

## **The University of Sheffield Fine Art Society (SUFAS)**

The following article is written and researched by Leanne Massey (MA American History) as part of the MA Work Placement module 2024.

### **Origins of the SUFAS**

From some time in the 1960s till 2012, the University of Sheffield had a Fine Arts Society (SUFAS).

As a space for the promotion of arts, the Fine Art Society was welcomed by many as an artistic outlet amongst the academic research facilities that has come to define the University and its faculty.

When the society disbanded in 2012 its records, such as committee meeting minutes and society programmes were left to the University Archive. Likewise, the artworks that the society owned upon its dissolution were donated to the Heritage Collection.

By going through these archive materials that were held by the University Archives and Heritage Collections, I was able to understand the history of the society and its importance amongst not only the University but the wider community of Sheffield. Projects such as these are important because little is known about SUFAS within the University community today despite its significance in the past.

### **Arrows and a student exhibition in 1961**

Arrows was broadly an arts and general features magazine that was student-led within the Union. Within this capacity, it was a media outlet through which students could voice their opinions and promote their aspirations.

Whilst going through the archive materials for the Fine Art Society, there were two articles from a 1961 addition of *ARROWS* that became significant to this research project.

At this time Western Bank Library had just recently opened (in 1959) and was built specifically to incorporate an exhibition space as part of its internal design. Consequently, an Art Exhibition was held in Western Bank Library from January 30th to February 22nd 1961 and it is this exhibition that students Brian Edwards and Richard Seddon refer to in their articles.

*The following information is drawn from ARROWS Vol 78, pp. 20-26, p. 40 and ARROWS Vol 79, pp. 18*

Brian Edwards, recalls a keen interest and enthusiasm for the exhibition by members of the University and also members of the public– so much so that the exhibition was extended by a week and half by the Librarian. In his same article, Brian Edwards vocalises that of those who attended the exhibition at Western Bank, almost 100 people signed up to say that they would be interested in forming a Fine Arts Society amongst the University.

In the same publication a Richard Seddon summaries that:

“In a University where the impression received by those outside is that the humanities exists somewhat in the shadow of the sciences and technology, the lively existence of an art group, as talented as the works in the present exhibition suggest, is both welcoming and reassuring”.

Evidently, the society was created to serve a particular community that was undoubtedly present within the University. It is from this exhibition that we can trace the origins of the Sheffield Fine Art Society (aka SUFAS).

From researching in the SUFAS Archive, it is evident that a Mrs Vera Warrander– the wife of Howard Warrander, a then professor of politics– was also fundamental to the formation of a Fine Art Society. Vera Warrander, at the time organised art classes and exhibitions for faculty and associates whilst also inviting local artists to give lectures about their work, and it is from these activities (in conjunction with the enthusiasm seen for the 1961 exhibition) that the Sheffield Fine Art Society was born.



*Howard Warrender by Vera Warrender (Charcoal drawing on paper, Heritage Collection ID: 1159)*

There were logistical difficulties to starting the society, with primary concerns being the financing of the society and ensuring that there was regular exhibition space– although part of that problem was solved with the opening of the Western Bank Library Exhibition space. Although the precise date and logistics of the formation of the society is still ambiguous, the demand for a Fine Art Society was apparent in the 1960s and it can be assumed that not shortly after the University of Sheffield’s Fine Art Society was born.

## Objectives of the society

The University, as a hub of research and innovation, did not have an arts programme that could act as an outlet for artistic expression amongst the Universities' community.. Hence, the Fine Art Society was founded as a way of addressing this gap.

In order to encourage the promotion of the fine arts, the society had a constitution that outlines how the society was to promote and encourage an interest in the arts amongst the members of SUFAS but also the wider University community. It did so in a myriad of ways. Such activities included:

- The exhibition of fine art objects (including the sale of the object exhibited on a commission basis
- The holding of talks and lectures
- The arranging of visits for members to exhibitions, art galleries, studios, and like places, and for any other viewing of any fine art objects
- The arranging of courses of instruction for members in the practices and techniques of the fine arts
- The purchase of fine art objects for exhibition or loan
- The sale of any fine art object owned by SUFAS

These objectives were just a few ways in which the society promoted artistry within the University. More can be understood about the society, how it operated and its aims, by looking at the remaining 'Sheffield Fine Art Society Programmes' that remain within the University's archive. Below are two examples of the multitude of programmes remaining in the archive:

**Annual General Meeting 2005**

The AGM will be held in the Board Room on Floor 1 of the University Arts Tower on Tuesday 29 November 2005 at 6.30 p.m., preceded by a reception for old and new members at 6.00 p.m.

