

## **The Society of Women Artists 2010**

### **Women's work will not be accepted in London exhibitions.**

That is how it was for the majority of women artists before 1857.

Only a few brave souls dared run the gauntlet of public opinion, shocked by the very idea of women exhibiting their artwork. "Unseemly, my dear".

But there were many women artists desperate to show their work alongside their male counterparts. Eventually they were forced to go it alone.

In 1857 they opened their first art exhibition in London, and began what is now the Society of Women Artists (SWA). Some women still felt the need to sign their work with a pseudonym, such was the potential scandal. That all happened 46 years before the Suffragette movement was formed.

Would artists today put up with such nonsense? Even in the 1950's it was not an equal playing field. Rose Hilton gained a first at the Royal College of Art in London, but was told by her future husband, the now famous Roger Hilton, that there was only room for one artist in the family, and guess what? It was him! Since his death in 1975 Rose Hilton has become a highly respected artist, having a major exhibition at Tate St Ives in 2008.

So what about today? Paul Wynter, runs the highly successful art gallery on the UK web called 'londonart'. He says he has more male artists than women on his books, but the women sell best!

So is it acceptable to have a women only Society in 2010?

Historically it would be hard to break the Society's 150 plus years of continuous London Exhibitions.

The SWA has become a highly competitive forum for women artists. Last year a record number entered their work for the open selection, and the competition was fierce as hanging space is limited at the prestigious Mall Galleries in central London. Uniquely among societies even Member's work is submitted for selection and no one is guaranteed hanging space.

SWA President Barbara Penketh Simpson confirms: "The Society is constantly developing as a diverse, vital, and forward-looking organisation seeking to promote talented women artists."

Even in these tough financial times the Society is well supported by its Members and non-members, and those who give Awards and Sponsorship. The SWA is fortunate in having an active Patron, HRH Princess Michael of Kent, who will open this year's exhibition.

The Society of Women Artists Exhibition will open to the public from:

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July to Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2010

The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1Y 5BD

For more information: [www.society-women-artists.org.uk](http://www.society-women-artists.org.uk)

Painting:

Artist: Soraya French

The Rehearsal, mixed media, 41x51cm

