Members’ Forum

A Message from your Editor (that’s Dave Hardy, folks): From now on, these will be the pages where you can have your say, and, especially, tell us about yourself. Yes, we really are interested! So remember, if, one issue, there’s an empty page, that will be because YOU haven’t written...

What is Space Art?
A couple of issues ago, Richard Bizley asked about the difference between SF art and space art. Beth Axary replied, but this is the first time I’ve had to include her reply, which included a copy of the IAA Manifesto where space art is defined. It may help us all to read again what our association stands for (if you disagree, let’s hear from you. It won’t be the first time we’ve had a heated debate on this subject). Beth adds: “Science fiction art could be space art if it fits into this definition, and yes, I agree with him that the boundaries are hazy (some like the word ‘fuzzy’ as in fuzzy logic).”

IAAA Manifesto
The IAAA was formed as a group of artists whose work focuses on what we define as astronomical art. This is any art which is:

- inspired by scientific exploration of space and knowledge of the physical universe around us,
- and/or demonstratively informed by scientific knowledge (for example through content, artist’s statements, and/or artist’s background, etc.,
- and/or dealing with concerns about humanity’s relationship to the physical universe and our cosmic environment.

Unlike many historical art movements, ours is not restricted or defined by styles or techniques. Although primarily a group of realist and representational painters, IAAA encompasses styles which are photo-realistic, abstract, conceptual, expressionistic, surrealist, whimsical, etc. Our shows to date have included many of these styles. We recognize that few art forms can be strictly defined, and strict definition may even be inimical to creativity. However, we recognize the following usages, which help clarify some styles and intentions.

Astronomical Art is art inspired by the science of astronomy. Space Art, which deals with human exploration of space in the physical sense, for instance with astronautics and space hardware. In addition to these, a third term, Cosmological Art has been coined to loosely describe art which, while including astronomical and space art, is more broadly concerned with the large scale structure of the physical universe, and our human relationship to it as a whole.

We conceptualize these three realms of our work as a bulls-eye pattern. Just as a telescope focuses most starlight in the central, brightest core of the image, we visualize most of our work and exhibitions concentrating the majority of our efforts in the astronomical and related space art areas, but with a smaller percentage falling in the broader ‘cosmological’ area.

And linked with the above (because I met Jackie at a science fiction convention):

New Member

We have a new UK member, Jackie E. Burns. Asked for some biographical information, she replied as follows:

First came literature (C.S. Lewis: Narnia; Brothers Grimm), then came astronomy, then came science fiction book covers. As an eight-year-old, all of this was eye-opening stuff. “Some day,” I promised myself, “I am going to paint stuff like that!” And so I drew, and painted, and read. The dream has now been realised but still the magic and wonder of the universe – all that it is and could be – beckons me on.

My paintings may well be quiet sometimes, but they are never ordinary. The topics range widely from the mundane, around the bizarre and through to the fantastic. I like to push the boundaries just a little. All my work is done in water-based materials – pastel, pen & ink, or on computer. My sales are mainly through private commission or exhibition work, and I have clients in the UK, North America, Uganda and Hong Kong.

I teach airbrushing privately. I have also given demonstrations at schools and art clubs. Although I specialize in airbrushing, it is not my sole method of painting, although I do enjoy the challenge of planning and then executing a project using the airbrush alone.

Setting up and running exhibitions is another professional outlet. I have set up and run one landscape and three fantasy exhibitions at the Association of Illustrators’ Gallery in London. I am in the process of getting together a premier exhibition of Irish contemporary art at Docklands, London, and a textile art exhibition is in the pipeline for 1997.

Whether you are a new IAAA member or not, why not take the time to write a few words about yourself for this page? How else can the rest of our members know who you are and what you do – ?

Jess Artem, who is organizing the Tenerife end of our Workshop in September, has done just that. Even better, he sent me some photos of his work, and one of those is on our front cover. He writes:

I was born in England in 1945. Studied at Art School (technical illustration course mainly) from 1961-64. Became interested in astronomy as a child and went on to study it pretty thoroughly (though privately) over the past 30 years. Moved to Tenerife in the Canary Islands in 1984 (my wife got a teaching post in the English Language Department of the university there).

