

Bob Brooker and Hilary Buckley

This week's countdown to Lyme Regis ArtsFest article reveals the back story of artist Hilary Buckley and her computer whizz and photographer partner, Bob.

What's the history of your involvement in the Arts?

HB: I always liked art at school and I have an older brother who read Fine Art at Durham. My mother took up painting aged 50, and I did 'O' level and part of the 'A' level course. I went to evening classes when the children were at school and learned about working in pen and ink and watercolour.

I did a B Ed in the early 80s but I just couldn't get a job, so I went to evening classes and studied accounting. Gradually I amassed some expertise in accountancy for small companies. I joined a graphic design company in 1999 and have been with them ever since. I still work for them part time from home.

When we moved here, I signed up for the University of the Third Age Painting Together course. We had a meeting once every two weeks at Karol Kulik's. I learned a lot about different media and then really developed my own work at Lynda White's art classes. My work has a definite graphic style to it, unsurprisingly. I am drawn to graphic shapes and colours and seem to have discovered my own distinctive style...partly as a result of my use of acrylic ink as if it were paint. People seem to like it. I have sold fourteen paintings in the last year.

I belong to various different art groups in Axminster and Lyme and have sold work in all sorts of places, including the Axevale Festival. At ArtsFest this year I'll be exhibiting in the Baptist Church Hall, and will have pictures in the Library, Martin Diplock and the Bell Cliff Cafe on the Art Trail.

BB: I got involved in through Hilary. I've always been interested in photography and Hilary sometimes uses my photos as the reference point for her work.

How did you get involved in ArtsFest?

HB: Mainly through Karol and initially just as an artist, but Bob's IT expertise has meant that we help to run the website and last year I helped put the brochure together.

BB: Yes, when I retired, I felt that I really had something to contribute, so I started doing voluntary work at LymeNet and ended up implementing the 2011 Fossil Festival website, as well as ArtFest's. I tweet on behalf of www.lymeregis.org website (the official tourist information guide, sponsored by the Town Council) and it really is a great way to publicise events. When Hilary had a show in the Upstairs Gallery recently, we tweeted John Govier at BBC Devon asking if there was any chance of a mention and next thing he was on the phone and doing an online interview with Hilary! I'll be tweeting ArtsFest happenings this year and hope that will help raise the profile.

What are your sources of inspiration?

HB: Well, like most people, I'd have to say the local views [They have a spectacular view from their house on Ware Lane]. I love David Hockney's recent landscapes and I admire the work of Paul Nash and some of his contemporaries. But what I am really passionate about is Art Deco, which you might have guessed by looking round the house! [It is indeed a glorious tribute to Art Deco!]. I love the colours and the geometric shapes and a bit of that creeps into my work.

And if you could own any work of art and be locked up in any gallery for the weekend, what would you choose?

HB: I would love to own a Jean Dunand lacquer screen. The designs and colours are just fabulous. I would very happily be locked up in Eltham Palace which has an amazing Art Deco interior. It was the home of the Courtauld family and it is really splendid. Well worth a visit.

In what ways do you think ArtsFest could be better?

It would be good to get more of the younger artists in the area involved in ArtsFest, who would perhaps extend the examples of art forms on display, bringing their own unique perspective to the festival. We don't have much conceptual or video art, for example, and it would be stimulating for everyone if we could push the boundaries a bit.

What are you looking forward to in ArtsFest this year?

HB: I really enjoy the 'buzz' in the town during AF, when you can spend hours looking in all the shops at the Art Trail and finding Open Studios in unexpected places that you haven't been to before. It is so good to have everything within easy reach. I think the fact that so many shops and businesses get involved showing work really creates a great atmosphere...and that's almost enough in itself!

However, I am also planning to get up early and do Christine Allison's dawn painting workshop at By the Bay. A friend did it last year and she found it was really inspirational. I'll also make sure I get tickets for WordFest at the Marine Theatre. It looks like being a really good event and we like to support the theatre.