

# THE RAINBOW

Box Art Group Newsletter - Friday 26<sup>th</sup> July  
2024

Written by and for the members of Box Art Group (No. 100)

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## Brixham Harbour

Last October I thought I would try something different. It turned out to be a collage/mixed media, bit of all sorts picture of Brixham Harbour in November.

It was a very slow experience, tinkering with it endlessly, but eventually I decided it was finished this month. Phew.

*Lynne*



## The Eyes Have It

A couple of birds by Mike C. Apologies if I missed the tip of the heron's beak when I photographed it.



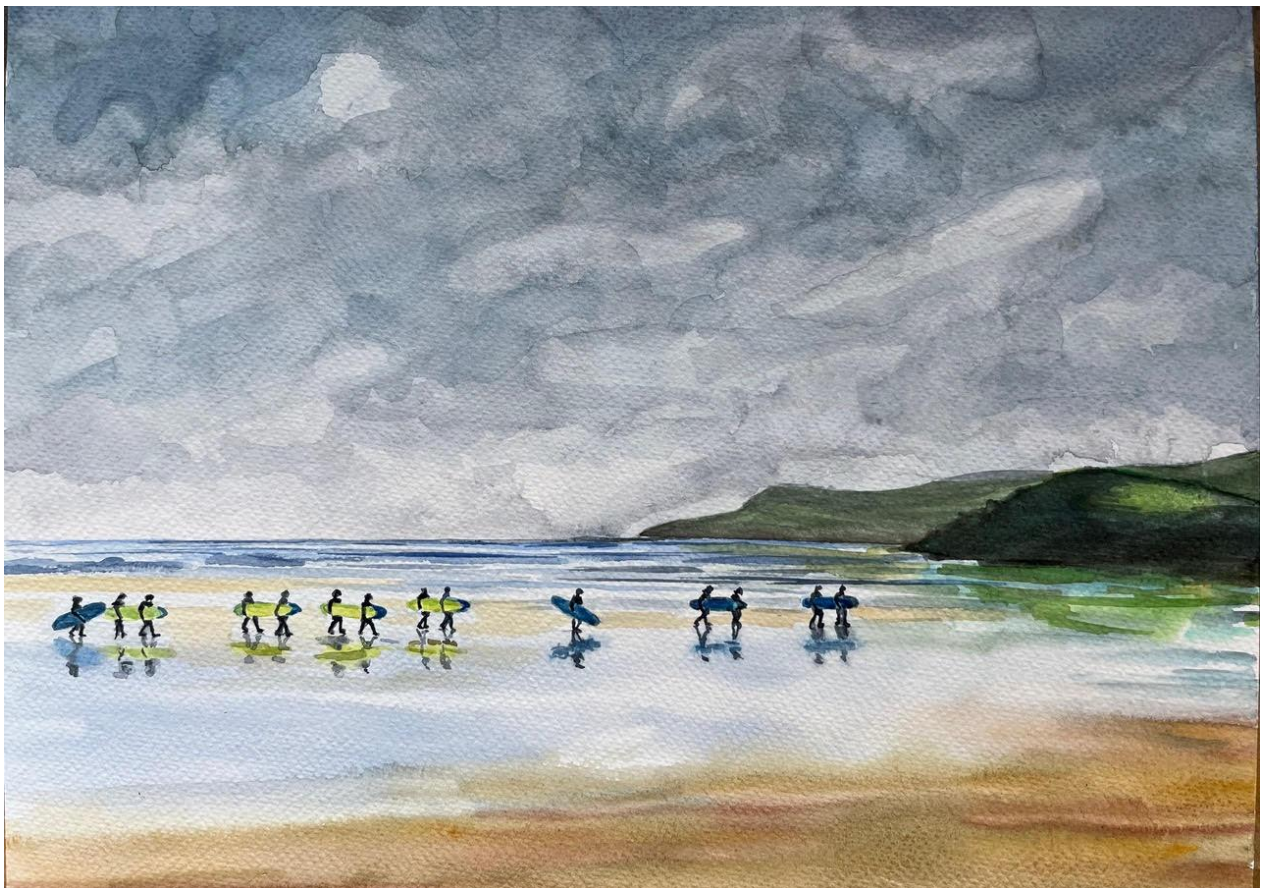
Goldfinch  
*Pete*



## Watery Watercolours

Watery watercolours below, by Michael M.





