



LEABROOKS WITTER



June 1st 2021

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



Way Ahead

The image on the left is of Ai-Da, the robot artist, with a self-portrait; it will feature in a new show at London's Design Museum where 'she' is the subject. It is, for the moment, an interesting perspective on what constitutes 'art' and, also, quite a disturbing demonstration of the way in which technology is intervening in our lives and has the potential to influence our development and practice as artists.

It's not the only area in which technology has begun to influence us: while we focus on the practicalities of exhibiting and selling actual works of art at a local level there's a whole universe out there in which digital art is being sold for fabulous sums of money; it's usually described as cryptoart.

In our real world physical paintings are sold with appropriate authentication but artists creating work online have found it difficult to copyright so that it can easily be 'stolen'. Not now though: they can use NFTs, non-fungible tokens, which provide digital certification. All the artist has to do is register with online market places that buy and sell NFTs; the company will then upload their work, provide unique identification and safeguarding and send it to auction where it is bought and sold using a special cryptocurrency. The sum earned is then converted to sterling or dollars. In effect when someone buys work from these companies they are actually buying the token which gives them the right to access a specific piece of digital art. The buyer will never handle such art in the way that you could, for example, handle a Constable. But some artists producing physical paintings are now experimenting with ways to digitise them so that they can be offered as NFTs and earn considerably more money than they would in more conventional markets.

Do these strategies give some indication of the way ahead for us? It's in your hands.

CBJ

Inside the mind of an artist



Martin Davis, a versatile artist with an exceptional range of skills, provides us with a special insight into his motivation.

I wonder what kind of an artist you are or want to be? Do you ever consider it? Or do you just start an artwork same as you always do? I admit to being a "troubled", "unsettled" sort of an artist – and one with an incredibly low boredom threshold. It stops me in my tracks should I ever consider painting the same thing twice in succession. I can't help it but I never settle to start a painting without revisiting that initial question – why am I doing this? What do I want

to achieve? And how? Why am I an artist at all? I ask myself these things again and again in all seriousness because I don't want to just do the easy thing and to stop myself from doing it. I never get past that question but it always puts me in the right frame of mind to begin with.

You may know already in what high regard I hold Richard Diebenkorn. If you're not familiar with him or his approach to starting work I really recommend you look at his "Notes to self". Personally I aspire to his dicta knowing I could never achieve them.....but they keep me sane and fresh and madly in love with painting. You could well do worse than summarise them as "art for art's sake". Such a pity the phrase has become a stock cliché.

To my mind the value of experimentation in art is incalculable and beyond any doubt, but you might be surprised that I don't consider myself experimental at all.... well, not on the same scale as your average Turner prize wannabee anyway! But experimentation with a small "e", yes. Variety is central to everything I do. Never satisfied with the last thing I did I am always looking to change - make marks with different things, different media, different support, different size/shape, less paint more paint, limited palette, tonal variations of one single colour, incomplete composition, no composition, paint the frame, leave bare canvas, one touch, finger painting, splatter – you name it, I try it, and I'm always adding to it. The same applies to when I paint, where I paint, how I paint – sitting, standing, lying down, in bright light, in darkness, music on/music off, squinting, one eyed, fast, slow etc. It all helps switch off my conscious mind – essential for me. And don't even get me started on subject matter!!



These things are what I call experimentation. I know on some level it's all petty and pretty idiotic but however small it all helps. It stops me from becoming stale. Try it!

Calling all contributors to The Phoenix Exhibition at Leabrooks Arts Complex

- Please deliver art works to the Gallery/Complex from Monday, 21st June to Thursday, 24th June.
- The Exhibition will open on the 26th June and will run until the 31st July. 2021 with a Preview on Saturday, 26th June.
- Public vote, registered throughout the Exhibition period, will determine the winner of the £150.00 prize.