

John T Freeman RIP

We are sorry to inform you of the death of John T Freeman, the artist and husband of our President, Jane Allison, and past Chairman of the Guildford Art Society.



John was also an accomplished cartoonist and regularly contributed to the art magazine "The Jackdaw" using the pseudonym "Bluetit" whilst his illustrations for "Thatcher. Graphic Guide" published in 1986 by the Camden Press caused considerable controversy. His book "Portrait Drawing" was published by the Crowood Press in 2006 and is available in bookshops and art material supply shops.

John was born in 1958 in London and studied painting at Bath Academy of Art (Corsham) 1976 -77 before going to the Chelsea School of Art from 1977 to 1980 where he met Jane. John was a committed member of The Chelsea Arts Club.

John's work was in the tradition of the romantic realism that had developed in England before and after the Second World War. After leaving college he continued to paint and developed an interest in etching. He published critically acclaimed books of etchings, "I London", "Descent to Byworth", "Paris Workings" "Dancing The Mysteries" and "Between the Gate of the Sun and the Gate of the Moon: Reflections on Alexandria." His etchings can be seen in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and the Glyn Vivian Museum in Swansea.

John was also an accomplished cartoonist and regularly contributed to the art magazine "The Jackdaw" using the pseudonym "Bluetit" whilst his illustrations for "Thatcher. Graphic Guide" published in 1986 by the Camden Press caused considerable controversy. His book "Portrait Drawing" was published by the Crowood Press in 2006 and is available in bookshops and art material supply shops.

From 1985 he taught as a freelance tutor and lecturer to all levels of ability across a wide spectrum including the computer games industry, Lion Head and Media Molecule, Hurtwood House School, Watts Gallery, Tate Britain, where he led two studio sessions on Gillray and Hogarth and lectured on Blake in collaboration with Jay Wobble, the Prince of Wales Drawing School and West Dean College. He was recently invited to talk at the University of Cambridge about the history and theory of etching in relation to his own work.

His approach was to encourage the student to see progress within their work as problem solving that can be assisted by the development of visual reasoning along with the awareness of the importance of working within the art historical tradition of whatever medium or discipline they are pursuing.

As Chairman of Guildford Art Society in 2000, he sought to revitalize Guildford Art. He wanted to turn it into a civic visual arts body with the aim of encouraging Guildford as a whole to be more involved in visual arts. He complained that Guildford was well supplied with performance arts but the visual arts were viewed with suspicion. In an attempt to change this he organised an exhibition of six renowned contemporary artists in Guildford House but his efforts were not supported by Guildford Borough Council. Their indifference to the visual arts has not changed.

Jane and her son, William are hoping to publish a complete catalogue of John's work and also a revised book of "Paris Workings" to include around 100 additional etchings and hope that time will bring John the recognition he deserved as a great artist and a truly original thinker.