## Memories

At a recent Thursday meeting, we were talking about the Art Group in general and it started me wondering how long I had been a member. After some very interesting 'research' I found printed copies of many original 'Rainbows' for which many thanks go to Pete for starting this during the lockdown. Roxy and Beth used to set us projects which kept us painting at home during this difficult time and we sent these to be included in the next 'Rainbow'. The original founder was the well-known stained glass artist, Edward Payne, whose studio was at Box. Eventually an old diary showed that I had joined the Group in 2001 and the accompanying photos show some of my memories.

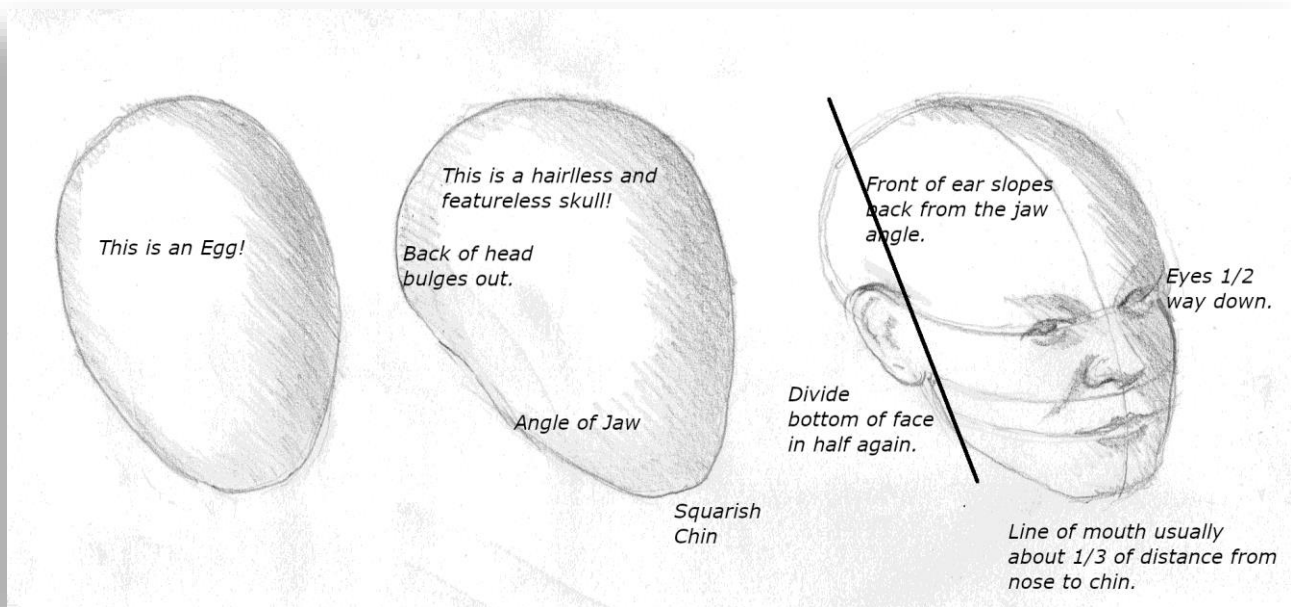
*Hilary K*





## Drawing Eyes

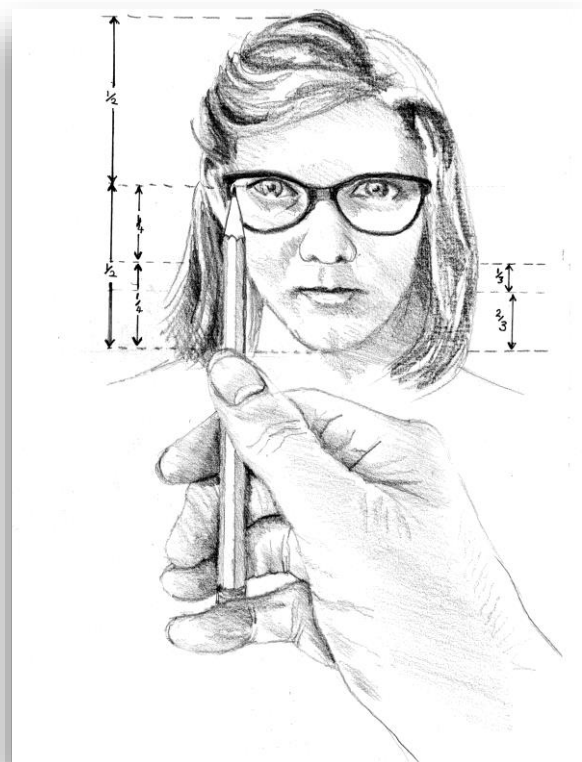