I have exhibited at: the Royal Academy (Summer Exhibition, 1974); Institute of Astronomy, Cambridge, 1983; Greater London Council, Annual Exhibition, 1983; as well as at various small galleries in London and Tenerife.

In 1978 my painting was used as the record cover for Van Der Graaf: The Quiet Zone. Various other paintings have been published by Artists Cards (London). Wizard and Genius posters (Switzerland).

Beginnings

My interest in physics and astronomy goes back to childhood – it was the BBC’s journey into Space during the 1950s that really caught my imagination – and this interest has developed in parallel with my perceptions as an artist. Indeed, it has always been an interest of mine to see if it were possible to build a bridge between the perceptions of the scientist and the artist. For the past 15 years or so, my main interest has been in developing an holistic view between the world of subatomic physics and the largest system we actually know – the Solar System.

These studies have culminated in a most unusual cosmological concept which – and IAAA members might not like this – places the Earth (or, at least, the Solar System) back at the centre of the universe. Yep! I guess I'm a pre-Copernican!
Cosmic Surrealism

Jess promises an article later to expand on this concept, but, as a ‘taster’ adds:
I would say, than, that my work is more motivated by ideas, concepts and theory than solely by observational or technique. I don’t use an airbrush, only conventional brushes, oils and canvases.

One of the great benefits of the modern space age for me is our unprecedented view of the Earth floating alone in space. I use this view frequently in my paintings in an effort to draw the viewer’s attention toward the Earth and its fragility, rather than away from it. If I had to declare an ambition, then I think it would be that my painting is an attempt to direct mankind’s consciousness back to its centre of creation rather than away from it.

Or, to be more specific to charge the Earth’s ‘Gaia Sphere’ with positive karma rather than negative...

If the above has whetted your appetite for more – or you wish to argue with it – do let me know. Or you will have an opportunity to discuss Jess’s ideas as long as you attend the Tenerife Workshop, of which more later.

Meanwhile, to show that we don’t only include pieces by UK members (but, once again, IT’S UP TO YOU), here’s one from new US member Dale Darby, in response to Mike Carroll’s plea last time:

What I Did During Summer by Dale Darby

I’m happy that the question was asked. Let me explain. I had been doing space art with the airbrush for about three years, and Tom Hunt (Art Director of Astronomy magazine) suggested that I should join the IAAA. It just so happened that Sacramento was about to engage in a project that would net us a Challenge Learning Center. I was asked if I could arrange a space art show for a fund raiser. Well, I can tell you that I did and I now have a great respect for show directors. I was able to put the thing together with the help of Michael Carroll, Pam Lee and Beth Avary.

This was a show comprised of IAAA artists, but I had to limit it to just a few because of room and budget constraints. The artists who were able to contribute to this event were Pam Lee, Joel Hagen, Lynette Cook, Beth Avary, Michael Carroll, Bill Hartmann, Chris Butler, Joe Shabram, Ron Miller, Tom Hunt, Dennis Davidson and myself. I even got a Joseph Minski piece.

Opening night saw around 300 people and along with myself was Pam, Lynette, Joel and Dennis. What a show! The IAAA was well represented. We sold the Minski piece and one of Mike Carroll’s. Bill Hartmann got a commission and I got two.

Now if that wasn’t enough for my summer (I had to produce six new pieces for the show), along came the Arches Workshop where I got to meet a lot of the voices that I had talked to for the show. A bunch of great guys. I met Pam and Joel earlier when we enjoyed a talk in Sacramento by Jim Lovel. It was a really great summer. Joining the IAAA was the best thing I have ever done. The art was truly appreciated. I made some very good friends along the way also. That’s what’s important. Keep the spirit alive!

