

A DESIGNING WOMAN

Further to this edition's theme of belonging to and exhibiting with Pershore Arts, we have an interview with one of our newest recruits. Having retired from a successful career in design, **Carol Stiff** has been able to take up new artistic pursuits. She says:

"I became interested in Product Design while I was studying in my Foundation years at Birmingham College of Art and Design. At that time there were no women Industrial Designers and as women are responsible for buying 70% of products, I thought that a woman's input at the design stage would be helpful. I have always thought in three dimensions so it seemed a perfect choice for me. I applied to study BA(Hons) Industrial Design at Birmingham and graduated three years later in 1971.

The aspects of the work which I enjoy most are firstly problem solving, finding out what the real problems are with products and addressing them, and secondly designing products which are better to use, nicer to look at and more effective than those which preceded them. The biggest kick from Product Design comes from seeing your products in shops all over the world. Highlights of my career include becoming a Fellow of the Chartered Society of Designers; designing the worldwide best selling record player in 1978, and winning the award for the best designed audio product at the Milan Fair 1979.

The most challenging aspects of product design are to design a product which is good to use, lovely to look at, able to be produced by the machinery available to the client, in a range of appropriate materials, within a given price limit, for a specified market group!! The most frustrating aspects come when your design concepts are altered during the development stage without your knowledge as this can ruin the whole concept of the design.

I first starting teaching when I was approached by the Head of Product Design at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in 1984, to work as a visiting lecturer on the B.A.Hons course. At this time I was working as a freelance consultant to several companies and had two small children and the prospect of giving something back to my profession was very attractive to me. I really enjoyed working with the students and six months later applied for a vacancy as Senior Lecturer in B.A.(Hons) Industrial Design at Birmingham Polytechnic (now City of Birmingham University). In addition to my role in Industrial Design, (Product Design), I later became Director of Studies for B.A.Hons Design in Business. I taught at the University for twenty six years and retired 5 years ago in 2010.

The most rewarding aspect of teaching design is seeing your students develop their wonderful ideas into feasible products during their three year course. Nothing is better than graduation day when you award them their hard earned degrees. Teaching is a great way to earn a living and pass on your knowledge.



Grand daughter Daisy - Carol's latest venture into portraiture

After retiring I found that once again I had time to return to my own work, and started by renovating my house and filling it with the colours I love. I started drawing again and took commissions for sketches of houses, landscapes, greeting cards and portraits. I rekindled my love of photography and joined Kempsey Camera Club, which is a very friendly group. They provide courses in all aspects of photography and run in-house and inter-club competitions. I also joined St Peter's printmaking group and discovered the joys of block printing. The group consist of a wide range of artistic people who share similar interests. The work they produce is very varied and inspiring.

I love being part of an artistic community again and this is one of the reasons I joined Pershore Arts. I am really looking forward to meeting an even wider range of artists and craftsmen and exhibiting my work locally."

Carol Stiff



Hare in Autumn - linocut by Carol Stiff, 2015