Back in January I wrote about drawing portraits, and promised some additional guidance on drawing facial features. This month, therefore, I shall talk about drawing eyes, because eyes tend to immediately attract our attention in a portrait and they therefore need to be convincing - as well as being, in my opinion, the most difficult feature to get absolutely right.



The eyes tend to be about halfway down the skull, and their centre line is usually just below the top of the ears. (But "likeness" comes from the minor differences to the rule.)

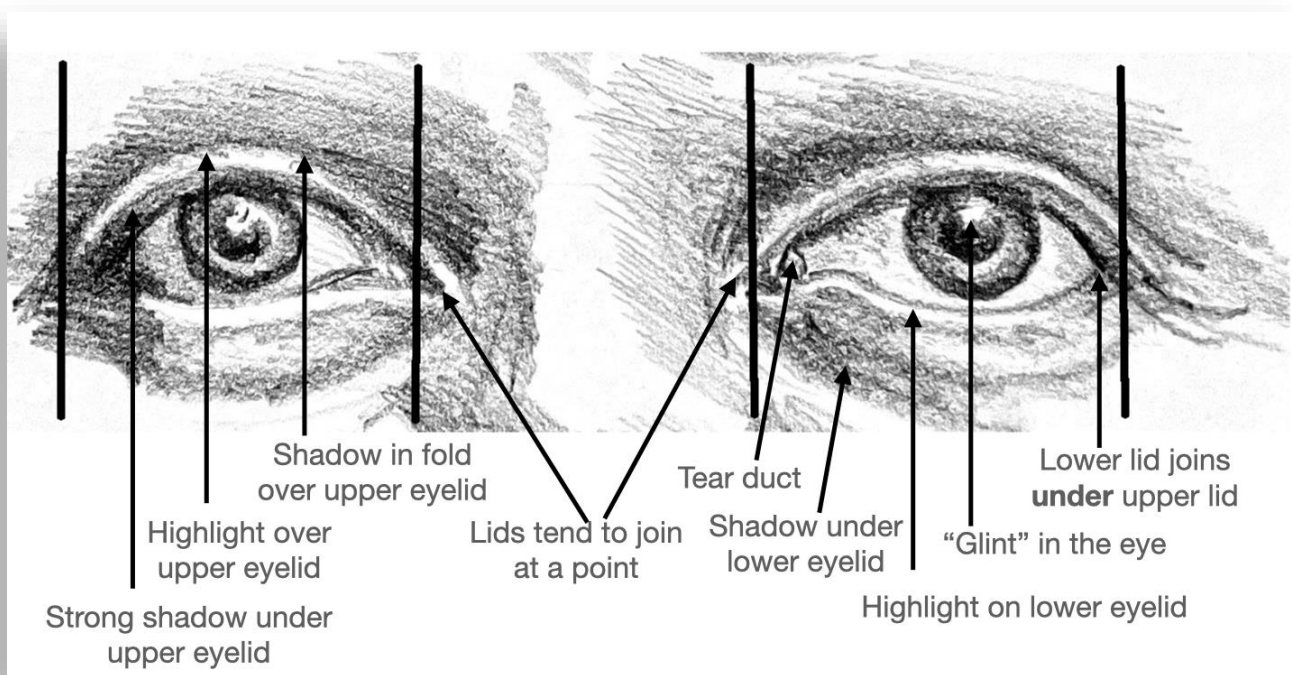
Firstly a bit of quick revision, in particular let us remind ourselves that the eyes tend to be about halfway down the head. (It is not an exact rule: men in particular tend to have bigger jaws than women and so their eyes tend to look a little higher - especially if they are bald!) Conversely, women may well have more hair, which pushes up the apparent top of the head. So **USE THE PENCIL TO MEASURE**.