Now there’s a guy who has really entered into the spirit of being an IAAA member, and has obviously enjoyed every minute. I can really relate to him, because that was just how I felt when I attended my first Workshop, in Iceland in 1988. I’ve said this before, but I don’t apologise for saying it again:

If you haven’t been to an IAAA Workshop yet, DO IT. You won’t regret it!

from Michael Carroll

For those of you who have access to the World Wide Web, there is now a website that lets you see the volcanoes and craters of Venus, a la the best Megellan data. Developed by a grad student at McGill University, it can be accessed at:

http://stoner.eps.mcgill.ca/bud/first.html
(also recommended by Kara Szathmary)

Galileo at Jupiter

We all know about the antenna problems on Galileo, plus the tape recorder ‘jam’. At this time, it is not yet known what caused the probe’s ultimate demise, but it appears that two independent data streams were successfully received by the orbiter. Playback of the taped data begins in early January. At this point, the data transmitted to Earth was stored as an emergency measure in the spacecraft’s computer memory (in case the inconsistent tape recorder failed). This data is safely back home, but a scheduled media conference on the results December 19 had to be canceled due to the U.S. government furlough.

Despite the fact that Galileo flew within a few thousand miles of Europa and within a thousand miles of Io, no images were attempted. This frustrating fact is due to the damaged tape recorder, which malfunctioned in October. JPL engineers took a conservative approach, dedicating the recorder to getting all the probe data possible (the probe mission began just after the Europa and Io encounters). It is now felt that the material from some of the tape migrated in zero-G to the surface of the capstans. It froze there, but as the tape player was commanded to record first images of Jupiter, the stuff heated up and jammed some of the tape. Scientists are confident that they understand the nature of the partial failure of the recorder, and are working to repair it. Unfortunately for us eager space artists, this means no images until the first encounter.

Playback will be completed in May. The first close encounter is with Ganymede June 27 of 1996. Hopefully, there will be more distant shots of various moons, Jupiter, and rings before then, but the mission is slow, gradual one compared to the golden age of Voyagers and Vikings. Patience, friends!

Website for Galileo updates:
http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/galileo/countdown/

Priorities, priorities (an editorial from an editor)

Many of us in the field of art fall into one of two categories: either 1) we are scrabbling to get more work, or 2) we are heavily involved in trying to hit the next deadline. I submit that we must be careful – for our mental health and the health of our families – to monitor ourselves. Good art takes creativity. Creativity takes time. If we spend all of our time making money or trying to make money, our art stagnates. Sometimes we must paint for art’s sake, and sometimes we need to stop painting or drawing or sculpting or whatever it is we do and pause to be inspired. As the American social realist painter Ben Shahn put it, the artist must ‘return to the potato field’. (One value of our workshops is that it forces us out of our home environments and into natural ones which enable us to relax, and rediscover what inspires us).

A Change is as Good as a Rest

An occasional change of venue is a bolster for creativity, but so is a simple walk or bike ride. Instead of looking for that next big client, how about looking outside at the gathering clouds or the changing trees? Most space artists are studio painters. I spend much of my day in my basement. A few weeks ago, after a long and difficult stint I was doing on a book cover, my daughter came down and said, ‘Boy, the sky sure is pretty outside’... I dropped what I was doing and ran upstairs with her to witness one of the most gorgeous sunsets ever to grace Colorado’s skies.

Some have accused me of having the intellect of an eight-year-old. If that means having the spirit of an eight-year-old, along with the wonder of the creation around us, I consider it the highest compliment. Our lives can be a humdrum of query letters to magazine and book publishers, slide files, paint supplies and desk-schedulers. But as artists, we can never allow ourselves to lose the wonder that brought us to the arts in the first place.

Art is not about pigment, canvas, clients and invoices. These are important parts of the business, and cannot be ignored. But the core of art is
Lanzarote
by Arthur Gilbert
(who visited this Canary Island in Oct/Nov '85)

If you feel that, due to a lack of will for lunar colonization, you may not just a live long enough to walk on the surface of the Moon, then take heart! A walk across the 'lunar landscape' of Lanzarote may be the next best thing.

Here, the landscape is as close to the Moon, (or Mars) as you are likely to get, and being an island of approximately 37 miles long by 12 miles wide it is quite easy to explore.

From Tenerife the island can be reached in about 40 minutes air flying time for around £70.00 (English pounds). However, Lanzarote is worth a visit in its own right, having an abundance of volcanoes and many square kilometres of volcanic landscape. About 250 years ago violent volcanic eruptions totally transformed the landscape to the north and west of the island, destroying eleven villages at the time. In many areas the volcanic formations are in near pristine condition due to the practically non-existent rainfall.

