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a European vantage point, perhaps. Goss's paintings in various media are large and atmospheric. Rather like Joyce Gunn Cairns, he avoids being too definite, letting his work suggest but not define what he is recording. Several of the works here are interiors, and one is titled *The Smickel Inn*. There is a still life, a view of a terrace, and a rather wonderful painting of sparkling light on a swimming pool. There is also a group of smaller, freely painted watercolours. Altogether it's a good month for painting.

Henry Kondracki to 19 November; Tom Wilson, Ann Ross, Joyce Gunn Cairns and Jane Askey to 18 November; Nick Goss to 16 December

Painting the town

From Henry Kondracki's views of Edinburgh at the RSA to Joyce Gunn Cairns's engaging character studies at the Smithy Gallery, good painting abounds, writes Duncan Macmillan

Edinburgh is a much-painted city and part of the display in the new Scottish wing of the National Gallery is devoted to its image. Starting with James Norie's view of the city painted around 1745, it includes Alexander Nasmyth's memorable painting of Princes Street with the RSA building under construction and alongside it his view of the city from Calton Hill with the citizens enjoying the late sunset of midsummer. Now, in the Academicians' Gallery within the same RSA building, **Joie de Vivre** is an exhibition of the work of Henry Kondracki and he can claim a place in that same distinguished tradition.

Henry Kondracki: Joie de Vivre
Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh
★★★★

Tom Wilson: Miscellany and Mugshots
Open Eye, Edinburgh
★★★★

Ann Ross: by leaves we live
Open Eye, Edinburgh
★★★★

Joyce Gunn Cairns & Jane Askey
Smithy Gallery, Blanefield
★★★★

Nick Goss: Smickel Inn, Balcony of Europe
Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh
★★★★

Fife. The sky is pink to the north, but in the foreground the road is shiny with recent rain. In Hanover Street, Rain, an Edinburgh bus splashes through the traffic on a wet street and the spire of the Tolbooth Kirk (now better known as The Hub) is lost in the murky sky.

But although Kondracki is good at rain and murk – he even paints the Mound seen through the rain-splashed window of a bus – he also captures many other moods. In Portobello Beach, for instance, the sea and sky are blue and the sand golden while Blue Holyrood is a misty view from the foot of Arthur's Seat across to Holyrood and Calton Hill. Kondracki also goes indoors, however, and one striking image is of the interior of a cinema with Casablanca on the screen.

There are also several works by Kondracki on view at the Open Eye. He is not the main act, but is there, perhaps, as a gentle reminder that, as the RSA expands its commercial activities with Academicians' Gallery, the organisation should be careful not to upset the delicate economy of art. It was galleries like the Open Eye, or for most of two centuries, the Scottish Gallery, or Compass in Glasgow, that took the financial risk to give openings to artists like Kondracki. These galleries are the vital root of eventual artistic success. Reasonably, they expect to reap its reward, but if the root is starved of the vital nourishment ultimate success provides, the RSA might find it has nothing to show.



Clockwise from main: Casablanca at the Cameo, by Henry Kondracki; Caring For Her, by Joyce Gunn Cairns; Winter Evening Walk, Edinburgh, by Jane Askey; installation view of Smickel Inn by Nick Goss

The Open Eye was begun by Tom and Pam Wilson in 1982 and later passed to Keith and Jilly Dobson. It has a distinguished record of investing in new talent and nurturing it to success. As well as a gallery director, however, Tom Wilson himself is an artist and **Miscellany and Mugshots**, currently showing in the gallery, is a selection of his recent work. Tom is a miniaturist. Many of the works here are barely six inches square and few are more than a foot on their longest dimension. In the tradition of the miniaturist, many are pocket-sized portraits. *Mug Shots*, presented as a single work, for instance, consists of around 60 miniatures hung

together. All in pencil, they are mostly versions of familiar faces, whether from photographs or old masters. Here are Picasso, Francis Bacon and Stanley Spencer alongside the Mona Lisa and famous faces by Rubens, Velazquez, Ingres or Lucian Freud. Other works in crayon or watercolour render similar images by the likes of Vermeer, Rembrandt or Velazquez in colour, but there are also still-lives. Chillies, mushrooms, windfall apples, nuts, stones and beach-combings and other things are all exquisitely described. The biggest picture here, however, is *The Oenophile's Day Off*, a composition of several hundred drawn corks of wine bottles, some distinguished names and vintages clearly legible on them. Not so much a day off for the oenophile, perhaps, but rather a busy day.

Alongside Wilson, the Open Eye is showing **by leaves we live**, the delicately poetic works of Ann Ross. She paints in watercolour. Some pictures are collections of leaves painted individually, much as Tom Wilson approaches still-life. Mostly, however, she paints birds and animals among leaves and flowers, always striking an exquisite balance between pattern and atmosphere as, for instance, in *Between Two Hedges*, in which two hares run through morning mist.

The Smithy Gallery in Blanefield, north of Glasgow, also has an admirable record of supporting artists and is currently showing work by **Joyce Gunn Cairns and Jane Askey**. Gunn Cairns's works here are mostly profoundly sympathetic portraits of people. Her *Dolly*, for instance, is a picture of a child with a doll. *Peacemaker* is a woman with dove, but even when she paints cats, an anxious-

looking bear or a leaping fox, we feel what matters is individuality. A good many of her sitters are in fact painted holding cats, *Love Knows no Bounds*, for instance, or *The Love of Red Cats*, and so in them we get a sense of the relationship between sitter and pet as in some sense one of equals. Most of her work is in oil on board, but her drawing is always apparent and she uses oil very thinly and loosely, almost like watercolour, avoiding its power of definition or of rendering solid colour. The result is to suggest how, as she explores her subject visually, the visual and the emotional cannot be separated. Feeling is too delicate and evanescent to be pinned down by sharp drawing or solid colour. Without being impressionist her work suggests, nevertheless, the impression made by the interaction of the emotional and the visual.

Jane Askey's work showing alongside is nicely complementary. It is all still-life or landscape, painted loosely, but with vivid colour, as in the still-life *Willow Pattern Spring Blossom*, or in *Ultramarine Sky and Apple Blossom*. She also chimes with Henry Kondracki, however, in lovely ink drawings of Edinburgh, such as *Edinburgh Blizzard*, *Bruntsfield Looking East*, or *Winter Evening Edinburgh Walk*.

The Ingleby Gallery is another important independent gallery, although it has stood a little outside the main art economy of Scotland and has tended to draw both its artists and clients from further afield. The current show, **Smickel Inn, Balcony of Europe**, is, for instance, of work by Anglo-Dutch artist, Nick Goss. The inn the show is named after is in Rotterdam Harbour on the edge of the North Sea,

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