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AUTUMN EQUINOX - Edition #3

22nd September 2021



“Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun,
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit, the vines that round the thatch-eaves run.”

From ‘Ode to Autumn’ by John Keats

Welcome to this year's third Newsletter.

We hope you've had a good summer and were able to enjoy the spells when it was warm and sunny, though that does seem a distant memory, now!

At least the weather was good during most of our far Open Art Trail Exhibition at the beginning of July (apart from the torrential downpours on the very last day) and we'd especially like to thank all of you who came to visit us in our studio: it's all due to you that it was such an enjoyable and successful event.



Carmen with her very popular range of handmade greetings cards and decorated gift bags.

since the end of our exhibition, right up until a couple of weeks ago, she's been very busy honouring her commitments regarding her clients' remaining decorating jobs, before hanging up her roller forever. (Consequently, she ain't done much in the studio!)

But, being artists at heart, both of us make mental notes all the time as we go about our business and observe the world around us and ideas like - 'Oo that'd make a good picture' - or 'maybe I could try this technique or that' and with the dark winter months approaching, those thoughts and ideas might well get turned into work in the warmth of the studio, later in the year. Who knows...

So what about Stuart, then?
(Yes, what *about* him!)

Well, having spent the last few weeks making a side-

In Our Studio

While many of you will only know Carmen as a fine art painter and muralist, she also pursued a parallel career as a painter and decorator. In 2006, together with Stuart, she founded DecorArt of Lydney, a business which flourished for 15 years: that is, until May of this year, when Carmen announced her retirement. However,



Stuart's portrait selection.

door from scratch for the garage, and the cuts and bruises having healed somewhat, he turns his mind once again to monochrome and the portraits that didn't get completed this year.

He was delighted to have taken on several portrait commissions of various children and adults from photographs that were sent in and looks forward to more to come.

Portrait reminder... in case you'd like to make a surprise gift of a framed portrait of one of your parents, your partner or child - or yourself - do send in a favourite but neglected photograph and we'll see if it can be worked into a nice picture to hang on the wall.

Just attach your picture file to an email and send it to:
kalithea@freeuk.com

Paint what you see...

Carmen and I have often discussed what it is that makes the drawn or painted image of any subject recognisable, realistic or just plain believable; be it of scenes from nature, buildings or people. Too often - and somewhat naturally, we tend to draw what we *think* is there, and rarely what actually is.

Portraits and figure drawing present a particular challenge in this respect. Beginners (and I include

myself) will spend far too long trying to paint a perfect eye or get each hair or fingernail in the right place, whereas just painting what you see is much more effective. This sounds obvious, I know, but it's actually very hard indeed to let go of the compulsion to draw what you *think* it should look like, rather than allowing your subject to show you exactly what it *does* look like!

To try to make the point, a portrait of Maude Fealy - a celebrated stage and silent film actress from the 1900s - may illustrate what I am saying.

When painting her, I was nervous about the lack of detail available for her eyes. However, thinking that I would actually trust her image, I just took a chance and bravely drew exactly what I saw and no more...



and... the absence of any detail at all and in simple light and shade, she is very clearly looking straight back at us!

Thank you Maude.

Seasonal Themes

Carmen always looks forward to this season and was really keen to quote those lines from Keats, for this newsletter. Perhaps it's surprising, then, that to date, she hasn't painted too many autumnal scenes: apart from 'Bouton-on-the-Water' (featured in our last newsletter and shown at our exhibition) there are only two others (pictured here).



'Autumn' one from the series 'The Four Seasons' by Carmen. Oils on board 394mm x 324mm. Painted from a childhood memory of wind-blown fallen leaves.



'Autumn Canopy' by Carmen. Oils on board 890mm x 380mm. A view of overhead boughs in the Forest of Dean.

The above paintings can be seen on our website www.kalithea.freeuk.com and are available for sale as either prints or originals.

In our garden

Despite a dreadfully poor spring and growing season where lovingly sown seeds took one look at the weather above ground and decided (very wisely) to stay where they were, the greenhouse - on the other hand - did well with strawberries and tomatoes aplenty. But the star of the show was, unquestionably, our little Victoria plum tree!

In May, Carmen took the sensible precaution of wrapping the branches in a few yards of spare bubble wrap in case of an air-frost and the result was quite amazing. Instead of the usual half-dozen fruits that we have come to expect, we

have weighed up ten pounds or more, most of which has gone to neighbours but we haven't exactly been short of Plum Crumbles in our house these past few weeks! (See Carmen's Crumble recipe below.)

Mid-Quarter News Bulletin

As our Winter Solstice Newsletter will go to press only four days before Christmas, we thought we'd send you an interim bulletin, around the end of October, as Carmen will soon start working on a range of seasonal greetings cards with wintry themes, which we intend to make available to purchase via our

website, at that time. Like the greetings cards on offer at our July exhibition, these will be also feature images derived from on our own original paintings and photographs and which may well appeal to those of you who might be searching for alternatives to the usual mass-produced glittery cards of Santa on his sleigh!

Meanwhile, we wish you well and hope you'll enjoy this season's 'mists and mellow fruitfulness'!

Carmen's Apple Crumble

You will need an ovenproof baking dish approximately 25 x 18 cm and 6.5 cm deep.
Makes 4 medium-sized portions

Ingredients for the Crumble

150g plain flour
100g butter, cubed and at room temperature (plus a knob of butter for greasing the ovenproof dish)
55g demarara sugar
1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 level teaspoon ground ginger

Ingredients for the Filling

900g Cooking apples, peeled, cored and cut into 2cm cubes.
N.B. Alternatively, you could use plums (stones removed) or pears, instead, or a mixture of some - or all - of these.
12 cloves
Half a small glass of red wine (or cranberry or blackcurrant juice)
Half a tablespoon demarara sugar
Half a tablespoon plain flour
1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 level teaspoon ground ginger

Method

Pre-heat the oven to 200 C.

Put the cloves and the red wine (or fruit juice) in a saucepan and simmer gently for 5 minutes.

Remove the cloves and discard, then add the apples, sugar, cinnamon, ginger and flour to the pan, stir in and simmer gently for 5 minutes.

Remove from the heat and allow to cool while preparing the crumble mixture.

Seive the flour into a large mixing bowl.

Add the cubed butter, then using your fingertips, rub the butter into the flour until it resembles coarse breadcrumbs.

Stir in the demarara sugar, cinnamon and ginger.

Lightly grease the oven proof dish with the knob of butter and pour in the apple mixture.

Spoon on the crumble mixture on top and press down with the back of a spoon.

Cook in the pre-heated oven for 40-45 minutes, until the crumble is browned and the fruit is bubbling.

Serve with any of the following: cream, custard, brandy butter, ice cream or natural yoghurt.

Enjoy.