Please make the AGM your chance to contribute new ideas and to discuss future plans for the Society.

From 7.00 to 8.00 p.m. in the Mezzanine Gallery of the adjacent Main Library there will be a preview of the Members' Exhibition.

**Exhibitions**

The exhibitions are open during the following times:  
Monday to Thursday : 9.00 a.m. - 9.30 p.m.  
Friday : 9.00 a.m. - 8.30 p.m.  
Saturday : 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.  
Sunday : 2.00 p.m. - 6.00 p.m.  
Previews are held from 6.00 p.m. - 7.30 p.m.  
(except on the evening of the Annual General Meeting)

**2005**

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Preview</i>
1 Nov - 18 Nov	<b>Ian McKay</b>	1 November
29 Nov - 16 Dec	<b>Members' Exhibition</b>	29 November & AGM 2005

**2006**

17 Jan - 3 Feb	<b>Janet Carlton</b>	17January
14 Feb - 3 Mar	<b>Patrick Bew</b>	14 February
14 Mar - 31 Mar	<b>Janet Buckle</b>	14 March
25 Apr - 12 May	<b>Members' Exhibition</b>	25 April
23 May - 9 June	<b>Sue Nichol</b>	23 May
3 Oct - 20 Oct	<b>Richard Gee</b>	3 October
31 Oct - 17 Nov	<b>Sean Williams</b>	31 October
28 Nov - 15 Dec	<b>Members' exhibition</b>	28 November & AGM 2006

From the number of SUFAS programmes that remain within its archive and from these programmes it is clear that SUFAS was a flourishing society and an epicentre for the Universities' artistic community.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Annual General Meeting</b></p> <p>The AGM will be held in the Board Room, on Floor 1 of the University Arts Tower on <b>Tuesday 30 November 1999 at 6.30 pm</b> preceded by a <b>Reception for all members at 6.00 pm (new members are particularly welcome)</b></p> <p>The AGM is your chance to contribute ideas and discuss future plans.</p> <p>The AGM will be followed by the Preview of the Members' Exhibition approx 7.00 - 8.00 pm, on the mezzanine of the adjoining Main Library.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Members Spring Exhibition 2000 - Millennium Competition</b></p> <p>For the Spring Exhibition 2000 members will be invited to submit one or two items on the theme of <i>The Millennium</i>. At the discretion of the judge one or more prizes may be awarded to a total value not exceeding £250.</p> <p>Members may submit items outside the competition but competition entries will have priority. Further information will be sent to members in February 2000.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exhibition &amp; Preview Dates</b></p> <p><i>The exhibitions are open during Library hours (9am-9pm Mon-Thur; 9am-5pm Fri-Sat; 2-6pm Sun). Previews are held from 6.00pm - 7.30pm (except on the evening of the AGM)</i></p> <p><b>1999</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">2/3 Oct</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Picture Hire Weekend</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Sat 2 Oct: 10 am to 5 pm Sun 3 Oct: 2pm to 5 pm</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">26 Oct - 12 Nov</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Artist: <b>Pauline Meade</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 26 October</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">30 Nov - 17 Dec</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Members' Autumn Exhibition</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 30 November</b></td> </tr> </table> <p><b>2000</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">18 Jan - 4 Feb</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Artist: <b>Shirley Redpath</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 18 January</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">15 Feb - 3 March</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Artists: <b>Stuart Jones Sharon-Louise Aldridge</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 15 February</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">14 March - 31 March</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Members' Spring Exhibition</b> See note opposite</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 14 March</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">9 May - 26 May</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Artist: <b>Jacqueline Currell</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 9 May</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">30 Sept - 1 Oct</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Picture Hire Weekend</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">24 Oct - 10 Nov</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Artist: <b>Hazel Brocklehurst</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 24 October</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">14 Nov - 24 Nov</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Members' Autumn Exhibition</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 14 November</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;">28 Nov - 15 Dec</td> <td style="vertical-align: top;">Artist: <b>Jane Burgess</b></td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"><b>Preview 28 November</b></td> </tr> </table>	2/3 Oct	<b>Picture Hire Weekend</b>	Sat 2 Oct: 10 am to 5 pm Sun 3 Oct: 2pm to 5 pm	26 Oct - 12 Nov	Artist: <b>Pauline Meade</b>	<b>Preview 26 October</b>	30 Nov - 17 Dec	<b>Members' Autumn Exhibition</b>	<b>Preview 30 November</b>	18 Jan - 4 Feb	Artist: <b>Shirley Redpath</b>	<b>Preview 18 January</b>	15 Feb - 3 March	Artists: <b>Stuart Jones Sharon-Louise Aldridge</b>	<b>Preview 15 February</b>	14 March - 31 March	<b>Members' Spring Exhibition</b> See note opposite	<b>Preview 14 March</b>	9 May - 26 May	Artist: <b>Jacqueline Currell</b>	<b>Preview 9 May</b>	30 Sept - 1 Oct	<b>Picture Hire Weekend</b>		24 Oct - 10 Nov	Artist: <b>Hazel Brocklehurst</b>	<b>Preview 24 October</b>	14 Nov - 24 Nov	<b>Members' Autumn Exhibition</b>	<b>Preview 14 November</b>	28 Nov - 15 Dec	Artist: <b>Jane Burgess</b>	<b>Preview 28 November</b>
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**Sheffield Fine Art Society Programme from 1999-2000**

