

Topsham Art Group Newsletter

January 2026

I hope you have all had a very happy Christmas and New Year. Welcome to 2026 – and the 60th anniversary of the Topsham Art Group. Lots to tell you so diaries at the ready!



Mary Fedden, Garden, 1967. Gouache, chalk and collage on paper

events of the times, and of course, the art and architecture. Think about the British artists of that era – David Hockney, Peter Blake, Terry Frost, Mary Fedden and Michael Craig Martin – and further afield Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and Mark Rothko were also creating new and exciting work. Create your own piece that reflects the era and bring it along that evening. Make sure you book in with Margaret on your arrival and Pamela will judge the entries and award the prize.

Topsham Art Festival

Carrying on with the celebration, this July will see the Topsham Art Festival involving members and the wider community. The Programme Team are busy putting a programme together – keep your eyes peeled for information later in the year. We hope you will want to get involved taking part in events and helping out.

We would love to display some of your sketchbooks as part of the Topsham Art Festival – get drawing, sketching, painting – more details nearer the time.

Subscriptions for 2026 were due by 1 January 2026. The renewal price is £25 – the same as last year. Please pay by BACS to the Topsham Art Group Account, **Sort Code 30-93-14 Account No 02832855 and state SUBS in the reference box**. If you have decided not to renew your membership, please let Kim Bates know as early as possible so she doesn't have to chase you (email: tag.membership24@gmail.com). The final date for subscriptions is 15 January 2026, after which those who haven't paid will need to re-apply for membership.



We decided that the 60th anniversary was a cause for celebration and on Thursday 26th March, following the AGM, Pamela Campbell-Johnston, an art historian, will give a special lecture prepared for TAG - '**A Decade of radical change in Society and Art: British Art and Architecture 1960 - 1970**'.
Competition: 'The Swinging 60s'; closing date Thursday 26 March

Many of us will remember the 60s for all sorts of reasons – winning the World Cup, the music, the fashion, the politics and

Next meeting

Thursday 15 January, 6.30 for 7.00 pm: **The Reach of the Exe: Art, Science and Exploration from Topsham to the ends of the Earth**

Naomi Hart is an Exeter based artist. After completing her Art and Design degree in 2002, she has developed a practice which has involved collaboration with scientists



They grew to recognise the change in the sound of their footprints as they moved over crevasses', 60cm x 60cm mixed media on canvas, from 'ice report', Naomi Hart, 2018

from all over the world – from the Arctic to the Galapagos, Canada and Australia. Naomi makes multimedia and multidisciplinary artwork, using drawing, paint, photography, sculpture, installation, walking, performance and sound to investigate the world. Her work is frequently focussed on water and marine environments, and the impact of environmental issues in the natural world, finding creative and astonishing ways of representing the threats to fragile and unique environments.

Naomi will talk about some of her artistic collaborations with scientists, using examples from the Arctic and closer to home. There'll be a small exhibition of work, including some sketchbooks, and cards will be for sale. <https://naomi-hart.com>

Tuesday 24 February, 6.30 for 7.00 pm **Appraisal with Phil Creek**

We are lucky enough to have Phil Creek visiting us this evening to offer appraisals of our paintings and prints. Phil gained a BA Degree in Fine Art from Manchester University and a Post-graduate Degree in The History of Art from Birmingham University. He was Head of Creative Arts at Honiton Community College, Director of Course at The Beaford Art Centre, and County Art Adviser for Devon. He is now a full-time painter living in East Devon and Honorary President of the South West Academy of Arts.



Bring along one painting or print which you would like some advice on from Phil.

Website news and social media

Debra Lambert, a TAG member, has been hard at work developing a new website for us. We are at the testing stage but it will go live early in the New Year. There will inevitably be some hiccups in the first few months but we hope that it will give a fresh look to TAG and have useful functions for members. There may be more useful elements in time (e.g. a personal gallery for members' pictures) but this will take time to develop. In the meantime, did you know that we have a Facebook account for TAG members only – please apply to Gill Sawyer to be



signed up gillybean616@icloud.com and an Instagram account for TAG which we would encourage you to 'follow' and 'like' posts. If you have your own Instagram account, please tag topshamartgroup.

Summer Exhibition, 'original' work and photographing your pictures

You'll remember that in our Summer Exhibition rules, you are asked to sign that your work is original. We had a discussion in the committee about what this actually means and the implication of using photographs from the internet as a source for your paintings, which is common practice.



Researching this topic has been an interesting exercise and the bottom line is the comment – '2D artists should use images as a reference point for study and inspiration, not for direct copying'.

Generally:

- **Assume copyright:** Always assume an image is copyrighted unless explicitly stated otherwise.
- **Use legal sources:** Use images from public domain sources (e.g., <https://pixabay.com> <https://unsplash.com>; <https://www.pexels.com>), Creative Commons licensed photos, or professional stock image sites where you purchase a license.
- **Obtain permission:** If you want to use a specific copyrighted image, contact the creator and get written permission.
- **Create your own references:** The safest and most unique option is to take your own reference photos. This ensures you have full control and original angles/lighting, making your work stand out.

