer visited Italy many times and in this picture (below) he gives us a view of the ancient entrance into Venice from the sea, designated by the columns, with the Doge's Palace on the right. Soft tones again suiting the light but staffed this time with figures in the Piazzetta and the gondolas. He would have sketched the scene and finished in the studio.

His best price for *Piazzette Venice* (1931) sold at Sothebys for £49,250 in September 2010. Look out Mr.Peploe !



A Night to Remember - WJC Henderson



Jim Henderson (pictured left) was the guest speaker at the 90th Anniversary Dinner held in February 2013. Ian is the grandson of David and Chris Fergusson who were two of the founders of The Society. His research in preparation for the event was impressive.

Here is an abridged version of what he had to say:-

I shall have time to mention only a few personalities from the Society's early days which was supported by no less than 18 patrons who together with the first officers, including my grandfather, who must have done so much to underpin the impressive first exhibition of 1922 which contained close to 450 works. The exhibition was opened with a splendid oration by one of the first patrons, Sir William Younger and printed at some length in the 'Standard'. A review of the paintings followed a few days later and the unnamed critic commented very respectfully on works of Royal Scottish Academicians, now mostly obscure, then tackled the vexed issue of two paintings by Cadell, by writing, " his 'Iona', a piece of impressionism, is fairly intelligible if studied at a considerable distance but what it represents one can scarcely say with confidence.

The Society's first Honorary members included Sir David Cameron, E A Hornel and Sir James Paterson; the patrons included many local lairds and big wigs including five Baronets and the local MP. It is

clear from what I found that the Society was forward thinking and conscious of the need to focus on educating Dumfries on rapidly developing trends in modern art.

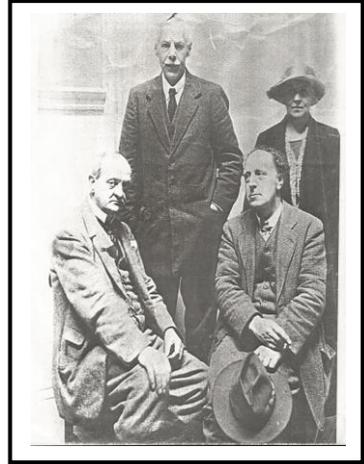
The type of notables invited to perform the opening ceremony changed over time, rather strikingly - John Revel the Principal of Glasgow School of Art in 1928 to Joe Corrie a coal miner and dramatist in 1936 who advocated that the state should take over the responsibility for subsidising art. Despite all these grandees, and the not so grand, the Society, I am sure, depended for its continued existence upon the dedicated enthusiasm of local people, and local artists in particular, as it must still do today. In the 1920s these included my grandmother, the artist Chris J Fergusson and my grandfather, David Fergusson who was a lawyer and became the Society's first Honorary co-secretary and later treasurer.

My grandmother was born in 1876 in Dumfries, schooled Dumfries Academy, and further at the mysterious Crystal Palace School of Art in London. From 1902 – 6 she attended the exciting Glasgow School of Art in Macintosh's nouveau building where she met and became friends with Jessie King. My grandparents settled in Dumfries after their marriage in 1908. They built for themselves a house in Arts and Crafts style which they named 'Southdean' It is rather unique in design in Dumfries and still stands, quite near the Observatory Museum half way down Rotchwell Road in Maxwelltown.

My granny's work seems always to have been popular and easy on the eye and had a knack of capturing the atmosphere of Dumfries and the beautiful countryside surrounding it, very convincingly. I am happy to say that a number of her works have remained within my large and appreciative family and are hanging on the walls of our homes today, where they continue to be enjoyed. In her work she helped to capture the atmosphere of an era which came to an end

with world war two. She continued to exhibit until shortly before her death in 1957 Her work was included in the Society's special exhibition held in tribute to the festival of Britain of 1951. I was fortunate to get to know her for a few years when I was a little boy and she was by then an old lady.

Her landscapes were often illustrated in the catalogues along with group photographs of her standing with other members of the hanging committee.



1924 L>R: EA Hornel, R Cairns
EA Taylor, C Fergusson

When I looked through the catalogues I was impressed to find examples of work by practically all the prominent artists then working in Scotland, and also many from other parts of Britain. Names like Peploe who regularly exhibited from 1925 onwards and the others who would subsequently become popularly known as the 'Four Scottish Colourists'. In the 1926 exhibition a sculpture by Auguste Rodin was shown, a bust of RL Stevenson's friend, William Henley. After 1945 other important artists including Sir William Gillies, Anne Redpath and Sir Robin Philipson came to the fore in the Society's exhibitions.

