FCA Meeting – October 18, 2012
Portrait demonstration by David Goatley

Call to order 6:45 pm
Minutes   submitted via email by Kristina Boardman

Sharlene Stushnov-Lee, President, welcomed members to the meeting. New members were introduced. Congratulations went out to Sandhu Singh for winning the Designer's Choice at the Sidney Fine Arts Show and to June Haynes for winning the Victoria Banner Competition.

Agnes Cornell reviewed the details of the fall exhibition at the Morris Gallery. The reception was quieter than last year, possibly due to the timing of the Sidney show. Two sales have been made so far. Unsold paintings are to be picked up on Sunday the 28th between 1 and 3.

Sharlene reminded everyone **of** the upcoming workshop with **Richard McDiarmid**. It will be taking place at the Saanich Fairgrounds on November 24 and 25th and is $180 for members and $225 for non members.

Sharlene introduced special guest **David Goatley**. Member **Lisa Riehl** offered to pose for the demonstration.

Biography from David Goatley's website (www.davidgoatley.com):

*David **G**oatley, SFCA is widely recognized as one of North America's leading portrait painters. Originally trained in London, England, where he was born, David has completed over 300 portrait commissions all across the continent since arriving here with his family in 1992.*

In political life he has painted Their Excellencies Iona Campagnolo and James Dunsmuir, Lieutenant Governors of BC, the Hon. Deborah Grey MP, the official Parliamentary portraits of Former speaker Gilbert Parent and Prime Minister Kim Campbell. He recently completed portraits of the retiring Presidents of both The University of Alberta, Trent University, the Chancellor of UVIC and the President of Canadian Pacific Railways.

In the USA he has painted many leading business figures and their families, working - so far - in 20 States, commissions he won through his agents Portraits Incorporated, The Portrait Group and Portraits North. Other sitters have included leading figures in the arts - the painters Robert Bateman and Ted Harrison, internationally acclaimed Tenor Richard Margison, Soprano Valerie Gonzalez, the actor Colin Skinner, dance impressario Constance Darling, Opera Maestro Timothy Vernon, composer Paul Cantelon and the writer, Hanif Kureishi, as well as philanthropists Eric Charman and Michael DeGroote and others making a difference in the fileds of commerce and education.

Bateman described him as "A truly fine painter in the Sargent style who works with confidence and grace and a true respect for the quality of the paint"

There was one main light source set up for the portrait painting demonstration, and David commented that the hot light off to the side was making interesting shadows. He began by indicating that there were many ways to paint a portrait. He intended to show a method called alla prima, which is 'wet on wet' painting. Another option would be slowly building up the painting with layers of glazing. David mentioned preferring drawing with burnt sienna because it is transparent and hides easily. He was working on a board that had been toned with a mixture of yellow ochre, viridian green and terra rosa, which appeared as a pale green, which David indicated is a nice balance against the flesh tones.

He suggested initially roughing in the shapes as a starting point. The top light gives nice shadows and creates the shapes. David said to keep in mind that you do not need to re-invent the wheel, and that there are general common features that can act as starting points. Faces are put together in roughly the same way, such as having the eyes half way up the head.

David was asked about his brushes, and said he had brought along about 10 which included everything from a big one to a tiny one. He said that a #2 brush is a nice one to draw with, and that he tends to use Heinz Jordan synthetic brushes. He likes to draw with the paint, and mentioned that it is easier to see shapes than lines in proportion to each other. David noted that he used a small amount of paint on the brush at this stage rather than having it loaded. For colors he uses a mixture of Windsor and Newton (particularly burnt sienna and naples yellow) and Gamblin, but he indicated that he is not brand loyal and will use any of them.

David suggested first establishing big shapes, masses of light and dark, to see how it all fits together. He then refines the shapes as he progresses. He mentioned recently taking a workshop with Burt Silverman in Upstate New York. Burt stressed drawing in representational painting and had his students drawing a lot. David said he enjoyed being a student and feels like he discovered drawing all over again, and that this has helped his painting and changed his approach to painting.
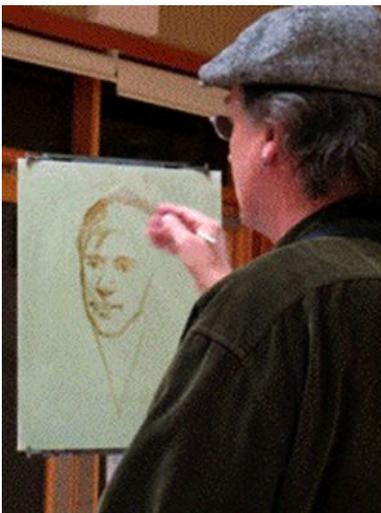
Regarding the portrait, David mentioned that it would be helpful to get a few darks in, which would help him see the other colors. The green background was acting as the mid-value of the painting. David then used a cadmium orange to help portray the hot light. He added orange to the highlights on the nose, cheeks and forehead. He also added a dark red in the ear. While painting he mentioned that he used linseed oil and occasionally alkyd medium/alkyd resin to speed drying, but generally uses nothing and prefers it as it comes out of the tube. David indicated that the model's face is cooler in the shadows and that raw umber and permanent rose red could be added, and then for the mouth added more rose red for a pinker tone.
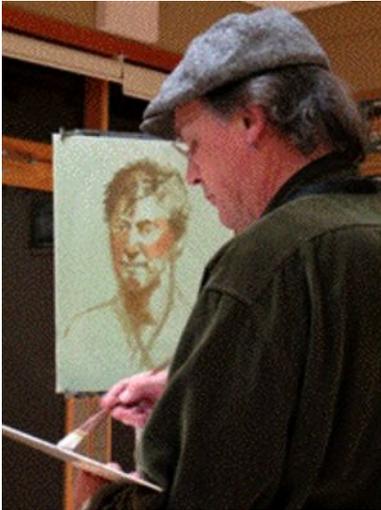
David was asked about his palette and noted that it was made of plexiglass which was weighted on one side. He indicated that he preferred a white palette but that some prefer a brown one for mixing mid-values. He uses his paint thinly to begin with and began to talk about mediums and that they alter the flow characteristic of the paint, and reiterated that when he said he was using his paint thinly he did not mean that he used mediums but that instead he used just a small amount of paint on the brush, and that he only uses mediums here and there, preferring the paint as it comes.

