

# Exhibition of the week

THE ART CAFE, 42A FLOWER GATE, WHITBY

## Floral foundations in an English garden

Architectural and floral illustrations at The Art Cafe

**S**usie Lidstone is an elected member of The Society Of Architectural Illustration who finds inspiration for her work from the natural world.

"I have been painting for 30 years and now work from my small studio in Farnham, Surrey," she said. "The vibrant ever-changing colours of flowers, plants and trees throughout the seasons has always fascinated me and I find that watercolour is the perfect medium to capture their qualities. I think that their appeal is timeless and I hope to capture both the calm and vitality I always feel when studying my subjects."

It is the natural interweaving of plant forms that makes watercolorist Susie Lidstone "especially obsessive" about the flowers she paints.

"Patterns in plant forms are quite abstract in their formation," explains the artist, who is inspired by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the Scottish architect, designer, watercolorist and artist.

"I love roses, which are quintessentially English – sometimes people think they are an old person's flower but that's not the case at all. I am also enjoying painting orchids and anemones at the moment. I suppose you might call my work realistic abstract – you can get lost in the movement of flowers as you paint them."

Depending on the size and intricacy of a painting, it can take Susie between a week and a month to produce a piece.

Susie describes how our fascination for floral illustration continues to evolve from early religious symbolism to the current day.

"Natural forms whether they be plants, flowers or trees have patterns and abstract forms which lend themselves in their very nature to be used as symbols. They are life itself which grows, then dies back so the religious aspect is understandable."

"Plants species with the help of many talented horti-



Orchids by Susie Lidstone, whose work is on show at The Art Cafe in Whitby.

cultural specialists continue to evolve with new colours, and types and so our love of them continues and from an artist's point of view a continued source of inspiration and material."

Her inspiration and one of her influences is Charles Rene Macintosh, the famous Scottish architect who managed to combine

modern architectural designs with references to nature.

"I was first introduced to Charles Rennie Mackintosh's work when I was a first year art student by one of my tutors Jim Tierney.

"I find the lyrical quality and sensitivity of his plant studies breathtaking. The fine detail he puts into his drawings and the vibrancy of his colours. His architectural work seems to mirror the fluid lines that he achieves in his drawings and paintings."

"The other side to my work is highly detailed paintings of

architecture and buildings. I do come back to look at some of his work when I start a new commission. In recent years I have been very lucky to have been elected as one of only a few women to The Society Of Architectural Illustration so I feel closer to him than ever.

"When I start a new work my subjects tend to dictate how I paint them.

I am sensitive by nature and hope to transfer that feeling to each work."

"Flowers are like people

unique in the way they look out onto the world and how they grow. Their colours inspire me, sometimes as with 'Orchids', which is pictured, the softer the colouration the more delicate and sometimes more time consuming the painting process is. It was painted in spring/summer so it has that lightness of colour that comes with that season."

When asked about our love as a nation of gardening

how that transfers into our approach to floral art, Susie explained her interpretation.

"I feel sure that as a nation of gardeners we have a delight in seeing flowers that we are familiar with.

Having a painting of flowers in your home brings nature onto your walls. Flowers and plants evoke memories in

people. Anemones remind me of my dear mother, my father always used to buy bunches of them when they were in season for my mother and they were one of the first flowers that I ever painted.

"I sold a painting a couple of weeks ago to sisters who had bought a home together and 'Red Clematis' reminded them of their mother who had left them the money to buy their home. They wanted to have the garden they knew as children on their new walls and to keep the memory of their mother with them."

**'I suppose you might call my work realistic abstract – you can get lost in the movement'**

**'Flowers are like people, unique in the way they look out onto the world and how they grow'**

## TURNING YEAR



Bewick's swans are back.

## Martin tradition

By Heather Elvidge

As afternoons darken and trees become bare, the northern swans arrive – Bewick's from Siberia, and whoopers from Iceland.

Both have yellow beaks marked with black, unlike our resident mute swans that have an orange beak. Small groups of these visitors can turn up anywhere, so be sure to study your local swans for any yellow beaks.

Another visitor from the far north will be arriving in Scarborough this Saturday morning. Easily recognisable in his familiar red-and-white, Santa will make his way from the harbour to his grotto in Boyes store. Soon, Santas will be popping up everywhere.

Yes, only six weeks to go. All the same, it's a wee bit early for festive music. Not around Sheffield though. There they'll be carolling this Thursday, packed into the Black Bull in Ecclesfield for the season's first "sing".

Village carols are different. Some are local compositions handed down through 200 years. Others are old favourites, left out from the Church of England's chosen repertoire in the nineteenth century.

Many village carols have a call-and-answer repetition known as "fuguing", where the bass line echoes the melody. One of these tunes was borrowed for On Ilkley Moor b'at 'at. It's still sung around Sheffield with its original words, While Shepherds Watched. Try it – While Shepherds fits the tune perfectly.

### Blood month

November days are wild and soggy, or gloomy and misty. Yet after the 11th there's often a fine spell, known as St Martin's little summer.

According to legend