



Learning To See

Proving Age Is No Barrier When It Comes To Art

87 year old portrait artist Bernard Willems of North Wales Circle, draws and paints people with all their uniqueness and personality, and his passion has been to help others interested in art to learn how to do the same.

Bernard, a Catenian since 1972 – in Wilmslow Circle and then in Prestatyn, North Wales – has been a professional portrait artist throughout his life, and has painted the portraits of people from all different backgrounds. 11 years ago he founded the Willems Fine Art Society, aiming to teach people how to draw and paint that most challenging of subjects – people (few artists excel at portraiture in comparison with the vast numbers of landscape artists).

background. In addition this helps them see and appreciate the beauty of the world, and God's creation.

Every person has a soul worthy of expression, and Bernard is happy to share his talent and skills with the members of the community, irrespective of their natural ability. He helps his students learn how to open their eyes, and then translate this into art.

Says Bernard: "I was born in Banbury, Oxfordshire in 1922, to an English mother and a Belgian father.

The family moved back to Belgium when I was three years old. So I learned to speak French and Flemish.

I qualified at the academy of fine art and finished my study in time with the invasion of Belgium by the German forces on the 10th May 1940.

Having been born in England, I was a



"That's very good"

I became President of North Wales Circle (125) in Province 4 in 1990-91 and 1991-92 and also in 2003-4 and 2004-5.

I was also Provincial Councillor of North Wales Circle for six years.

In 1991 I started my "Willems Fine Art Society" which I teach free of charge three times a week, Monday afternoon, Wednesday morning and Wednesday afternoon. A total of 37 students.

PS I painted the portrait of the 2001-02 Grand President of the Association, Dick Jones and also Past Grand President Gerald Soane and his wife Pauline. Also our Bishop Regan, Prince Philippe, heir to the throne in Belgium, and his sister Princess Astrid, and many more."



"A little more shade I think"

Bernard believes that if he can teach his students to 'see' the world in the same way as he does, there is no reason why his students cannot achieve the same results and beyond!

Wanting to share his passion, Bernard has been providing Master classes free of charge. He now has 37 students, with ages ranging from 23 to 84. Indeed, Bernard has had to double the size of his studio to accommodate his students!

In teaching people portraiture, Bernard incorporates the study of physiognomy, personality and temperament so that his students can bring out the real essence of their subject – not purely physical likeness. His students learn how to see and appreciate the beauty in every person, irrespective of social standing, wealth or

British Citizen who could speak both languages, so I was asked to join the Resistance. During the five years of occupation I was arrested by the Gestapo 22 times.

I returned to England in June 1945, and did my military service in Dover with the Army Education Department teaching Art and French.

I married Nancy in 1946 and we now have five children and 10 grand children. I moved to Manchester in 1957, and joined the faculty of Manchester University as a lecturer, and also joined the Catenian Association in 1972.

I became President of Wilmslow Circle (250) in 1980-81 in Province 17.

When I retired from lecturing I moved to Prestatyn in 1985.



A corner of the art studio