Fire Mountain
'Timanfaya,' or 'The Fire Mountain' is set in the national park, south west of the island. This area can only be approached by guided coach tours of about 45 mins duration. A "Trust," as from you will see, is a fantastic moonscape before you, with stops at the most interesting formations. You will see red and ochre coloured volcanoes with beautifully preserved calderas. Vast lava fields, rough and irregular, smooth and granular. At the top of Timanfaya is a restaurant where you can eat at reasonable cost, food cooked from the volcano's heat. Guides outside do various tests to indicate the intense heat, not many centimetres beneath your feet.

The roads around most of the island are good, and, generally very quiet. To the north of 'Yaiza' - a small town south of Timanfaya, the road takes you straight through the national park, but here there are no lay-bys or stopping points. I think it is discouraged in this area, to stop sightseers from taking souvenirs of lava.

However, on all other roads there are stopping places. These are somewhat rough and irregular, but adequate, whilst you take up a position to paint, sketch, or photograph.

To the north of the island are the highest mountains with correspondingly twisting roads and wonderful views across the valleys and plains. The road through 'Arrieta' on the extreme north of the island is well worth taking. Here is a basalt lava field containing gigantic blocks in cracked and fractured configurations. The whole area is very irregular, with large blocks stretching well back into middle distance against a background of volcanic cones.

In this same area are the 'Cueva De Los Verdes', or 'Green Caves'. This is an intricate network of underground tunnels and caves, where entrance is gained, (guided tour) through a collapsed segment. The whole system is part of a 7km. long lava tube which emanated from 'Corona Volcano' and goes all the way down to the sea (only a small section is explored). There is an interesting illusion inside, which would be spot it if I were to tell you its nature.

Dramatic Locations
Many of the most dramatic locations are of tourist attractions, but this does not cause distraction from their intrinsic beauty. Any architecture involved has been designed by the island's leading architect Cesar Manrique whose work blends beautifully with the surroundings. A true genius at creating harmonious settings of art within nature.

At 'Los Hervideros', S.W. of the island is a very attractive "Green Lagoon", in a fascinating setting. A short walk along the coast, across ochre coloured rocks, set against a fine grained reddish-brown mountainside brings you to the lagoon. It is a brilliant emerald green, set in the rim of half a volcanic crater. The other half is submerged in the sea. Contrasting with this is a black beach running along one edge. Topping the whole scene is a dramatic cliff face of petrified lava.

There are many interesting and varied aspects of Lanzarote, and certainly no shortage of material for the space artist. From a social point of view probably the best cultural centre would be 'Puerto Del Carmen'. A holiday resort with fine, sandy beaches and the most varied evening entertainment. We stayed in 'Costa Teguise', a few miles north. I have a possible contact there for villagers, should the occasion arise.

An IAA Exhibition
The Island has an extremely good museum, The Lanzarote Holiday Gallery. It is in English and is a mine of information, which is otherwise hard to come by. Whilst there I made a point of meeting the Editor with a view to gathering information about art galleries, etc, should occasion arise for an IAA exhibition at any time. They were very helpful and even offered publicity of any such event in the magazine, including the Tenerife edition. This would make an interesting feature for the magazine and at the same time give publicity to our work.

More from Dale Darby:

1998 White Mountain Workshop

Some of you in the IAA already know that I am an avid amateur astronomer with the Sacramento Valley Astronomical Society. Some of you have even gone out of your way to say that I am a decent astronomical airbrush artist. Thanks for that. My personal favorite artists belong to the association.

I like the idea of workshops and decided that I would try and put one together. One of the most remote yet comfortable spots that I know of is White Mountain. The reason for this article is to point of kick around the idea and see how much interest is generated.

White Mountain stands at an altitude of 14,250 feet and is located just east of Bishop, California. It is truly a high altitude research site. Bishop is also the location of the Owens Valley Radio Observatory, managed by CalTech. Our excursion included a full blown tour of T.V.R.O. and possibly a ride on the massive 40-meter dish, courtesy of Dr Mark Hodges, my good bud and fellow astronomer. He often comes up on the mountain to enjoy an evening of star gazing.