From regular members exhibitions to the frequent showcasing of external artists the society was incredibly active throughout the academic year. The programmes also show that the society was able to arrange these events thanks to the annual member fees. In 1993 the annual membership fee was £4 and remained consistent over the years. In 2007 through till its dissolution in 2012 the annual fee was £5 for full time students and £10 for non-student. By using the funds raised by membership fees SUFAS was able to support the activities of the society, such as its exhibitions, educational cultural trips, lectures and more. The SUFAS 1993-1994 programme shows that the society planned day trips to various art galleries, such as the 'Manchester City Art Gallery', 'Yorkshire Sculpture Park' and 'Leeds City Art Gallery', as a way of further cultivating artistic interest/skills within the society.

It is also through these annual funds that the society was able to purchase selected artworks, the remains of which have been generously donated to the University's Heritage Collection upon the society's dissolution in 2012.

As mentioned before, SUFAS arranged a multitude of exhibitions throughout the year. They had exhibitions that were solely for the members to showcase their work as a means of celebrating the artistry within the society. Yet they also selected artists from outside the society to showcase their work as a means of further expanding the artistic diversity of SUFAS. It is evident from the remaining resources in the SUFAS archive that the society embraced a rich range of artists who took inspiration from both a diverse range of artistic inspirations and artistic medium.

Below are a selection of the promotional posters that SUFAS used to promote its exhibitions to the public, faculties and students.

Sheffield University

Fine Art Society

# LIBRARY GALLERY

## ALIVE AND STITCHING

### Contemporary Art Textiles

A group of six professional textile artists

Peggy Fearne, Lynne Garbutt, Diane Gilder,  
Anne Menary, Jo Owen and Ann Parkin



Mezzanine Gallery, Main Library

Sheffield University, Western Bank

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February to Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

Website: [www.sufas.group.shef.ac.uk](http://www.sufas.group.shef.ac.uk)

Email: [sufas@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:sufas@sheffield.ac.uk)

### GALLERY OPEN

Mon – Thurs, 9.00am to 9.30pm: Fri, 9.00am to 8.30pm: Sat, 9.00 to 5.00pm: Sun, 2.00pm to 6.00pm

Organiser contact, Sandra Szasz – Tel: 0114 2517027

Sheffield University

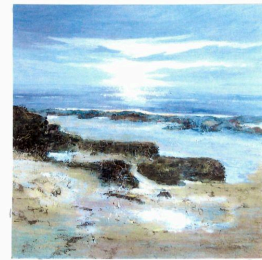
Fine Art Society

# LIBRARY GALLERY

## FROM HARTLEPOOL TO TIBET

An exhibition of paintings by

**SUE NICHOL**



The Beach, Hartlepool

Mezzanine Gallery, Main Library  
Sheffield University, Western Bank

Tuesday 23 May to Friday 9 June 2006

Organiser contact : (0114) 2662003

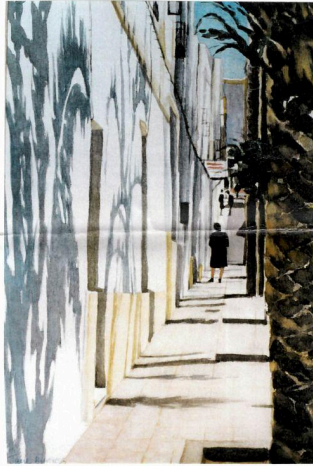
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Sheffield University

