

JOURNAL OPINION

From the
ART

By Martin Urmson



A confident exhibition from Hinchcliffe

MODESTY is a very British trait, highly prized and praised by people of my generation and background. I like to think I am from the middle of the middle classes (which is a modest ambition in itself), where the distaste for pride and vanity is strongest.

Artists tend to suffer from modesty, or indeed false modesty, less than most, and I feel they are the lucky ones. One such was John Hinchcliffe, whose work is now showing at Salisbury Museum. Hinchcliffe had many talents, and a great deal of confidence in them.

I heard this from many different sources at the exhibition's private view last week; from friends and from family, and from speaker Professor Simon Olding. After a little thought, his stepson James Barber summed it up thus: "He was like a rock star." A friend agreed: "John was the Mick Jagger of the art scene."

The Hinchcliffe show began in September with a collection of his lino-prints and now has been added to with textiles, ceramics and painting in

"John was the Mick Jagger of the art scene"

the main galleries. I saw the lino-cut prints before I learned much about the man, and was struck by the boldness and conviction of his marks. Lino is a tricky medium, you only get one shot at it, yet these prints have real directness and vitality: the process has become invisible.

The small upstairs gallery where the prints are held seems to have new lighting, thankfully as it used to be a little neglected. The Hinchcliffe exhibition is the best curated show I believe I've ever seen at the museum, and a great complement to the top class Wessex gallery.

Joint curators are Wendy Barber and Jac Arnold. Barber was both Hinchcliffe's design partner and wife (he died in 2010) and today continues the design business (ceramics, fabrics and prints) with their daughter Georgia.

John Hinchcliffe began his career as a textile artist, studying at Camberwell and the Royal College of Art. Influenced by traditional Scandinavian rag rugs, in 1973 he opened a Sussex studio making colourful wall hangings and rugs.

He was drawn to exploring other media, in particular ceramics, and in 1983 Salisbury Arts Centre hosted an exhibition of Hinchcliffe and Barber ceramics and printed textiles. This led to important contracts with outlets such as Next, Harvey Nichols and Harrods.

These ceramics are still very striking today. I particularly like the stark black-on-white animal designs, a successful marriage of the primitive and the sophisticated. There's much to see, and everything is well-explained. Take your out-of-town friends along to the museum before mid-January: they'll be impressed.

Annie Riddle

Now, where did I put my glasses?



Annie's almost got Christmas wrapped up

The art of shopping early for Christmas

I KID you not, I've done two-thirds of my Christmas shopping already.

I'm aware of how dreadfully sad this makes me sound, as if I've got nothing better to do.

Especially since I've bumbled on in the past about how depressing it is to see our shops – and supermarkets are particularly guilty – stuffed full of red, green and gold glittery tat by early October.

I swear I spotted the first foil-wrapped foundations of this year's festive chocolate mountain in Waitrose the week the schools went back after the summer holidays. And I groaned.

So, since I'm not best-known for my organised lifestyle, and struggle even to keep up with the required reading for our book club, friends will probably be faintly surprised at what I've been up to.

"She must have too much time on her hands," they'll say. "Not like those of us who've still got a proper job!"

But the fact is, I had two completely free afternoons this week.

Even the dog didn't require my presence.

The first I spent wandering happily round Arts Trail displays in town with

my friend Fi before collapsing on a café sofa with coffee and cake. Luxury!

Making art so accessible to the public is an admirable idea, and there really

So, since I'm not best-known for my organised lifestyle, and struggle even to keep up with the required reading for our book club, friends will probably be faintly surprised at what I've been up to.

was something for everyone on offer, with David Walker's 'graffiti bicycle' photographs in Waterstones making a

particular impression on me.

My only criticisms would be that there were too few exhibits at some of the central venues, so we didn't linger long enough to justify the walk and that the catalogue picked out the best ones as illustrations so you felt you'd already seen them by the time you got there.

Well, that was enough culture, thanks. So next day I did what I always tend to do when at a loose end. Weed the flower beds? Give the cupboards a much-needed sort-out? Catch up on one of those neglected books? None of the above. I went shopping.

Since I felt guilty about it, I thought I wouldn't buy anything for myself but take advantage of the mid-season sales to pick up a few early gifts.

A few? I had to make two treks back to the car to load up all my purchases and I really didn't spend all that much (honest). I was delighted at the bargains to be found.

So this year when people ask, as they always do, "You ready for Christmas, then?" I'll reply smugly: "Of course. Whatever made you think I wouldn't be?"

■ anneriddle36@gmail.com