

**FEATURE** EA Arts

# East Anglia's creative spirit



■ Left, Hellebores by Maryanne Nicholls.



■ Below, Marguerites by Patrick George.



■ Above, Red Yellow and Green by Patrick George.



■ Right, Lemons Hot and Cold by Patrice Lombardi.

## EA Arts

andrew.clarke@archant.co.uk

Suffolk-based art curators Richard Cobbold and Emma Judd are celebrating their 10th anniversary with two new exhibitions which they hope will put East Anglian art in a national spotlight. Arts editor Andrew Clarke met up with them.

**A**rt curators Richard Cobbold and Emma Judd are celebrating their tenth anniversary together with two new exhibitions which will combine to shine a spotlight on Suffolk and East Anglian Art.

Cobbold & Judd have spent the last decade championing East Anglian art and instead of promoting solo shows have opted to match up experienced painters with talented newcomers in a series of exhibitions to challenge artists and surprise visitors.

This summer they celebrate their tenth anniversary with two new shows which will not only re-affirm what their artistic vision is all about but will also open up new creative opportunities for them.

Next week they are putting some of their most successful artists together for a joint exhibition at Orwell Park School and then during the first week of the Aldeburgh Festival they are opening up a new exhibition space beneath the Peter Pears Gallery off Aldeburgh High Street.

Emma said: "I really can't believe we are celebrating our 10th year together. What we wanted to do was put together a show that celebrated Suffolk and Suffolk artists."

"We are putting the show on in the magnificent Alston Room at Orwell Park School, Nacton, and we have chosen people who have all had a connection with us over the years."

"They will include people like Maggi Hambling, Maryanne Nicholls and Jill Barthorpe along with people who may not be as familiar, like Patrice Lombardi, an American now living in Wivenhoe."

"Patrice, who was trained in Boston, continues to exhibit in London and Italy. She produces very strong images. In all her paintings she strives to capture the essence of her subject. She works to transform a basket, a vase of peonies, a



■ Two Figures by Maryanne Nicholls.

"Suffolk is in a wonderful place, both geographically and creatively. We have so many fantastically creative people living and working here

butterfly, a cypress tree or a person into a statement that transcends reality. Subjects are chosen for their personal significance, their mystery, their form.

"They are incredibly vibrant. Twenty to 30 layers of paint are used to create rich, strong images. Light and colour are the vital components. Images emerge as much from an inner vision as from external observation giving them an air of heightened reality."

Richard added: "As ever our artists range from internationally respected figures to young artists at the start of their careers. The majority work and live in East Anglia and the intention of the show is to highlight the rich diversity of artistic life in Suffolk."

Richard said that celebrating the creative spirit of Suffolk was just as important as championing the coastal views or the big skies. "Suffolk is in a wonderful place both

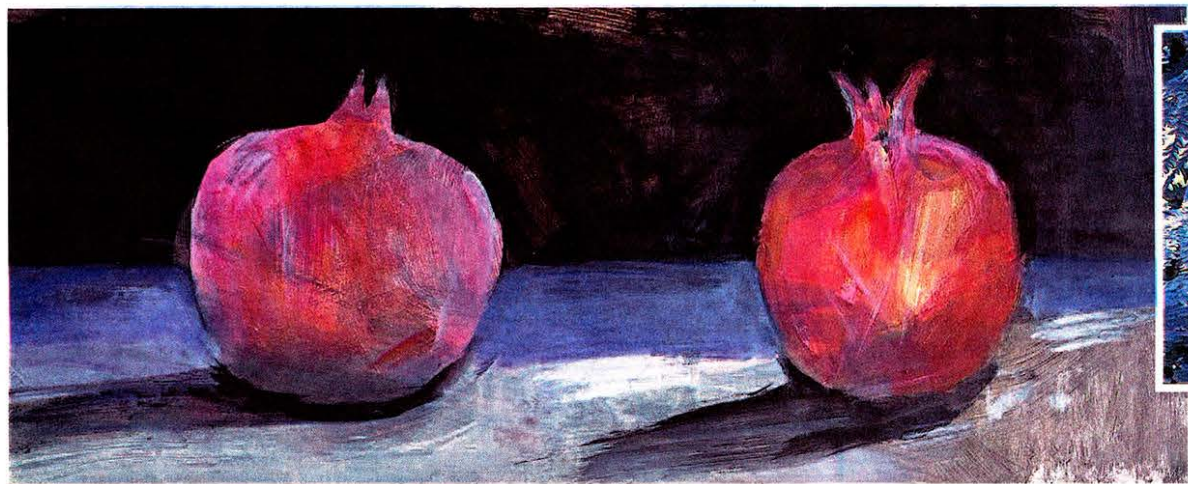


■ Tilia by Buckmaster French Etching on Lime leaves.

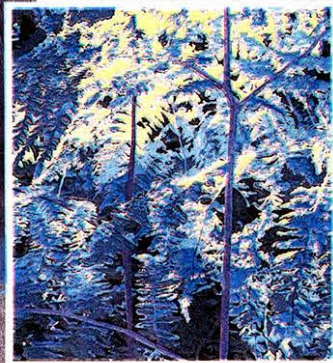
geographically and creatively. We have so many creative people living and working here, that Suffolk in recent years has really made a big impression on the contemporary art world.

"What we thought would be a good idea for this exhibition, which marks a significant anniversary, would be to show work from some of our faithful artists, people who have been very loyal to us over the years, and see how their work has

# celebrated by new gallery



■ Two Pomegranates Violet and Black by Patrice Lombardi. Below, Snowdrops by Jill Barthorpe.



