

Alton Art Society's show one to rival the best

Alton Art Society's well-travelled and observant members produced a show to rival the most professional of artists.

The Society's 61st exhibition had something for every taste — portraits, landscapes, still-life and sculptures; scenes both foreign and British and pictures that used a wide range of materials and techniques.

Landscapes were particularly strong this year. Robert Bickerdike effectively captured the patchwork effect of the fields in summer and the corresponding winter scene with his evocative sister paintings entitled "Old Winchester Hill."

There was strong evidence of the artist's love of landscapes close to home; Gwen Lambourne's atmospheric "In a Hampshire Cornfield," a good example among many of a feel for the essence of the Hampshire countryside.

Also enjoyable in this vein was Dorothy Dean's painting of her home village, "Harvest at Bentworth" and Gerald Woolley's peaceful scene at sparkling water!

Among the most intriguing exhibits were the portraits. Jane Steven's sombre "Phyllis" portrayed a sad, thoughtful face in profile while and Cathy Collingwood captured well the beautiful face of "Wambui." Then there was the sullen aloofness of Peter Prescott's "Puella Quondam", the enigmatic "Keith" by Marjorie Kirby, and Eric Phizacklea's "Darkie."

Artists demonstrated their mastery of technique in a multitude of ways. Ann Sayer successfully contrasted textures to achieve very convincing beams of light and carpeted forest floor in "Light and shade." With clever use of colour, Elaine Bryan conveyed a real sense of heat in "Corfu Afternoon."

The undoubted master of watercolour is Paul Banning, who recently had an exhibit in the prestigious Royal Watercolour Society Open exhibition. He had a number of excellent paintings, notably "The Sunday Paper" and the

atmospheric "Lace-makers of Borneo."

Barbara Shaw was, perhaps, the most experimental of the artists exhibiting, producing some wonderful interpretations of familiar scenes and objects. In "Binsted (1)," she used a range of materials, including newspaper, to form a stunning collage of blocks of colours which merged into each other, nonetheless effectively reproducing the scene. Her watercolour, "Binsted (2)," portraying the same scene in a different medium, demonstrated her versatility. Also impressive was the subtle "Orchid For Mum," with a clever blending of colours to create an interesting still life.

Artists were evidently inspired by their travels and some of the paintings were of scenes from all over the world, with places as far-flung as China, Cairo and Mallorca. Many artists were inspired by Venice, while others captured the colours and light of Scotland effectively, as in Stella Bennett's "Boats Moored, Loch Tay" and Barbara Shaw's "Impression of Scotland," which humor-

ously in "From the Hopparden" (Catherine Curtis) and, stranded in mid-air, "A Boat — Floating," both raising a smile. A sculpture by Arthur Wren showed a wonderful "Angel Flying" in superman pose.

The sculptures were, indeed, of a very high quality, the most eye-catching being "Twosome," also by Arthur Wren, evoking its subject matter with pure, clean lines.

The exhibition included a memorial panel of paintings by the late Joan Taylor, who served on the committee for 14 years and was a life member. Three of her works were exhibited, the lovely "Meonstoke," the moving portrait of "Bob" and a still life, "Daisies and Golden Rod."

There are too many excellent pictures to mention individually, but it would be wrong to omit George Carter's striking "The Red Candle" or "Russian Dancers," by Raymond Bennett. Stella Bennett showed an interesting choice of subject in the detail of "The



Some of the winners in the children's section of Alton Art Society's annual exhibition, pictured with chairman, Peter Forey (JRP Photographic)

Canalside scene a winner for Gerald

A newcomer to Alton Art Society has carried off their "Exhibit of the Year" award.

Gerald Woolley's watercolour of "Greywell Mill"

artist, chairman, Peter Foley said it was "very, very close" with no less than six paintings in the running for the prize.

Pipped at the post was "The Lytchgate, Farringdon," by Alton's Christine Radford, "The House Painter" and Julia Tinley's "Convolvulus."

Winner Gerald Woolley said he was delighted with his success but he had mixed feelings about selling the painting, even though he is a retired professional artist.

"You feel as though you are selling part of yourself because you have put so much into it," he said.

Greywell is a favourite haunt of his and he has returned many times to faithfully capture the canalside scene.

Gerald (63), who is also a member of the Farnham and Fleet Art Societies, moved to Church Crookham two years ago on his retirement after living and working in London for 35 years as a designer-illustrator in agencies and studios.

● "Greywell Mill" was one of five paintings bought at the Alton exhibition by East Hampshire District Council's purchasing panel.



Alton Art Society's "Exhibit of the Year" award goes to Gerald Woolley for his watercolour of Greywell Mill (JRP Photographic)

CHILDREN'S ART TAKES PRIDE OF PLACE

The children's section of the exhibition showed that there will be no lack of talent in the future.

Five-year-old Vicki Christmas was the winner of the youngest section with her fellow St Lawrence School pupil, Jacob Croucher, second. was won by Caroline Harness from St Lawrence's with Selborne's Ben Marnham second.

Their school won both the 5-7 and 9-11 group prizes.

In the 12-14-year-old section, Ailsa Grant-Ferguson won first prize with an enterprising "Town Centre" with Gideon Frater, also from Amery Hill School, second.

With stiff competition from the runner-up, fellow Eggar's pupil, Jo Foley, Tim Ward won the prize for the seniors with a self-portrait.

The special handicraft prize went to Gemma Hogwood of Holybourne.

CASH SNAG BUT SHOW GOES ON

This year's Alton Art Society exhibition was a resounding success but, chairman Peter Forey revealed, there were doubts at one stage that it would take place.

Because of the removal of concessions for local organisations, the Society had been faced with greatly increased costs for hiring the Assembly Rooms, despite receiving a grant from the Town Council, for which Mr Forey expressed thanks.

"There were a few moments when the exhibition was in doubt but members of the society rallied round and dipped into their own pockets so that the show could go on," he said.

He paid tribute to the committee and everyone involved in the organisation of the event with special thanks to those who had worked so hard to hang the entire exhibition in just one day.

Mr Forey said it had been a "fantastic exhibition," showing extremely high standards and he described the children's section as a "new and enlivening component."

Light, bright and beautiful

Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Sir James Scott, opened Alton Art Society's 61st annual exhibition at the Assembly Rooms.

He referred to the fact that his wife, Lady Anne Scott, was only the society's third president and to the longevity of her predecessors, Lord Baden-Powell and Lady Charlotte Bonham-Carter.

He congratulated everyone involved in the staging of the exhibition and he spoke highly of the variety and quality of the exhibits.

Sir James had been introduced by chairman Peter Forey, who thanked him and his wife for allowing the society's members to visit his

home every year to paint, some of the results of their efforts being among the work on show.

Sir James remarked that Rotherfield Park was a difficult subject and he said that what had caught his eye as he viewed the exhibition was the "unfair advantage" that those painting abroad in such locations as Venice and France had: "The light is so very different and that comes over quite vividly," he said.

He was also enthusiastic about the work in the children's section of the exhibition which he described as "light, bright and beautiful" and he added that he was looking forward to seeing more paintings from the "next generation" of artists.



Sir James and Lady Scott admire some of the exhibits at Alton Art Society's annual display with chairman, Peter Forey (JRP Photographic)