After my grandmother's day others took over the task of driving the society forward but time prevents me from mentioning many except because I knew them, Cyril Wilson and his wife Jane in the 1950's, Donald Wilson, the gifted bird artist and the still much lamented Archie Sutter Watt RSA.

The Society now looks ahead and I hope it will go on thriving. So my toast is to the health of the Society as it marks its 90th year and to the memory of its founders.

From the Archives – Autumn 2005

Painting in a Garden - Shona McQueen

On Sunday 19th June a small party of us met up at Muirfield, Hightae to paint in Jane Parker-Clark's garden. Philip Hutton, who had given a talk and demonstration on painting gardens during the winter lecture programme, led the painting day. The weather was warm, although not sunny, making for comfortable painting conditions.

Over coffee Philip began the day with a talk on the different styles of various garden painters, showing us examples of their work from books. He then demonstrated a charcoal sketch, the first of a number of demonstrations throughout the day. Those who attended his lecture in January will recall his enthusiastic style; he regularly threw himself down full length on the lawn to show us the use of a spray diffuser, or different watercolour techniques.

We settled down to our various sketches and paintings. Jane's garden offered us loads of subject matter, flowerbeds with irises and lupins; water features including a water lily pond; outbuildings and trees full of character – one damson tree even had a dragon lurking among its branches. The day was rounded off, as our days out painting always are, by a show of all the works produced on the day and an appraisal by our tutor.

Thank you, Jane, for supplying us with coffee and lunch, and generally putting up with us! An enjoyable day was had by all.

Winter Programme 2013 / 14 - Gracefield Studios, Dumfries

A season of illustrated talks and demonstrations begin at 7.30pm each evening followed by refreshments.

Friday 11th October

- **Keith Brown** – *My Wildlife Paintings of the Solway Firth*

Although my background is Civil Engineering; I have managed to transfer my skills into art. I have always been interested in natural history and I am constantly intrigued by the ever changing light on the Nith Estuary and the migratory birdlife that populates my favourite part of Scotland.

Friday 8th November

- **Silvana McLean:** – *The North – Its Influence on my Work*

Silvana trained in drawing and painting at Glasgow School of Art, studied etching in evening classes at Edinburgh College of Art and learned about non or less toxic etching methods from Professor Keith Howard. She is a professional member of Society of Scottish Artists and exhibit regularly there and at the Royal Glasgow Institute. She taught Printmaking and Mixed Media at Dumfries and Galloway College from 2004-2010.

Silvana has developed a deep interest in all things to do with the North from the seashore and icy landscapes to quaint local museums and has visited Iceland many times; in 2001 spent three months on an artists residency in Shetland.

Friday 16th December

- **Naomi Lethbridge:-** *Artistic Residency in Chongzing, China*

Naomi grew up in the region and maintains strong links with the area. She trained at George Street School of Art, Duncan of

Jordanstone and Manchester Metropolitan University (MA). She exhibits nationally and internationally and is represented by Paper Gallery in Manchester.

Earlier in the year Naomi spent 9 weeks in the industrial city of Chongzing, as artist in residence, and working at the Sichnan Institute of Fine Art.

Friday 10th January

- **Hugh Brydon:-** *Critique Night*

Hugh Brydon was an art teacher in Dumfries and Galloway for over thirty years. He exhibited widely as a printmaker and painter during that time. He has recently been producing artists books and publishing poetry pamphlets – a subject about which he spoke to the Society in the winter of 2010

Friday 14th February

- **Anne Butler** – *Landscapes*

My paintings are loose, colourful, energetic and generally landscapes. My work is often inspired by fields and fences, wind and weather and coastal visits. I enjoy experimenting with colour and trying out new techniques but I mainly work in acrylic on canvas of all sizes.

Friday 14th March

- **Shirley Henderson:-** *Creating Art in Coloured Pencil*

Shirley is mainly a self taught artist. In 2001 she discovered Colour Pencil and joined the UK Colour Pencil Society. Having 4 pieces of work accepted for the UKCPS Annual Open Exhibition over 3 years, she was awarded Signature Status with the Society. The majority of her work is Colour Pencil, but she does use other mediums as well.