Or create from real life.

I came across an interesting article from 2017 by Erika Lancaster <https://www.erikalancaster.com/art-blog/an-artists-guide-to-using-references-pt1-when-and-how-to-use-other-peoples-photographs-to-create-art> that highlights how to use and change photos to make the work your own. The public domain sources listed above have an amazing range of pictures for you to draw upon, and if you are a Facebook user, you can join the group: '*Free Reference Photos for Artists*' which is a great resource. I hope this helps clarify the issue.

Photographing your own work: Can I suggest a new year's resolution – photograph your own work before it is framed! We hope to include a member's



gallery on the new website, as well as pictures from the exhibition. It's really important to get photos of your work before it goes behind glass. Taking your own pictures before submitting your work for the exhibition will help us tremendously.

<https://willkempartschool.com/how-to-photograph-your-paintings-with-your-iphone/>

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TAG paintings at Topsham Surgery

I'm delighted to let you know that a number of paintings by TAG artists are now hanging in the waiting room at Topsham Surgery. The waiting room looks much more cheerful now. Once building work has been completed at Glasshouse Surgery, we will also be hanging pictures there. Thanks to all the artists who offered their pictures.

Life drawing in Topsham

From January, there's a change to life drawing on a Wednesday morning at Matthews Hall. The good news is that this will now be tutored by June Janes and is open to absolute beginners through to professional artists. Anyone who came to her demonstration at TAG last year will remember her inventiveness and experience of teaching. The Spring term begins on Wednesday 14 January 9.30-11.30 in the Council Chamber at Matthews Hall, £180 for a 10-week term. Contact June on 01392 666609 or 07305 731043, email: junejanes5@outlook.com. Check www.lifedrawingandportraiture.com or just turn up on Wednesday 14 January.



June also runs a portraiture class in Topsham on Tuesdays, 9.00-11.30, starting 13 January. Same contact details as above.

Beginners and improvers - classes for all at Nancy Potter House with TAG member Nadezhda Lisak

Join professional artist and teacher Nadezhda for a 6-week course at Nancy Potter House, learning how to paint birds in watercolour. This course is suitable for beginners and improvers who want to build real skill and confidence with watercolour. Over six weeks, you'll learn the foundations that actually matter: controlling water, timing your strokes, layering transparently, and developing the light touch needed to bring birds to life with clarity and delicacy.

We'll focus on form, feather texture, gesture, and the quiet precision that makes watercolour sing rather than fight you. You'll work step by step, gaining a solid understanding of how the paint behaves so you can rely on technique instead of luck. If you want to paint birds with subtlety, sensitivity, and confidence, this is a steady, supportive place to learn.

January 12th - February 16th 2026; Mondays 10am – 12 noon, £100

For further details and to register <https://nadezhda-portraitartist.com/topsham-art-classes/> Or email Nadezhda at nadezhda.portraitartist@gmail.com



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Grayson Perry: Aspects of Myself at RAMM, 24 January 2026 – 3 May 2026



This is RAMM's first exhibition of the work of Grayson Perry, one of Britain's best-known contemporary artists. From textiles and pots to etchings and woodcuts, *Grayson Perry: Aspects of Myself* explores a sense of self through a range of media and storytelling techniques.

Book your ticket online for a 25% discount on a standard adult ticket. Standard online – £6 (£8 if bought at ticket desk), NUS cardholders and MA Members – £4, ArtFund – £3, Under 19s and carers – free.

<https://rammuseum.org.uk/whats-on/grayson-perry-aspects-of-myself/>

Look out for associated workshops and events.

There is one space left on the free **Procreate workshops** at Apple Store, Princesshay, Exeter on Thursday 22 January, 11 am and follow up on Thursday 5 February, 11 am. Contact Gill Sawyer if you would like that place - gillybean616@icloud.com

Programme 2026

We are putting the final touches to next year's programme and will be producing a printed copy for all members, but in the meantime, here's a summary so far: all at 6.30 for 7 except for the March meeting.

Thursday 15 January: Naomi Hart, artist: talk

Tuesday 24 February: Phil Creek, critique

Thursday 26 March: **AGM 6.15, coffee and bar from 5.45.** Followed by Pam Campbell-Johnson on **British Art & Architecture 1960-1970: A decade of 'radical change in Society and Art'**. Competition: 'The Swinging 60s'.

Tuesday 21 April: Joe Webster, contemporary landscape plein air artist talk

Note: Monday 18 May: Chris Forsey, demonstration

Looking forward to seeing you at the first meeting in January, coffee at 6.30 as usual and start at 7.00 pm.

Best wishes
Maddy and the Committee