

PRIZE-WINNING PAINTING SETS A NEW RECORD

LANDSCAPE artist Mary Towsey has set a new record with her prize-winning painting of cornfields beneath a stormy sky.

"Somewhere Near Froyle" was voted by visitors to Alton Art Society's annual show at the Assembly Rooms as their "Exhibit of the Year," making her the third winner of the coveted trophy first presented by blind sculptor Jack Riviere.

But it was with mixed feelings that Mrs. Towsey revealed that her splendid oil painting had sold on the very last day of the show for the asking price of £450.

"I really didn't want to part with it and that was why I set such a high price," she explained.

It was the highest figure for the sale of any one exhibit in the 53-year history of the show, delighting the organisers, who were already pleased enough with the high proportion of paintings bought during this year's event.

It came as a pleasant surprise to Mrs. Towsey to find that the American who bought the painting was one of her own students at the Cobham School of Art.

A member of the Alton Society for about five years, Mrs. Towsey has managed to fit her career as an artist around her role as a mother of three daughters.

Amanda (20) is already following in her footsteps by studying at art school, while Belinda (14) and even six-year-old Eleanor seem to have inherited her skills.

Mrs. Towsey spoke about the challenge of painting a panorama in such a large scale as her winning picture.

"I'm obsessed with space and cornfields and I went out for a drive looking for the right subjects," she said.

"But I had almost given up when I found this scene. The biggest difficulty was one of composition because the 42ins. by 20ins. canvas was two inches bigger than the largest size I normally use."

Chairman of the Society Mr. Patrick Edwards presented the Exhibit of the Year Award: Joan Wingate's "The Seasons" was runner-up with last year's winner, Eric Street third with "Hartley Mauditt," and another landscape, "Scene Near Well" by Robert Bickerdike in fourth place.

Mr. Edwards paid tribute to Mrs. Joan Taylor, who had previously announced that this would be her last year as Show Secretary. He also thanked lighting expert Mr. Francis Stevens and Assembly Rooms caretaker Mr. Sam Ayres for their invaluable assistance.

Winners of the children's section stepped up to collect their prizes as the exhibition closed. Details: Under-8 — 1, "Harvest Time," St. Lawrence Infants; 2, "At the Seaside," St. Lawrence Infants. 9-11 years — 1, Rachel Cook; 2, Julia Fowles, Alison Hall, Zoe Saunders and Claire Read. 12-14 years — 1, Lisa Kelly; 2, Lisa Searle. 15-17 years — 1, Rachel Glover; 2, Adrian Watts. Handicraft — 1, Richard Platt and Miriam Hostman; 2, Joanna Titheridge.



Young artist in the making, Amery Hill pupil Rachel Glover was one of the winners in the children's section

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN ART SHOW

WHATEVER one's taste, Alton Art Society's 53rd annual exhibition at the Assembly Rooms last week was certain to bring visitors a great deal of pleasure.

There were glorious landscapes — some on the grand scale — powerful portraits, sensitive studies, still life, animal magic and even surrealism.

With nearly 180 oil paintings, water colours, pastels, gouache, screen prints and sculptures to chose from, visitors may well have faced a dilemma in voting for their "Exhibit of the Year."

But there was no denying that Mary Towsey's magnificent panorama, "Somewhere near Froyle," demanded immediate attention, closely followed by Tana Riviere's ethereal "Dream Days."

It was a show of contrasts — those bold, dark shadows of Joan Bickerdike's "Bulbarrow, Dorset," on the one hand, the soft, misty quality of Gordon Trimming's "Summer Haze, Martyr Worthy" and "Water Meadows, Martyr Worthy," on the other; brightly coloured studies such as Dorothy Dean's "Autumn Bunch" balanced by the mellow tones of Joan Blacker's "The Cooper" and "The Wheelwright."

Molly Dinwiddie's delightful offerings included her curiously titled "View from the Loo," while Philippa Dorling's enchanting and yet colourful portrayal of two friends and their canine companions was another eye-catcher.

"Seagulls," a striking version of the traditional birds-behind-the-plough view, had a Hitchcock feel about it but there was no mistaking the trade mark of the artist, Tana Riviere.

There was certainly no shortage of local scenes among the exhibits and they included George Carter's "Winter Sunshine, Alresford," R. L. Bickerdike's "Scene near Well," Nancy Archer-Shee's "Gracious Street, Selborne" and Eric Street's "Amery Hill, Alton."

But others went much further afield for their inspiration: Rosemary Nickless captured "Zurich by Night," while Guy Vaessen went to "Kashah, South Morocco" and "Lasu Village, North Thailand" for his subject matter.

Among the more unusual exhibits were Hilda Frank's weaving while outstanding among the sculptures was E. A. Stoke's "Ferret in Walnut."

The children's section featured some outstanding work this year, including Four Marks School's under nines' very own version of the Bayeaux Tapestry.

Alton and District Flower Arrangement Society were responsible for the superb floral decoration of the exhibition hall.

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