David talked about how colors can have a big effect on one another and mentioned taking the green from the background color and mixing it in behind the head to make it more opaque and to make the highlights on the hair really stand out. When choosing a background, David suggests using a cool, neutral color that is not obtrusive, as you want to background to stay back. He suggested letting bits of the green background color come through the skin tone because it acts as a nice supporting layer. As he was talking he was adding a few highlights here and there in the model's hair. David further highlighted the forehead and top of cheek with a mixture of white and cadmium orange, and stated that we now had a full value range in the portrait. He wanted the back of the neck to be cooler and darker so added cool umber.

David commentary included noting that mouths were difficult and always the point the sitter mentions. He said John Singer Sargent said "A portrait is a painting in which something is wrong with the mouth". David said that we unconsciously prepare our mouth when we look in a mirror, and that we don't often see our own mouth in a neutral position, and that the mouth is quite static. He also spoke about painting portraits of children, and that girls sat still longer than boys with energy. He also said that pretty women were difficult to paint, and that men were the easiest because you could toughen them up and they did not mind great blobs of paint and wrinkles. He said he prefers to paint from life but that photos can be helpful. Cameras make an electronic sketchbook which allows you to look at a lot of options very quickly (different backgrounds, color, lighting, etc). David said to remember to take breaks if you are using photos just as you would when working with a live model. |he recommends taking a break every 40 minutes or so to clear your head and return with fresh eyes. David commented on the tool called a mahl stick which has intrigued people during interviews. It is used to rest a hand on for steadying when doing an oil painting that you don't want to touch.

As he continued on with the portrait, he mentioned that daylight is cooler, so the shadows are warm. Conversely, the hot light he was using in this painting set up is warm, so the shadows would need to be cool. David indicated that he would not want to use pure white for highlights because white was cool, in fact the coldest color on the palette, and can look chalky. He instead lightened with naples yellow. While on the topic of white, David pointed out that the whites of the model's eyes were not white at all and that this is a common mistake. Sometimes, as in the case this evening, they are in dark shadow and are more a shade of grey. He added a combination of raw umber and ultramarine blue for the pupils to make a nice black.

Speaking generally about portrait painting, David mentioned that if you paint the outside shapes first it is easier to make the inside shapes work. Early on he used to begin with the eyebrows and work towards the outside but now tends to do it the other way around, sometimes even painting large blocks and gradually bringing the whole thing into focus.

The technique you use to achieve your portrait matters less than the important things like shape, value and color temperature.

David spoke about acrylic versus oil. Acrylics are great for anything you want to collage, or for elements of texture or large murals, but that acrylic doesn't do well with blending and soft edges and quick color mixes. Oil paint allows for rebuilding, softening and improving values.

David mentioned that he is now loading more paint on his brush in order for it to cover and stay where he places it over the wet paint. You can blend with tools or your thumb and it gets nice and physical. Highlights in the hair make it fun and make it come alive. He suggested moving your eye across the whole painting throughout the process (from highlight to highlight, for example). Every move alters the appearance of previous shadows and highlights. One of the best tools we have as painters is our eyelashes. If you squint you just see value rather than detail. If you get the big shapes right, the whole construction of the painting works.

David spoke about traditional portraits having dark backgrounds. He favours greys and cool colors for pale skinned portraits. He feels it doesn't look realistic now to have a dark background and that you can do it for effect but it is an easy way out and not natural. He said that realism is back with a vengeance and named some American painters of Modern Realism that he thought were of interest (Jeremy Lipking, Scott Burdick, Casey Bowman, Jacob Collins) and mentioned others who were working in a more nostalgic style of realism (Morgan Weistling and Daniel Gerhartz). David said that it was our job as artists to tell some kind of truth about the world we live in now with all its problems and complexities rather than creating portraits as they were done in previous generations.

The portrait was completed to much applause, and many enjoyed watching this process from start to finish. David was thanked for sharing his talent and his stories. Several photographs are included below.