Fine Art Society

# LIBRARY GALLERY



## AN EXHIBITION OF RECENT PAINTINGS

by

**JANE BURGESS**

**28 November till 15 December**

**GALLERY OPEN**

**Mon - Thurs, 9.00am to 9.00pm: Fri - Sat, 9.00am to 5.00pm: Sun, 2.00pm to 6.00pm**

Sheffield University

Fine Art Society

# LIBRARY GALLERY

**‘B Pictures’  
AN EXHIBITION OF  
PAINTINGS AND  
WALL HANGINGS  
by  
GRAHAM HYDE**



Mezzanine Gallery, Main Library  
Sheffield University, Western Bank  
Wednesday 13 April to Friday 29 April

**GALLERY OPEN**

Mon – Thurs, 9.00am to 9.30pm: Fri, 9.00am to 8.30pm: Sat, 9.00 to 5.00pm: Sun, 2.00pm to 6.00pm  
Organiser contact, Tel: 0114 2662003

Sheffield University

Fine Art Society

# LIBRARY GALLERY

**AN EXHIBITION OF  
PAINTINGS  
by  
SIMON CLEMENTS**



Mezzanine Gallery, Main Library  
Sheffield University, Western Bank  
Wednesday 9 February to Friday 25 February

**GALLERY OPEN**

Mon – Thurs, 9.00am to 9.30pm: Fri, 9.00am to 8.30pm: Sat, 9.00 to 5.00pm: Sun, 2.00pm to 6.00pm  
Organiser contact, Tel: 0114 2304943

## **An emphasis on Sheffield/Yorkshire artists**

One of the clear objectives of SUFAS was their commitment and dedication towards encouraging art and artists within the City of Sheffield and wider Yorkshire community. Although there are likely to have been numerous other occasions where the society encouraged local artists, the University has numerous items in their archival collection of the remains of SUFAS that demonstrate this ethos.

The archive left by the society shows that in 1997 there was a call for artists who live within a 20 mile radius of Sheffield to exhibit with the society. Two other similar exhibition calls were made in 2006, that time for artists within a 50 mile radius of Sheffield and in 2010 to those within a 30 mile radius.

One example of the many Yorkshire artists under the society's endorsement was Maggi Mallaliah. A worldly traveller, with exhibitions in Iraq and residing in Algeria, Maggi found herself constantly inspired by landscapes. Returning to the UK in 1982, the next chapter of Maggi's life was devoted to teaching and creating outlets for Sheffield artists and thus she opened up 'The Little Gallery', right here in Broomhill, Sheffield. While 'The Little Gallery'

was a place for artists to exhibit their work, Mallallah also offered art classes in her shop for anyone wishing to learn basic drawing and painting techniques. Undoubtedly, Maggi was a prime example of the society's ethos— the encouragement and engagement of artists local to Sheffield and the Yorkshire area.

### **Coming to an end**

The precise date of the foundation of SUFAS is at present difficult to determine, but it is clear that the society started some time in the 1960s. Unfortunately, after decades of success within the University and the wider Sheffield community, the University's Fine Art Society heydays had come to an end and its future was no longer viable. In a letter to the members of SUFAS in October 2011, Chair of the society, Pauline Harrison, acknowledged that at a meeting of the SUFAS committee in July 2011 it was confirmed that the society would be dissolved in 2012.

Pauline Harrison credits the demise of the society to a myriad of reasons. Notably was the refurbishment of the much loved Western Bank Library that meant the society could no longer be housed in the foyer of the library. The foyer of the library was considered an ideal exhibition space for the society as it provided a setting “where art could be enjoyed by the students, staff and members of the public and where local artists could feel that they were at the University's hub, appreciated and valued.

After the move from Western Bank Library the society was offered the use of the Turner Glass Museum which had moved from the Elmfield building to the Hadfield building. After the move the society had several successful exhibitions such as the '*June Ghosts*' exhibition in 2010 promoting the work of the Bakewell artist, Bert Broomhead. Yet, despite the support from continuing faithful supporters, the number of attendees to the SUFAS exhibitions was dwindling and the society questioned if it was fair to keep engaging local artists if they could not generate the same interest in exhibitions.

