



Ceramicist Mary Wyatt



A jack in the box? Sculpture by Sally Dunham of Soham

Crafts

Reaching 50 with an artistic flourish

Who formed the Suffolk Craft Society? What were its origins? In 1970 a group of Suffolk makers met and discussed forming a society to support each other and to show and sell their work. John

Chipperfield, then a young ceramicist, and now an honorary member, led the formation of the SCS with Robin Welch, another potter. They approached Cmdr John Jacob (ex-Navy and a pig farmer). He was passionate about the arts and was organising the appeal to rebuild the Snape Maltings Concert Hall after the →



Above: Verena Daniels works in glass, using fusing and slumping. Above right: Helen Dougall from Walsham-le-Willows makes batik pictures from her own drawings and paintings, meanwhile (right) Alison Dane a textile member and also from Walsham produces jewellery from paper she designs and beads. Below: exhibits in the Suffolk Craft Society summer exhibition in Aldeburgh last year



fire. He became the first chair of the society. From the start the objective was to support and promote excellence in contemporary designer craft-making in Suffolk, and attract makers from a wide range of disciplines.

How does it benefit members?
Membership of the society is seen to confer status and validates makers' skills. It gives access to the society's exhibitions for example our annual six-week summer exhibition in Aldeburgh which attracts over 6,000 visitors and the forthcoming spring show at the Bury St Edmunds Guildhall. Members benefit from meeting and sharing expertise with each other. Many of the society's makers are graduates in art/applied arts and teach their craft discipline.

How can people join?
You need to be selected for membership by your fellow designer craft-makers. This is an essential means of ensuring quality and diversity in the work of the society's makers. After initially submitting a CV and images of your work, you may be invited with others to come to a meeting to show and discuss your work, after which a ballot take place. You need to live and work in or near Suffolk, or have done so in the past.

How diverse are the crafts? Any examples of some really different creatives/artists?
Crafts/artists include printmaking, ceramics, jewellery, textiles, glass, furniture, sculpture, wood, and bookbinding. Arabella Marshall, a glass artist from Woodbridge, is currently developing a project that will see a large new fused glass artwork installed into the ruined chapel at RSPB Minsmere. This in turn will launch a programme of events



Handle with care: Tapestry weaver Liz Chester

inspired both by the beauty and the vulnerability of the amazing wildlife surrounding it. The piece will be called *A Wing And A Prayer*. Anne Schwegmann-Fielding makes sculptural mosaics using recycled materials, predominantly crockery. Using objects with a history is key to her work which includes many commissions for murals in public buildings and spaces.

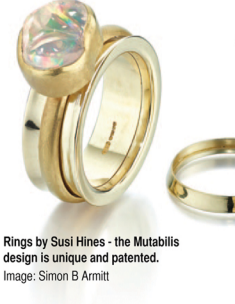
How strongly represented in West Suffolk is the society?
Around 20 makers live and work around Bury, Stowmarket, Sudbury and just into Cambridgeshire.

How often do you meet and where?
Membership meetings take place at venues ranging across Suffolk giving our makers the chance to meet in different parts of this expansive county. We don't have a fixed base at present but it's makes us creative, we are always on the lookout for venues that will showcase our members' work in the way it deserves.

Have any members caught the headlines/won major awards?
Susi Hines, jeweller, has exhibited internationally e.g. New York and Germany and is a regular at the premier UK contemporary jewellery event Goldsmith's Fair, where she has won a silver medal. Her unique 18 carat gold Mutabillis rings have their own unique design number at the Intellectual Property Office. Antonia Hockton, sculptor in stone, was on the final shortlist for the Arts Council England award for art in a religious context for her alter-piece in Great Bromley church. She was in the company of international artists whose work was in St Paul's and Ely Cathedral.

Any up and coming talents we should know about?
It's the case that a lot of makers have come through the SCS and moved on running successful businesses – a model that is far easier than in 1970. Many have their own websites and sell online well beyond the Suffolk boundaries. So we have a track record of spotting talent. It's good that many highly successful makers remain keen members, such as printmaker Penny Bhadresa whose wonderful greetings cards are in all the best outlets in the county. One to watch artistically is a newish member Nicola Coe, whose work is unusual and intricate, often using natural inks.

www.suffolcraftsociety.org



Rings by Susi Hines - the Mutabillis design is unique and patented. Image: Simon B Armit

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