



LEABROOKS WITTER



July 10th, 2020

This week: Artists in Lockdown

The Artists' Forum at Leabrooks Arts Complex

Arwyn Quick, a multi-talented artist, reflects on his experience of Lockdown

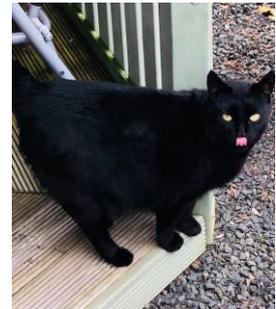
'My wife, Janet, and I have been shielding since she received her NHS letter, so the change of lifestyle has been significant, if not actually dramatic. For the first time ever, we have had all our goods delivered, having previously eschewed on-line purchasing, preferring to "maul the goods before buying". Of course, being green behind the gills, there have been a few first-timer errors. The giant bag of Basmati rice was one. Being of a generation more familiar with rods, poles and perches than the metric system, our first big grocery order came with a friendly man struggling with a 10kg bag of rice. And the garden has become even more important: snapping the bees with my camera-phone and "twitching" the goldfinches with our little binoculars.

As a relief from filling up the studio with yet more canvasses, and with no obvious means, during lockdown, of shifting any, I decided to revert to my first love of drawing. Drawings are containable and do not hurl themselves off the overstocked shelf and trip you up. Buoyed up by the rediscovered joys of cross-hatching and "layering-on with a will", I moved onto coloured pencils. Truly ancient Conte "Crayons de Couleur" were, unfortunately, all I had to hand. But, yes, online delivery from Staedtler came to the rescue, offering therapeutic "Ergo-Soft" coverage, instead of rock-hard, brittle disappointment! And so my artistic journey goes on.'



I decided that I would try to make Lockdown a useful, creative process. I started by collating the family photographs which I had inherited – most of them unlabelled. I addressed this problem by creating descriptions from hazy memories and impressions. (See below left, an example: 'Farming relations in the mid-30s' – Really helpful to future generations, don't you think?? And did Grant Wood, 'American Gothic', actually know them?) Thereafter I read a bit, wrote a bit, painted a bit, relaxed a bit, (see image below), and in between each activity fed the cat. (See below left: a portrait of Bonnie, the Gallery Puddy Cat, on her way to Slimming World; she's sticking her tongue out at me in disgust.) I've emerged with a frankly puzzling photographic family history, a developing knowledge of the works of P.G. Wodehouse, an inconclusive short story, two incomplete paintings and the feline equivalent of Pavlov's dog(s). Lockdown has, for me, been a work in progress.

Carol Barton-Jones



Pete Marsh is a gifted painter, Artist-in-Residence at The Great British Rhythm & Blues Festival, Colne and he manages the Falcon Mills Arts Studios, FaMAS, in Bolton.

'The first three weeks of Lockdown found the studios at FaMAS virtually deserted, with artists only visiting the place to pick up items needed to work from home. Since then there has been a gradual return to the studios by most, but not all, of the artists. A number of artists have been able to make appointments for visiting clients to view work safely in our spacious gallery area. Prior to lock-down work was about to commence on knocking a doorway through to another part of the former cotton mill. We have agreed to rent extra space to convert into a storage area. Many of us are bursting out of our studios and we desperately need storage so that the gallery area can be a gallery rather than a studio overflow! On Tuesday 30th June 2020 the work began!



During lock-down one of the artists has completed the creation of the FaMAS website. This has been a pipe-dream for too long so it is a welcome development.

<https://sites.google.com/view/famasstudios/home>

Although most of us have returned to relative normal working practices at the studios, the swing from being highly productive to being afflicted with terrible apathy seems to remain. This appears to be common amongst many people during this historic time. We had to cancel our Summer Open Studio event and we are now wondering whether we will be able to open our doors to the Winter Open Studio event in October/November. We have our fingers crossed.'

Titter on The Witterbut first, thank you to Arwyn and Pete for their contributions to this week's Witter.

'And finally, there was the person who sent ten different puns to her friends with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.'