

## **From Tom Marshall –**

“Thank you to everyone for coming along and taking part- I hope you found some of it interesting. I think that we ended up with some very nice artworks- and this was more about giving it a go and experimenting than ending up with a gallery-ready piece. Sorry not to give everyone as much help as you might have liked. I've learnt a few more names, though.

### **Paper and White Materials:**

Much of this was Fabriano and most was from Brookings, Ashley Rd, opposite Waitrose and with the green and white canopy. The coloured papers were torn down from larger sheets, which I bought there. The white pencils and inks were also mostly from there. You can buy black rubbers to use with black paper, online, and almost every medium in white that you have in black- clicky pencils, gel pens, dipping ink, even charcoal.

Other good black paper includes Canford Raven Pad- but this bobbles if it gets too wet. Hahnmueller do some thick paper, and St Cuthbert's Mill do black Somerset printmaking paper. Brookings may be able to order some of this. They also do other mid-toned papers in grey, brown, blue, etc.

I like to buy thicker paper, as then I have the opportunity to use paint, as well as dry media. Remember that you can make your own- save your old painting water- never throw it away- clean out your watercolour box or use inks by making coloured backgrounds to draw on in white- then you can use really nice watercolour paper. The dregs of your pastel box in the mix will add texture.

Of course, you can also do this kind of thing with scraperboard, oil paint, by sewing, collaging, etc.

### **Wire:**

The copper wire came from a couple of online places- one is Kernowcraft- a jewellery-making supplier. Another is the Scientific Wire Company on E-Bay. As well as copper, brass, and stainless steel, you can also buy bronze and other types of wire- some will oxidise in time, and you could make that part of your work, or paint them, sand them, varnish them, etc.

Remember to look at your pieces under a light that shows the shadows- that is part of the beauty of them!

Remember to keep them where pets and small children will not get them.

Potentially, you can combine thick and thinner wire together, to show lines of shape and lines of detail, or, say, a figure in steel wire, with the hands, etc, done in copper.

Brazing/soldering would open up further possibilities, and you could add in cut metal plate, found objects, foil of different kinds, etc.

Those who do needle-felting can do the Harley-Davidson rider version, and use steel wool- that can be combined with wirework- great for wolves, people with beards or bears, etc.

### **Other Notes:**

The finer the tool you are using, generally, the smoother you want the paper to be. With rougher tools and paper, you want to work on a larger scale. It's the same with wire. You simply can't use very thick wire on a very small scale without it looking clunky and losing detail- but in a way, that's part of the challenge- deciding what to leave out and what to keep. It's the same when drawing highlights- you have to decide which ones- the brightest only, or the next level ones, too. If using rough chalk pastels, even a sugar paper can be nice- and a good bit of mid-toned sugar paper can be lovely for working on in both white and black.

Because if working on black, you tend to end up with an artwork that is predominantly dark, it is better to work on a smaller scale, or large pieces could be oppressive on a wall at home- unless you have a mansion. That's probably one reason it is more used in illustration than on gallery walls.

One of those cruel art teachers would make everyone do a drawing of their wire piece, plus shadow. Move the light around, and draw all the shadows.

You could do a stop-frame animation taking photos of your wire piece, moving it a bit, and repeating that.

### **Artists:**

Many artists have worked in light on dark- Rembrandt did this in oil paint- I'm not sure if he did this when drawing, though. Durer, Watteau, Rubens, are among artists working with both light- chalk pastels, etc- and dark on a mid-toned paper. Russell Flint sometimes drew in white on dark blue paper. If you look at artists also using scraperboard and wood engraving, people like Gustave Dore (Illustrations to Dante's trilogy, London pictures, etc), Tove Jansson (Moomin books), Peter Boston (the children of Green Knowe series), have often approached artwork with a view to creating drawing in light on dark- if you look at some of Dore's work, he has areas in dark lines and others in white lines, within the same artwork. My brain gets in a tangle trying to work out how he did it, but perhaps, even if not actually doing an engraving, if you draw in a dark ink or oil paint on a gessoed board or glass, and scrape into this, then you can have both dark lines and light ones.

One of the most interesting wire artists is Alexander Calder.

I tend not to like the artworks that you often get in shops, where they have lots of densely-wrapped wire, but I think that could be done so that it looks good- you'd want them to be, given how extravagant they are with the wire.

Another approach would be to do what Liz Magee does and add solidity with other materials.

### **Subject Matter:**

White on black is great for capturing interesting lighting. It is great for making you really look. Try at home, where you might have more interesting lighting- try a series of self-portraits, with the light in different places, around you- draw hands, jars of things, household objects- it can made ordinary things interesting, like snow changes a back garden- try collections of related objects- especially with textures, a pile of old shoes, a tooth-mug of toothbrushes, a collection of feathers, chess-boards with the pieces on them, silhouetted trees, people with long shadows, stripy clothes and checked tablecloths. Something like a marble on a shiny surface is interesting to do- you see through it, but it also reflects- it has a shadow with bits of light reflected in it, etc. Or how about birch trees up on Talbot Heath?- where they have the dark heath behind them, they are white on black, but where the sky is behind them, it swaps over, and they become silhouettes. Remember, if drawing something like glasses, that unless your plan is just to do a line drawing, not just to draw the outline- but only the parts where the light hits- the same with the eyes or hands- don't just outline the hand- see what happens if you only draw where the light hits. Try a border collie or oystercatcher or magpie- only putting in the light areas- it's like a visual riddle.

You can even paint something you would normally paint in colour- a fruit bowl with lemons and oranges- and, because you're drawing in white, look at the way the surface of the fruit catches the light in different places. Maybe when you go back to using full colour, you will use more tone.

### **Places to see my work:**

If anyone wants to see more of my work, I am online, with Facebook and Instagram, and a website and I have work in the Hatch Gallery, Christchurch, near the Priory, for a couple more weeks. I'll also be doing Dorset Art Weeks in Poole Painting Studio, over Poole Printmakers- so, after visiting the main PEDAS show- please come along :)

Please do feel free to send me questions/ comments.

Best Wishes,

Tom