The other thing we learned is that it is important to ensure that the line joining the eyes appears perpendicular to the symmetry line down the front of the face. (Of course, as in the upper image, when you are looking at the head from the side, and above, it will necessarily be tilted on the paper, and perspective may mean that the angles are a little distorted. Use the pencil to help you see the angles correctly, as we discussed back in January.) You do, occasionally, come across people whose faces are in truth not symmetrical around the centre line. Often you will produce a more flattering portrait if you distort the drawing in the direction of the normal appearance - but if you go for strict accuracy you will need to draw very well to avoid making it look like a mistake.



The distance between the point of the chin and the line joining the eyes is typically about half the height of the head.

You can see in the second image that the inner corners of the eyes are separated by one eye's width. This is a good rule of thumb. Real faces do, of course, show minor variations from the general rule, and it is often the minor variations from the average that create a specific likeness.



These are, however, generally *minor* variations. Here, below, is a more detailed illustration: The most common mistake one sees with novice portraitists are a strong outline round the eye that appears like an almond shape cut-out of a face mask. So let us look in detail at the structure of real eyes. Note that the inner corner of the eye does seem to come to slightly turned-down point, while at the outer side, the bottom lid often seems to disappear under the edge of the upper eyelid. This is normal for people of European descent, but it is sometimes not the case for Asians, where upper and lower lids may meet differently. Care is required to represent this correctly.