■ Blue Brackens by Richard White.

changed – it's a wonderful opportunity to see how artists evolve and develop."

Among the artists on show in the exhibition are: Jason Gathorne-Hardy, Tori Lawrence, Gay Strutt, Delia Tournay-Godfrey, Wendy Brooke-Smith, John Burman and Nicky Brown.

Emma said that the exhibition also shows how established artists could also appear to become newcomers when their work dramatically changes direction. "If you look at Maryanne Nicholls, she is best known for her garden sculptures but she has been drawing recently at DanceEast. She been captivated by the movement of the dancers which has been translated into some quite dynamic, quite grabby, flower paintings."

Richard pointed out that Annabel Gault's work had also been transformed over the last couple of



years. "She is quite an exceptional talent. She made her name doing some very individual landscapes and now she is creating marvellous abstracts featuring some very rich colours. They are anchored in the

landscape still. She is very good at capturing the mood and the atmosphere of a place."

He said that Gault's new abstract paintings will be one of the attractions to their new summer show being staged as part of the Aldeburgh Festival.

"It will be the first time that Annabel has shown these new works outside London, and so, it's quite a coup for Suffolk."

Another coup will be the exhibition of recent work by Suffolk artist Patrick George who lives just outside Bury St Edmunds. "He a distinguished painter. He was a professor at The Slade. He's now 92 and the critics say that his work now is better than it's ever been. He's putting a lifetime's experience to work and he's producing the best work of a very long, distinguished career. So this will be another major draw for the Festival exhibition."

The Aldeburgh exhibition is being staged in The Garage Gallery, a small intimate space, which has been converted by Aldeburgh Music out of a disused garage.

Richard said: "It has a slightly austere look which makes for a nice contrast with the open feel of the Peter Pears Gallery upstairs, so you can show different types of work."

"It has a very contemporary feel. It feels very much like a London gallery. So as it's between the sea and the High Street, it's in a perfect position to attract people attending the festival or who are doing their shopping in town."

He said that one of the strengths of Cobbold and Judd was that they were art-lovers without a gallery.

"I think the fact we don't have a gallery ourselves is a positive bonus. It allows us to be flexible and choose the right space for the work. Some shows demand an intimate

space, others need something grander."

Both Emma and Richard agree that there is a strange unspoken alchemy at work when it comes to choosing work and artists to show. Largely it is based on gut reaction.

"Sometimes we see work on the wall somewhere – either at an artist's studio or on the wall of a house or at other times an artist comes to us and shows us their work and we then make a decision."

"There are no hard and fast rules other than the fact that we like there to be some connection with Suffolk."

■ Cobbold and Judd's Tenth Anniversary show is at Orwell Park School, Nacton, on Saturday April 25-26. The show will continue by appointment until Thursday April 30 and will include a lecture by Buckmaster French on the Tree Portraits series on Tuesday April 28 at 7pm.

■ The Aldeburgh Festival exhibition will be at The Garage Gallery, High Street, Aldeburgh from June 12-18.

### How did it all begin for Richard and Emma?

Richard Cobbold and Emma Judd joined forces at the beginning of 2006 when Richard was toying with the idea of retiring. He was approached by Emma who was looking for a new challenge.

She studied History of Art at Bristol before researching and making a series of art documentaries for the BBC. Richard had got his start in the arts world curating a series of touring exhibitions which were designed to celebrate living artists. The exhibitions started at The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge before travelling to venues around the eastern region, including Christchurch Mansion, before ending up in London. The last two finished their run at the Royal Academy.

"Putting an exhibition together is lots of hard work and in 2005 I was on the verge of retiring. I had

put on a photography exhibition at Hintlesham Hall and Emma was there as a guest and asked to be put on the mailing list as she had just moved to Suffolk.

"I said: 'Well, I don't think I'll be doing any more'. She went away and then 20 minutes later she was back saying: 'Is there anything I can do to help? I have lots of ideas', and that is how we met."

Cobbold & Judd's first exhibition as a team was in February 2006 and featured work by Mary Fedden, Annabel Gault and Luke Elwes. Although the pair showcase work of national and international renown, the vast majority have a strong link with East Anglia - many of them working and living in Suffolk.

Over the last ten years they have developed a strong reputation for showcasing first-rate contemporary

art - art which puts Suffolk firmly on the map.

Emma said: "Over the years we have strived to show a wide range of work by both internationally respected artists, well-known local painters and most excitingly those at the very start of their careers."

"I think the main difference between Richard's solo exhibitions and what we do now can be seen in the variety of artists we now champion. Richard has always had the most amazing portfolio of well-established artists which he has been promoting since they started out many years previously - people like Maggi Hambling, Mary Fedden and Elinor Bellingham-Smith but I knew a young group, more up and coming, so that's what I brought to the partnership."

Richard added: "We have a great

balance now and she brought a much younger crowd to the exhibitions and they all love art."

He said that when it comes to curating an exhibition they look for quality of work first and foremost. "We look for artists that complement one another and work that provides a contrast."

"But, having said that, we don't over-think it. It's intuitive. We look at the artists, we look at the work and see what works and what doesn't."

Emma was thrilled that the quality of their shows matched anything being displayed across the country. She said: "What I think is exciting is that the artists we show by and large are usually represented by London galleries and you wouldn't normally see them here but they love exhibiting in Suffolk because that's where they live and work."



■ Richard Cobbold and Emma Judd are celebrating their 10th anniversary as art curators with two exhibitions celebrating East Anglian artists.