The end of an organisation like SUFAS was surely heartfelt to all involved. Fortunately, the administrative remains of the society were donated to the university and remain in the archive today. Similarly, the artworks that the society had purchased were donated to the Heritage Collection and fortunately efforts like this project help keep their memory alive.

### **Sheffield Fine Art Society today**

Part of this project, in understanding the functions and purposes of the Sheffield Fine Art Society, aims to reaffirm the impacts that societies like SUFAS have had on both the history of the University but of the city of Sheffield itself.

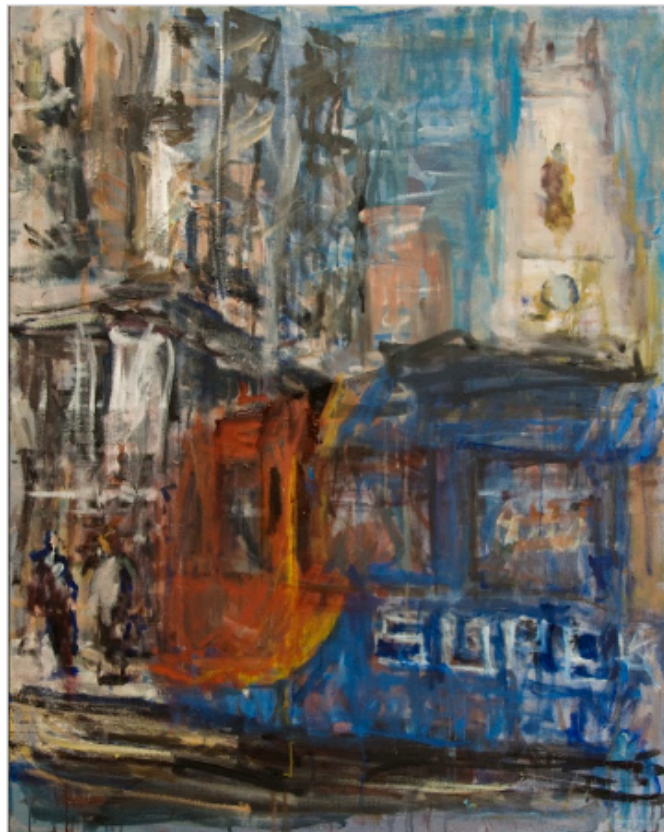
Just as extra-curricular societies that the University has today foster a sense of identity and belonging, SUFAS no doubt had the same impacts on its members in the past. The significance of SUFAS is amplified by the fact that it operated throughout a nearly five-decade period, stretching from the mid-1960s to 2012. For nearly 50 years SUFAS served as a facilitator amongst the University, drawing in both local and nationwide artists to come together and share their love and passion for the arts. Unfortunately, the history of



SUFAS had largely been forgotten since it disbanded in 2012, however this project marks the beginning of a renewed focus on understanding and appreciating the legacy of its past significance.

Presently, the heritage collection is in the process of auditing the remaining SUFAS collection with the aim of improving the existing catalogue, with some pieces potentially undergoing conservation treatment. This project and future progress hopes to breathe new life into these artworks, showcasing SUFAS's legacy throughout the University, and how it continues to shape its heritage today.

Although most of the Sheffield Fine Art Society pieces remain in storage, *'The Church, Regent Street'* by Robert Machan is on display in Firth Court just across from Krebs Cafe. Hopefully in the future more of the SUFAS pieces will be on display across the University as a way of both remembering and honouring the society in a way that promotes the remnants of the society presently in the University's Heritage Collection.



***'The Church, Regent Street', by Robert Machan (2008)***

*SUFAS142*

*Heritage Collection ID. 1255*

## **Art UK Curations**

As part of this research process I was able to uncover information about the SUFAS artworks and the artists who produced them..

The success of this element of the project was dependent on the varied information remaining in the archive and therefore more is known about some artists/artworks than others. Similarly, I was dependent on the information of certain SUFAS artists corresponding to the artworks presently in the Heritage Collection.

Despite this, I was able to make summaries for 4 of the artists showcased by SUFAS, such as: Bert Broomhead, Ade Suberu, Amrik Varkalis and Graham Underhill.

The link to these summaries can be found [here](#):