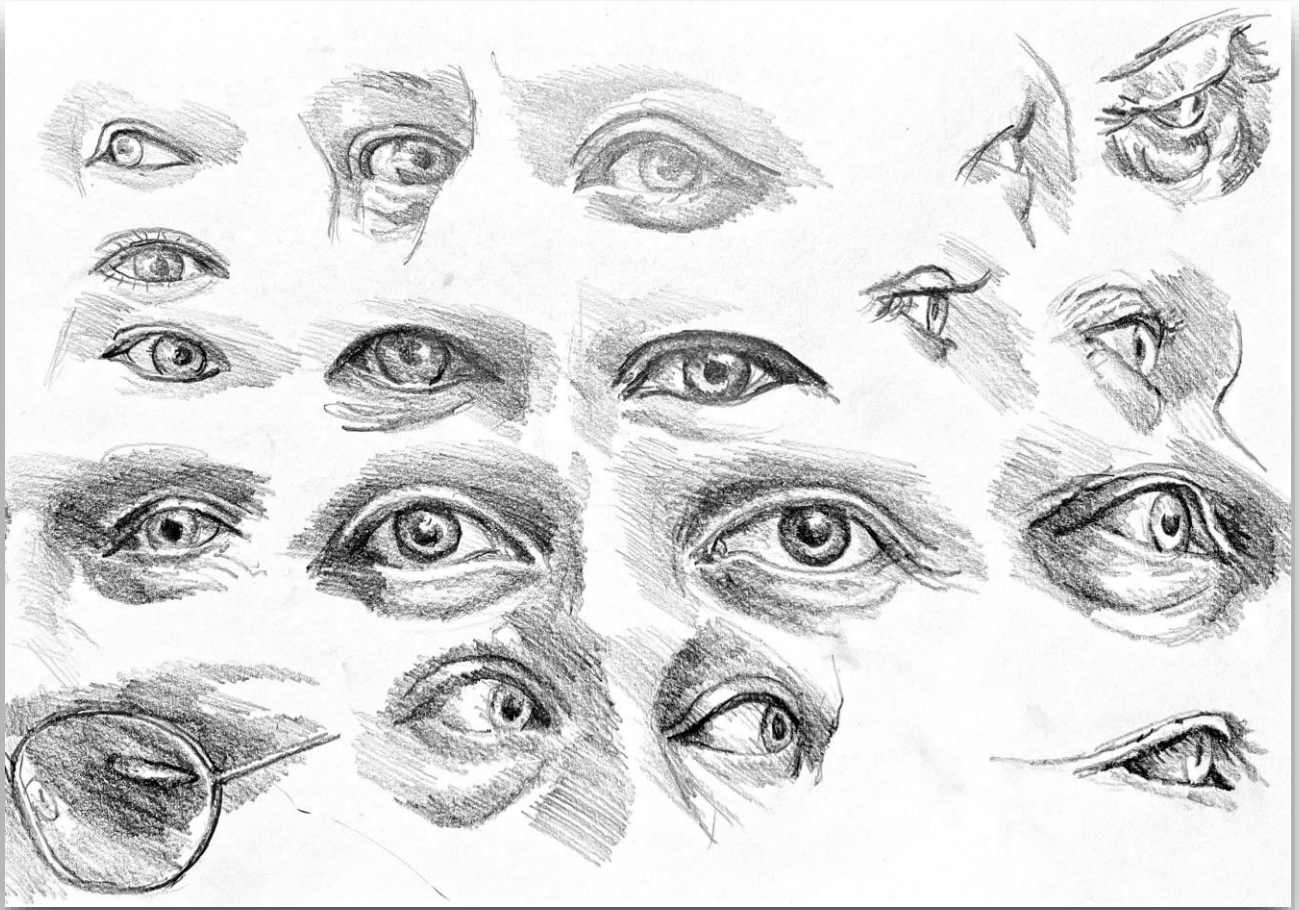
It is important to get the light and shadow right. In the example, incident light is coming from high to the right, so it is illuminating the top of the upper eyelid (leaving a shadow under its edge) while lighting up the edge of the lower eyelid and producing a shadow on the outside. In fact, the light on the edge of the lower lid often merges into the white of the eye and there may be no clear line separating eye and eyelid. Drawing that line too heavily (or at all) can be a mistake.

You rarely see the entire iris: usually either the bottom or the top is obscured by an eyelid (drawing the full circle actually makes the subject look surprised). If the subject is particularly looking up or down (or to either side) you may see a good deal less. While the outside edge of the iris may be sharp the dark rim tends to merge to a lighter shade inside. Even the pupil does not have a particularly sharp edge, just very slightly fuzzy. I do not use the point of the pencil here.

Putting a little "glint" near the pupil usually provides a "lift" to the portrait and attracts viewer attention to the eyes (good!). In fact, it should be the lightest tone in the entire portrait, if possible (particularly with a painting). The cornea (the "white of the eye") (is in fact rarely white, but often a slightly blue-grey (or even a little pink after an excess of enjoyment the previous evening)). Toning it down just a little emphasises the glint.

