PAINTING DEMONSTRATION ON 10th APRIL

BY PAUL MATHEWS

Paul is an accomplished wildlife artist. He usually works in oils but has recently started to work in watercolour. He demonstrated his skills by painting a portrait of a fox which he had photographed at the British Wildlife Centre near Gatwick Airport. He has developed a method of painting in watercolour which employs a number of oil painting techniques ie blocking in, underpainting and adding glazes.

Paul started the demonstration by copying his photo taking a lot of time to ensure that his drawing was accurate. He used a soft pencil and he removed any mistakes with a putty rubber.

Paul used Burnt Sienna, Sap Green, Burnt Umber, Yellow Ochre, Cobalt Blue, Brick Red and Paynes Grey in his painting. He started by blocking in the main areas, making sure he reserved the white areas. He used a size 6 flat brush and made sure his brush strokes followed the form of the animal even at this stage. He avoided painting detail at this point.

He did introduce the concept of "core shadow" This concept is that where a dark and a light shape abutted each other there is an illusion that the light shape turns subtly darker. He employed this technique in his painting where the white fur met the brown. Paul demonstrated the use of underpainting in some dark areas by using a dark Cobalt Blue and when dry adding a glaze of Paynes Grey. This produces a rich tone. He painted a green background to his painting to give it a lift and also used small patches of green to enliven his work.

Paul now changed to a size 4 flat brush and started to paint in more detail. His marks continued to follow the form but now he was focussing on the details of the eyes and ears and he was working in layers. Paynes Grey was increasingly used from now on. He also returned to the green background, darkening it in places but not everywhere to avoid making the fox look like a cut-out.

Lastly he returned to putting in shadow under the chin and neck using Paynes Grey. The aim of doing this was to encourage the viewer to focus on the face and to discourage the viewers gaze shooting out of the picture.

The painting was almost complete at the close of the session which was very impressive considering the available time.

Paul with the finished picture

The finished picture