

A Brush With Art

By Suzanne Stokes

Last week I explained how having a hobby is good for you at so many levels. 'Changing the mental chip' from having to work to being able to relax and learn something new is often difficult, but can be a life saver. It's a sad fact that some people who look forward to their retirement go into a mental decline when it actually happens, and a proportion die because they can't cope with the enormous change of mind set. They feel useless, at a loose end, or lonely, and the TV becomes their window on the world, the scotch bottle their best friend. But retirement should be an exciting and challenging time of life, so grab it with relish!

I am going to be focusing on the arts for the next few weeks, both as a practical hobby – and also I'll be giving you a resume of how and why art developed, and how to look at pictures in a gallery. More people visit art galleries every week than go to football matches – so I think it's a given that most of us love to look at pictures.

Let's assume you're one of the many people who say 'I would love to be able to draw, but I was so discouraged at school I gave it up.' Sometimes people have come to a class with very low expectations of what they could achieve – because no one ever taught them to look at things properly – and we never do look closely at anything unless we have a reason – like trying to draw it! After a few weeks students begin to tell me they look at everything – not just the things they are trying to draw – with a different eye. They notice shape, form, colour, shadows, proportions and it's like being given an extra sense.

It's important to learn drawing to a reasonable level before throwing yourself into painting. It's a building block – and if you bypass it, everything else you attempt is likely to be a disappointment. It doesn't take long to get the basics and you don't need to spend a lot of money to get started. A drawing pad – even some copier paper will do – a couple of pencils and a rubber, and you're in business. Give yourself something simple to get started - maybe a wine bottle, glass, and a couple of pieces of fruit. Arrange them so they make an attractive group and then look at the spaces in between the objects – the all important negative spaces. Get those right, and the rest is much easier! How much taller is the wine bottle than the glass – is it fatter or thinner? Would the apple fit into the glass – or it is larger? Lots of questions to consider. It doesn't matter how good or bad your drawing is – it's a brick in the wall and no one is going to judge you on it. The next one will be better still, and you will begin to understand the excitement of being able to recreate a three dimensional subject on paper.



Once you have the basic outlines and the proportions right, you'll start to notice which side the light is coming from, throwing shadows on the objects, and on the table. Putting in shadows gives form and shape and suddenly, your drawing begins to have vitality. Give it a go. You might discover a talent you never knew you had, and one which will give you joy and satisfaction for the rest of your life.

Suzanne teaches art in Quesada, La Siesta and Los Montesinos. For more information call 965 724 283 or see www.sue-stokes.co.uk