Summer Programme Reports

Summer Workshops Leona Hart

Once again we had an excellent response to the Summer Workshop programme. The slight increase in price had no affect on the numbers and 54 of you enrolled. We had 4 excellent tutors and **Clare Melinski** started the season with 2 small groups attempting to emulate her lino cut expertise: we did our best but the class will not be illustrating Harry Potter books just yet. **Philippa Sinclair** introduced us to extremely loose vibrant watercolour painting. Many in the class familiar with the medium did lovely work. I was rather pleased at 3.45pm to know I was 'nearly there'. **Shirley Henderson** amazed the class with her skill with the coloured pencil – not crayons! This class was delighted with their take home achievement and I have been told the class in the adjacent studio were envious that they had not enrolled too. Maybe next year. **William Spurway** gave a master class on the art of painting skies showing us the intricate layering of the colours and the fine detail in each cloud - in fact teaching us to actually look at the sky and not simply to reach for the blue paint. All in all an excellent season.

As you can see from the photographs the concentration was high and the participants were so engrossed with the activities they were oblivious to the camera- nearly.

Thank you to all our tutors and all you artists benefiting from their skill.



Clare Considers

Phillipa Paints



Shirley Suggests

William Watches



On The Road Exhibition : Joan Fleming

The DAGFAS 'On the Road' exhibition was held in the Castle Douglas Gallery from Wednesday 12th June till Saturday 22nd June.

Members submitted a total of forty four paintings, one sculpture and a selection of cards for sale and council members had an enjoyable time setting out the work to best advantage. A few more paintings could have been accommodated and members are encouraged to submit work next year, to this, a non-selected exhibition.

A total of 328 members of the public visited over the course of the opening and three paintings and a number of cards were sold (to a total of £274.00). The exhibition was well received with favourable comments and good feedback from the public.

Thanks are due to both council and society members who gave their time to steward the show, this help was much appreciated and contributed to a relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the gallery.



This was the third year of our outreach Exhibition and negotiations will soon be underway to locate one for next year.

The 86th Annual Exhibition

A very good number of members and friends attended the Preview Evening of the Annual Exhibition which was officially opened by Baroness Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh, Chairman of A.R.C.H. , a charity bringing music and the arts to hospitals and residential homes, seen here in company with our hard working exhibition co-ordinator, Kathleen Woods



Eighty five Artists exhibited two hundred and thirty five pieces of high quality work and the Staff at Gracefield Arts Centre once again excelled in the hanging and presentation of the exhibits, which were sorted and assembled beforehand by the

Society's volunteers. The Chairman took advantage of a period before the official opening to show the Baroness around each of the rooms and view the paintings, to which she made gracious reference during her address which was accomplished in fine style.

Eight pieces of work were sold on the preview night.

Thanks go to colleagues on Council for their help and support and to the members who came in to help with hand-in, selection and arranging the hanging. Their assistance is so important and much appreciated.

A Selector's Point of View by Nick Bass

In company with John Threfall, Clare Melinsky, Margaret Milligan and Keith Brown



It all starts with a telephone call from the Exhibition Coordinator “Will you be on the selection panel his year?” and you say “Yes”.

Comes the day and you report for duty wondering if you have made a mistake in agreeing to serve but fully aware that this is no time to change your mind. They look after the selection panel very well. Tea, coffee and nibbles arrive and so do your fellow volunteers. There is gentle chat and a chance to meet the others and you are allowed to have 2 works in the exhibition that do not go through the Selection process. So far, so good.

Then it all starts to be real. We are sat down and receive a few words of procedure from the Lady Chairman. “You will see the exhibits and be asked to use cards to show your selection, one for the very very

best ,two, three for the fully acceptable and the dreaded four for not today thank you.” AND NO CONFERRING YOU ARE NOW ON YOUR OWN. The decision that you make is yours alone and every one matters. The label that members get on the back of their pictures is the average of those given by the 5 selectors. None of the selectors know everything and we all have our own preferences so selection is not an exact science but a considered judgement by the selectors who do their best to be objective and fair. So the pictures arrive in an unending stream and we get the hang of it. Nobody likes to give a four, but if we feel that this is right then we give that decision knowing that the end result is the average of us all. This looking at paintings and making decisions is pretty hard work and we get through a total of about 300 pieces in 3 sessions with a couple of breaks.

When the last piece has been seen and judged we are a pretty tired bunch. If we have 300 lots to look at and there are 5 selectors that means that we have made 1500 decisions between us and people will inevitably question some of the judgements and of course we all make mistakes sometimes. No system is perfect but ours is the best that we can do and every panel member will do their best. We can hardly argue with that.