White Mountain research facility was first managed by the Navy as a high altitude research station. Then CalTech took over and installed an intrinsically fine telescope in a domed observatory on the site. U.C.L.A. now maintains the site as a high altitude research center once again. It was also considered for the primary site for the famous Keck telescope now located in Hawaii. Typical seeing on good nights there is 1/2 arc second. On a fair night it "balls" out to one arc second. That is to say the conditions as well as the base camp that is located at 7,950 feet, and the super-high altitude up on the site move to a "Milky Way" from there. When the Navy had it, it was used to train lunar astronauts, as it was the most "Moonlike" place on Earth at the time. One hears the same claim for Iceland and Hawaii listed as the tertiary lot of "Milanese" up there. The scenery is simply breathtaking. You have to pass through a Braille Pine Forest on the way up. Those trees are gnarly and anything from 1000 to 1500 years old.

The last 30 or 40 miles is rough but not necessarily four-wheel drive. I have a gutless Nissan truck that has made it five times with no problem. I will say don’t bother to come with bad tires; you’ll regret it. The temperature there is always below freezing. After you get there, you can camp or use their facilities. They will cook you three meals a day, good food and all you can eat, as well as the shower, toilet, pool, ping-pong, TV, library and library. You also have oxygen and other medical facilities. The sleeping arrangements are of an open bay style. They have one – at most two

separate rooms available for married couples, all heated, and, in 1993, one of three days at a cost of $25.00. A way, if you want to go on a nature hike during the day, a pack lunch will be provided for you.

The area is volcanic and has a rather large crater field – hence the name White Mountain. The only catch is that there are no windows. New Moon in either April or August. Before or after is iffy weather. You can also go up to the peak at 14,250 when there is oxygen available, so you can chose a small, non-frozen shelter. That also depends upon weather the road up is clear of snow.

The temperature ranges from the upper 60s to the lower 30s. Dress accordingly. Also, I would recommend a cast. Dehydration is more common at that altitude than heat. The rule of the day is to drink plenty of water. If you think you need to acclimatize first, there are campgrounds at 16,000 ft. I would also recommend an extra blanket and your favourite pillow.

Interested parties should contact me no later than March 1995. You can pay by credit card or cash when you leave the site, and only pay for the time you spend there. No better seeing and no better company. My address is: 6242 Carl Sandburg Circle, Sacramento, CA 95842. Tel: 916-331-0147. Call anytime, and keep the spirit alive.

The Tenerife Workshop

I am still awaiting some ballpark figures for accommodation (which is one reason why I have not stated the price for Christmas also didn’t help! but Mike and I have obtained the following guidelines for flights only (return, of course):

From the USA: around $1150
From the UK: not more than £200

As you all know, prices become increasingly competitive as the season progresses, so these are likely to decrease rather than increase. We have slots for 15 members, most of which are now filled— but we can usually fit in more, so Arches proved! However, please don’t leave it until the last minute.

At the moment we are thinking of around 14 September as a starting date.

IMPORTANT!

Will those members who have given their names so far please let me know whether you prefer one or two weeks for this workshop (10-11 days may be more difficult), bearing in mind that we hope to make a side trip to Lanzarote (see Arthur Gilbert’s report in this issue), and an Exhibition is planned. This will be open to all members, whether attending the Workshop or not.

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR SUBSCRIPTION?
Bruce Mazet, a member from Scottsdale, AZ recommends a company which makes custom stencils out of mylar. Those of us who still use paint and pencils, usually use some kind of commercial stencil. A problem I have encountered is that I need a size or degree that is in between the 5 degree divisions that every ellipse template company manufacturers. Laserworks Stencils, Green Lake, Wisconsin 800-285-6544 can solve this problem by making a stencil to your exact specifications.

My apologies to our Australian member, Steven Hobbs, whose article on computers and artists I intended to include in this issue. It got crowded out by more topical notices and forthcoming workshops. Next time, I promise!

Also next time, more from Kim Poor on computer art. Finally, a plea: it saves a lot of re-typing time if you can send contributions on floppy disk! Thanks.