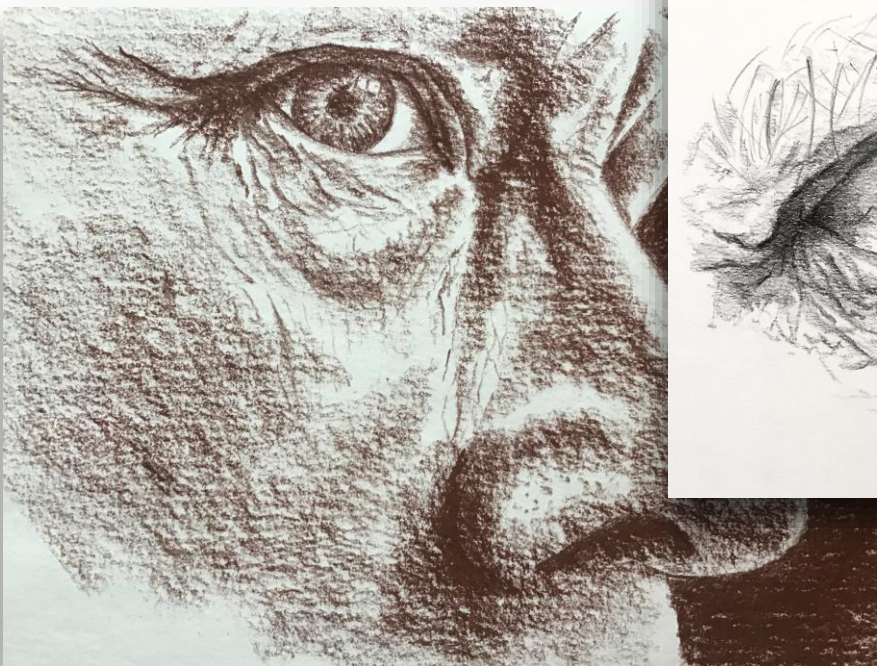
Individual eyes do, of course differ quite a lot from the generic sketch above, particularly in whether they have visible folds above and below the eyelids (old people can have quite a few while young Asians may have none at all). It partly depends on how much subcutaneous fat lies around the eye and it can make the difference between "bulgy" eyes and those which do look a bit like a cut-out in a mask. In addition some people have very prominent brow ridges and/or large noses which may create lots of shadow.





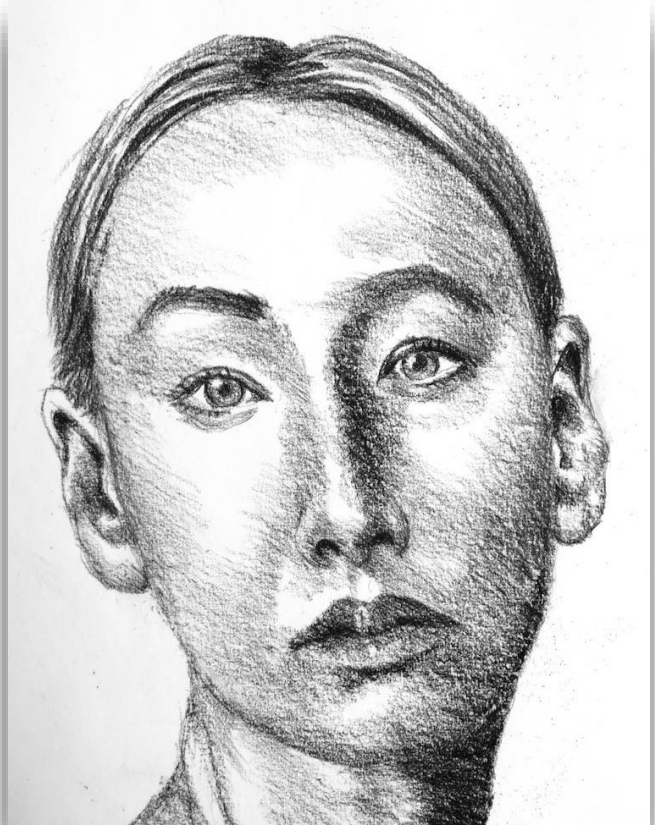
Above, I have reproduced a sheet with lots of practice eyes that I did some time ago. It is worth doing something like this from time to time, based on image of friends and family or images from newspapers and magazines, (The professional photographer knows that getting the eyes clear and *precisely* in focus is what sells his product.)

Here are some more examples from my collection. Firstly self-portraits, with some of my wrinkles - with the nice touch that you can see the image of a window in the highlight.