One last thought for the members who have been unlucky enough to have work rejected. This does not mean that the work is no good. On another day with another panel that work might well have been selected.

This can happen to us all! Press on





The Art of Assembly

Members' Open Christmas Exhibition At the Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary

Once again the Society is grateful to Janette Park for arranging an exhibition for DAGFAS members to show their work in the Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary from late November 2013 for approximately six weeks.

We must ensure the operation of receipt, hanging and uplift of works is as straightforward as possible for the DGRI staff and ourselves. Therefore all members submitting works for this exhibition should note that they will be received only under the following conditions.

1. Artwork offered for exhibition should be suitable for a hospital environment and should not include subjects which might disturb people who are sick or depressed. A commission of 20% will be charged on all work sold during the exhibition.
2. To facilitate attachment to the walls (by screwed mirror plates) only wooden frames (paintings, prints, drawings etc) or unframed works with a wooden stretcher will be accepted for hanging. We regret that metal or plastic frames, clip frames etc or three dimensional craft items or sculptures that provide difficulty in hanging will not be accepted in this exhibition. All glass edges must be fully covered and protected. Previous hardware (such as screwed eyes, rings, strings and wires) should be removed from the back of the work so that the DGRI staff may use their own screwed mirror plates.
3. There will be no selection panel. Members may submit up to two works for hanging that meet the above criteria and as many as possible will be hung. However if there are too many works for the space available then we will endeavour to hang at least one work for each member with the caveat that very large works may have to be omitted in favour of those requiring less space.

Reasonable care will be taken of all works, however the Exhibition is held in a public space and neither the DGRI and/or DAGFAS are liable for any damage to or theft of any work.

4. Receipt of works will be Monday 25th November 2013 between 10am and 12 noon. Delivery of work should be made to the DGRI Main Entrance area where DAGFAS members will receive

and check the works against the Submission Form which should be sent to Kathleen Woods no later than 18th November 2013.

Works will NOT be admitted for show if forms are NOT received by this date. Please attach a sticky label to the back of your work marked clearly with Title, Medium, Artist Name and price. No labels will be supplied for this exhibition.

5. Works that have not been sold should be collected on Monday 6th January 2014 between 10am and 12 noon. Works that are not removed by exhibitors or their agents will become the property of the DGRI and may be disposed of at their discretion. Agents employed to remove works should be given written authority by the artist.

6. DGRI staff will administer the sale and collection of sold works by the purchaser. A summary of sales and receipts will be provided to DAGFAS so that we may inform members.

NOTE: For purchases please contact the Main Reception Desk. For all other matters concerning the exhibition please contact the Exhibition Co-ordinator Kathleen Woods on 01848 200175.

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Dumfries & Galloway Fine Art Society
Members' Open Christmas Exhibition at the DGRI
2013 - 2014

Please send the following information to Kathleen Woods - either by mail or email (see addresses on page 27) by 18th November 2013, so that the list of exhibitors and works can be prepared prior to the exhibition. **FAILURE TO DO THIS WILL MEAN YOUR PICTURES CANNOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Email address.....

Telephone Number

First work

Second work

Title:

Title:

Medium:

Medium:

Price:

Price:

Each work when handed in on Monday 25th November 2013 is to be individually labelled with Title, Medium, Artist Name and Price. The Society does not supply labels for this exhibition. Please ensure all picture hardware is removed prior to handing



The Society Web Site

Are you one of the more than 1,500 people who have visited our website since it was revamped earlier this year? If not, have a look at www.dumfriesandgallowayfineartsociety.org.uk if you can - you might find it useful.

For a start it gives details of all the society's activities, including exhibitions, the winter talks programme and our summer workshops. Then it enables you to download and print your own labels for the summer exhibition, schedule details, membership application forms, and so on.

The **Gallery** feature provides a showcase for members' work, with links to individual websites where they exist, and the **Noticeboard** is available for members to post details of their own shows and activities, plus other items of interest to members..

It is not only members who visit the site. The majority of visitors are UK-based, of course, but the website attracts viewers from all round the world, from Bangalore to Sydney, Istanbul to Washington, Kiev to Jinan.

Remember though, it's *your* website. Your comments, suggestions, images for the gallery, are always welcome. Just email the editor at dagfas@freeolamail.com



Iain Irving – Web Site Manager

The Web Gallery

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