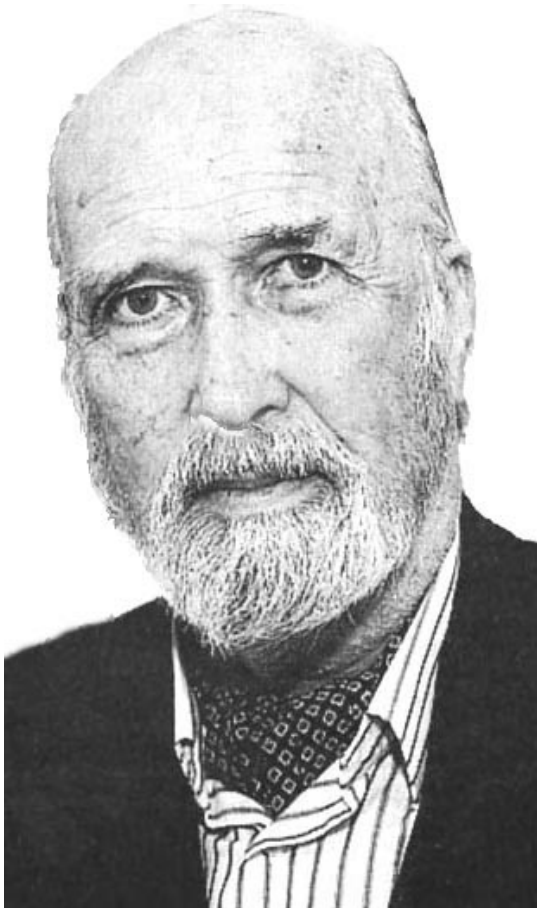


Village art couple acclaimed

Written by Donald Fullarton - Last Updated Wednesday, 21 April 2010 17:00



A CARDROSS couple are both leading Scottish artists, acclaimed by their peers.

Helensburgh and District Art Club members James Spence, RSW, RGI, who is 80, and his wife, Anda Paterson, RSW, RGI, who is six years younger, were two of the three founders of the Glasgow Group of artists in 1957.

The group's members are artists born, resident in or trained in Glasgow. They organise exhibitions which also include works by artists from elsewhere in the UK and abroad.

James, Anda and James Morrison were students at the Glasgow School of Art when they founded the Glasgow Group. They were frustrated by the conservative policies of the local exhibitions at the Royal Glasgow Institute and by the lack of commercial galleries in the city.

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Their response was to invite ten other young city artists to join in an exhibition in 1958 in the McLellan Galleries. With the exception of James Morrison and Bill Birnie all were third or fourth year students at the School of Art.

Today the group curates an annual exhibition in Glasgow. In some years this has been toured. In recent years the group mounted two exhibitions and a portfolio show of unframed works each year.

Normally all members of the group, who are elected from previously invited artists, exhibit in these exhibitions. In addition the group has mounted exhibitions in other parts of Scotland and in various European countries.

As it is an artists cooperative, all decisions are arrived at democratically by a majority vote of the artists members.

Born in Glasgow in 1929, James Spence, whose current themes are mythology, and the mysterious light of dawn and twilight, studied under David Donaldson and Benno Schotz at the School of Art.

He also studied at Hospitalfield House School of Art in Arbroath, as did Anda, and he soon became an established figure on the Scottish art scene.

His work is held in collections from Scotland to Tokyo, and he has exhibited in Norway, France, Spain, Poland, Russia and America. But his first solo exhibition was in Helensburgh's Hill House in 2006, and included 26 oils of landscapes and still lifes.

That same year he received the John Gray Award from the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolour at their 126th annual exhibition in June.

The winning painting, 'Approaching Storm — Hebrides', was adjudged the best of 180 works by

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both established and emerging artists at the exhibition in the Royal Scottish Academy in Edinburgh.

James said at the time: "This is the award I am pleased with most, because it is given by one's fellow artists. And it is good to see it's never too late, as at the age of 77 I'm getting on. You reach a point where you think you are getting past it!"

One of his favourite places is the north-west Highlands. "It is an area I have been fascinated with for some 50 years," he says. "The mood of the area and the skies of the Outer Hebrides are a constant theme for me. They have the most wonderful skies in the world."

His work is in the collections of H.M.The Queen, Glasgow and Dundee art galleries, Scottish Arts Council, Glasgow University, Educational Hall in Tokyo, Fundacion Alzate in Bilbao, Sloves-McCabe Boxing Collection in New York, The Royal Shakespeare Company, and BBC Scotland.

Principal Teacher of art at Dumbarton Academy from 1973-1990, he has won the BBC Award, the National Bockingford Award, the Royal Physicians and Surgeons Award and the Scottish Amicable Award at the Royal Glasgow Institute, the William Bowie Award, as well as the John Gray Award.

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