



LEABROOKS WITTER



1st March, 2021

The Artists' Forum at Leabrooks Arts Complex. Keeping in Touch

Ever optimistic, I was considering what would make a suitable exhibition for the re-opening of the Gallery some weeks ago and decided that a general exhibition would be most appropriate, with a theme that would raise the spirits of artists, ourselves as Gallery owners and the public alike. The idea of the Phoenix and its association with the regenerative spirit seemed both apt and inspirational. It prompted memories which have resonance today. **Carol**

FROM ALBERT ROSS TO THE PHOENIX

Some years ago, before the advent of social media, I was talking to a class of twelve year olds about the way in which the news is 'shaped', hoping that they would develop a critical eye when responding to spoken, written and visual images of reported events. We looked at examples of bias, prejudice, distortion, opinion masquerading as fact and so on and in the ensuing discussion we covered a number of issues of particular interest to them.

One of the topics which came up was superstition, (not entirely irrelevant to the focus of the lesson), and one of the boys said he'd heard a good story about a superstition: apparently, he said, sailors dreaded the arrival on board ship of any man called Albert Ross because when such a one set foot on the vessel it was inevitably scuppered. Gory accounts supported this idea. I enjoyed his contribution but then the penny dropped: he was talking about the albatross, which – reputedly – brings bad luck to sailors who harm/shoot it. (Ref: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.) It was an excellent example of the way in which information/news changes its nature when passed from one person to another, as in the game Chinese Whispers. To illustrate the point we played a couple of lively games before wrapping up the discussion with a story – and a good story is at the heart of all news items because it relates to human need. So, bearing in mind what had gone before, I told them the story of the Phoenix, a legendary bird which dies and then is reborn from the ashes and fire which consumed it.

I'm not sure how effective the lesson was in developing a 'critical eye' in respect of the news but the Phoenix appeared in various guises in creative writing and doodles in the following weeks. Oh, and one member of the class later became a journalist working for a leading newspaper.

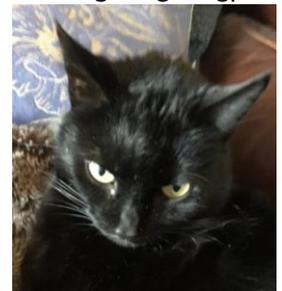
Right: images from the garden at Leabrooks



Waxwing



Moon gazing Magpie



Bonnie the Gallery cat

THE PHOENIX PROJECT: A SUMMARY

- * This is a competition open to two groups with a monetary prize for each class: 16 years and under and those aged 17+.
 - * Participants are asked to produce an artwork, (or a maximum of 2 artworks), inspired by the concept of the Phoenix – not necessarily an image of the legendary bird, although this is acceptable, but any focus which interprets the idea of regrowth, regeneration, new beginnings, etc.
 - * Any medium is acceptable: paint, pastel, pencil, clay, textiles, photography, etc.
 - * Any size is acceptable providing that you can transport the finished work.
 - * Artworks should be delivered to Leabrooks Arts Complex in the week beginning 21st June, 2021.
 - * The Phoenix Exhibition will open with a Preview on the afternoon of Saturday, 26th June, 2021. It will run throughout July. (All artworks must be for sale.)
 - * Winners will be decided by public vote and prizes awarded at the end of July.
- (For further information: carol@leabrooksartscomplex.com)

Do you suffer from Stendhal Syndrome,

sometimes called Florence Syndrome – or have you been responsible for someone else developing it? It's a condition involving rapid heartbeat, fainting, confusion and even hallucinations, allegedly occurring when individuals become exposed to objects, artworks or phenomena of great beauty. No, this is not a spoof: it's an actual psychosomatic condition or affliction, depending on your opinion.

