

Eavesdropping on Andrew Motion



Artist Fiona Graham-Mackay and Andrew Motion with the finished portrait

Have you ever looked at a portrait and wondered what the conversation between the sitter and the artist may have been about as the painting progressed? Did they bond? Did they reveal intimate secrets? Was it an easy relationship? A Portrait of... Andrew Motion on BBC Radio 4 eavesdrops on the portrait painter Fiona Graham-Mackay as she draws and paints the former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion in her studio in Rye, Sussex – and everything suggests they got on very well.

The idea for the programme came after Graham-Mackay painted the Irish poet and Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney, and was fascinated by the conversations they had as she worked; the Heaney portrait was unveiled shortly before his death in 2013. Now she has plans for further similar programmes featuring other writers.

The programme was first broadcast on Radio 4 on 30 December, but is available for 30 days on BBC iPlayer at www.bbc.co.uk/radio. As for the painting, it isn't all left to the listener's imagination: the website includes images of Graham-Mackay and Motion in the studio, along with colour sheets, drawings and close-ups of the final painting, and a recording of Motion reading a poem he finished while sitting for the portrait.

Artists stockpile cadmiums ahead of possible ban

The threatened EU ban on cadmium paints has led to artists stockpiling supplies in anticipation of them becoming unavailable, the paint manufacturer Michael Harding has said in an interview with *Discover Art* magazine.

"I have already had a run on cadmium colours," he said. "Several artists have rung up their favourite retailers of my paint and have ordered considerable amounts of them in advance, just in case, enough to last their lifetimes."

The paints are facing a ruling from the European Chemicals Agency after fears that cadmiums could enter the water system after brushes are rinsed, find their way onto agricultural land and thus become exposed to humans via food.

A decision is expected later this year, although any ban would take a few years to implement, it is understood.

Read our interview with Michael Harding on page 19

Inspired by Rubens



Peter Paul Rubens, Tiger, Lion and Leopard Hunt, 1616

Photo Musée des Beaux Arts, Rennes, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Adelaide Beaudoin

Going back to look at the work of old masters is a well-worn and fruitful route for artists through the ages looking for inspiration, and as recommended now as it has ever been.

A new exhibition, *Rubens and His Legacy: Van Dyck to Cézanne* at the Royal Academy, London, brings together more than 160 paintings by the Flemish painter (1577-1640) and those who were inspired by him. Leading international collections have loaned paintings, drawings and prints dating from his time right up until the 20th century to trace his developing influence: Van Dyck, Turner, Delacroix, Manet, Cézanne and Picasso are among those represented by works that show Rubens's lasting legacy.

Rubens and His Legacy: Van Dyck to Cézanne is at the Royal Academy of Arts, Piccadilly, London, from 24 January to 10 April. Book tickets via www.royalacademy.org.uk.

Send your news and views to the editor, jameshobbs45@gmail.com