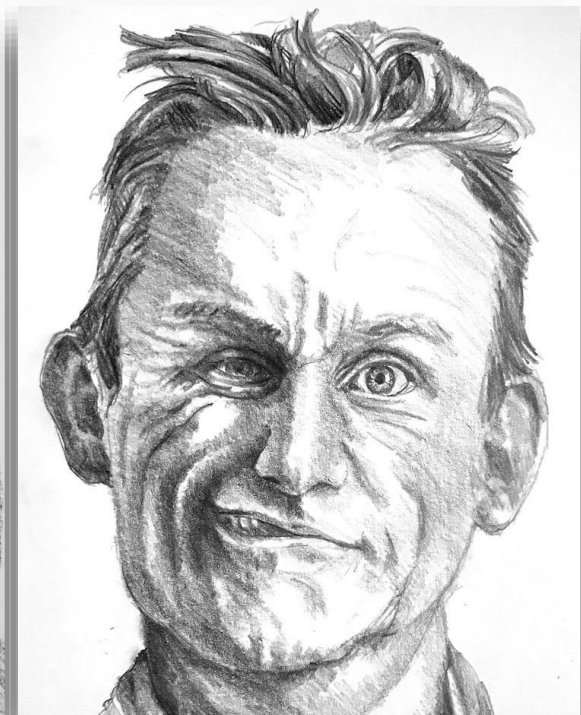
Lighting from below.



Genuine "almond" eyes.



Surprise!



The "wink" - eyebrows NOT at the same level, even though eyes are horizontal.

The next four images, above, are from tricky poses - all drawn from Raw Umber Studios "Model

Pack” Reference photographs.



“Jim” a colourful lady from Minch

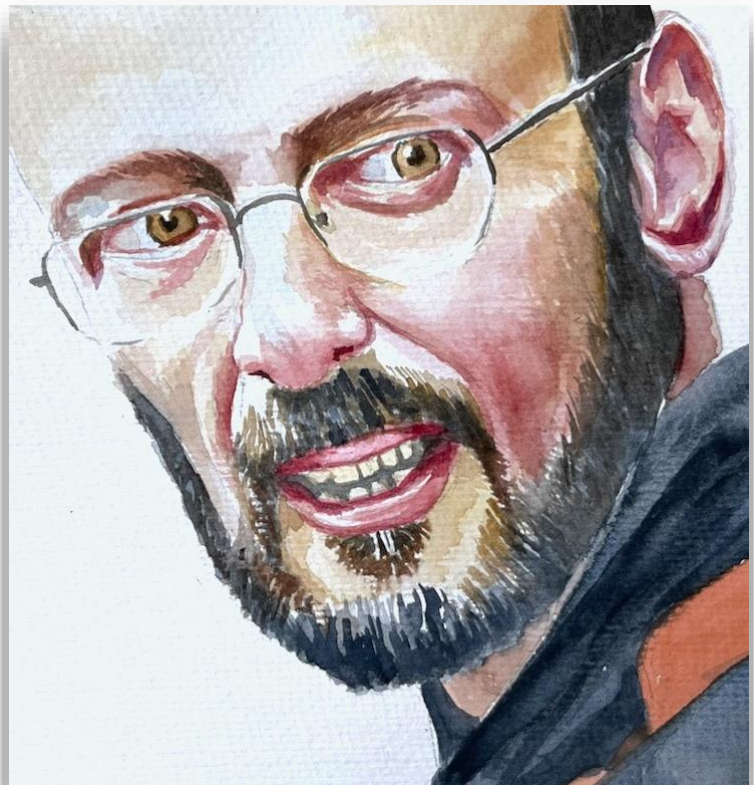
What do we do about spectacles? You can love them or hate them (and make your mind up because we tend to get a lot of spectacled faces to draw at Box Art).

The first problem is that if you draw the face and then try to put the specs on later, drawing *around* the eyes (which may be in not quite the right place) the spectacles often look very odd, perhaps forced into a distorted, non-symmetrical shape. We *know* that specs are symmetrical. and that is the way they have to look!

My normal choice is to roughly sketch in the outline of the head (with eyes about halfway down) and then draw the spectacles very carefully, ensuring that the left and right lenses really look the same size and are connected on a “horizontal” (allowing for head tilt etc.). *Then* I draw the detail of the eyes either inside or around the spectacles. A well drawn pair of specs can then provide a helpful, solid framework around which you can build the rest of the detail in the face, and this can really help you to get everything correctly positioned and in the right proportion.

There is a further dilemma: strong spectacle lenses distort eyes. For short-sighted people it make the eyes look smaller than they really are in relation to the rest of the face, and for someone like me with eight diopter lenses it is quite a bit smaller. So, do you draw exactly what you see, or do you draw what the eye would look like without the specs (i.e. a bit larger than they actually appear to you through the lens).

I do both, depending on circumstances - but mostly I draw the eyes the natural size you would expect with “weak” lenses. It usually looks more convincing. If you choose to do “small eyes” then you have to do the drawing really well to convince, and impress the viewer with your exact observation (otherwise they think that the portrait is



Marin - local bee-keeper.

just badly drawn. Moreover, it does not tend to flatter the subject even if done with precision, so be prepared for an unfavourable reaction from the model.

Some spectacles have thick frames and here you need to take care that you do not make them too thick and dominant on the face. Others make have minimum metal surrounds (or even none at all) These are, in my view the hardest to get right. In the watercolour portrait above on the right, I have partly created the outline of the lenses with just a little black in a few places, but also a rim of light that usually also appears at the edge of spectacle lenses.

In summary, getting the eyes right is indeed very difficult, but if you do put some effort into mastering this feature you are a long way towards giving your portraits some “life” and a connection with the viewer.

All artwork by the author.

*Michael*



**View from the Kitchen Michael M**

## Take a Vote

The Art Group committee recently held a meeting to discuss among other things, by how much the annual subscription should be increased. For information, it's been held at £55 since 2017 but is overdue an increase. Last year, a £500 grant allowed us to continue sessions throughout this summer and keep the subs unchanged, but they will need be revised this year mainly due to increased hall rental and tutor fees.

We've come up with two options and are asking members to let us know their preference:

1. Increase the subs to £64 per annum, and drop the summer opening. This would give us 34 sessions during the year, of which 33 would be tutored. (There's no tutor for the AGM session). This is effectively £1.88 per session, which includes teas, but would be a great disappointment to those who are keen to support the summer sessions.
2. Increase the subs to £70 per annum and retain the summer opening, which is currently appreciated by a good number of members. A minimum average of 12 members per session was suggested at the beginning of the summer as a target, and this has been exceeded so far. With the summer opening, we would have 47 active sessions next year which equates to £1.49 per session, again with 33 tutored sessions.

Assuming we have 40 members, Option 1 allows our finances to break even (more or less) next year, but Option 2 incurs a small loss which is readily manageable from existing resources.

The reason we're asking this question now is twofold: it allows all members to have their say, rather than only those who turn up for the AGM; and it will enable a new set of promotional leaflets to be prepared in time for the start of our year in early September, with the hope of attracting some new members.

So, please email your preference to me at [peter@lyonspace.co.uk](mailto:peter@lyonspace.co.uk) rather than replying to artbox. If you send your reply by a cut off date of 10<sup>th</sup> August, I'd be grateful.

Pete

## Nearby Events in August

**Aleph Contemporary, Station Road, Stroud, GL5 3AR** 6th July - 25th August Fridays & Saturdays, 10am - 4pm

**Tetbury Goods Shed** Nature's Garden. Paintings by Angie Spencer Wed 26 Jun 2024 to Sun 11 Aug Wednesday through Sunday, 10am – 4pm

## Shepherd's Hut

I have recently finished a pastel painting of the Shepherd's Hut, Majorca, requested by friends I see each year on the island.

It is a beautiful place and I can understand why they chose this particular place for the painting, situated in the south west of the island, close to Puerto Andraitx. The hut can be seen on a lovely circular walk around the craggy hills overlooking the coastal village of Sant Elm, and with a magnificent view towards the little island of La Dragonera. This island is uninhabited, except for a small marine research station. A ferry boat sails across from late Winter to Autumn to enable visitors to walk the length of the island and enjoy the seabirds and wild flowers, plus the beautiful view towards the shepherd's hut on the mainland.

*Jill*

