

# WITNEY & WEST OXFORDSHIRE GAZETTE

Wednesday, January 22, 2003

## Forest foray among the photographs



Under the  
spotlight  
with...

**HELEN PEACOCKE**

**A**n exhibition with a difference is being staged at the West Ox Arts Gallery as all the photographic images are mounted on stands placed around the room as if they were trees.

All that's missing from the *Forest* exhibition are a few background sounds of rustling leaves, and the occasional burst of bird song that could have been added for even more effect.

To view each picture, you have to walk through the stands as if you were walking through a woodland.

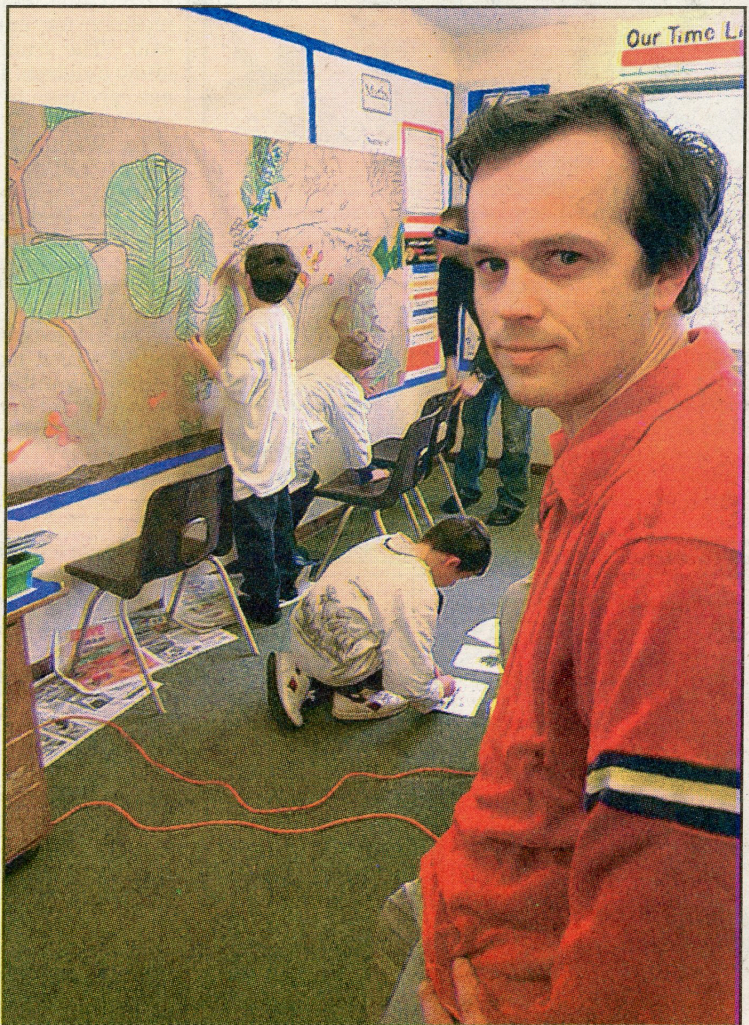
The collection has been put together by the Southern Arts Touring Exhibition Service.

Organiser John Gillet, of SATES, said: "*Forest* has already proved to be one of our most popular touring exhibitions and the response from people visiting it has been very positive."

To mark the exhibition and broaden its appeal, photographer Paul Maple held a workshop at Bampton Primary School that linked to the *Forest* theme. His aim was to show the children techniques which could produce striking images of nature on photographic paper without using a camera.

Teacher Julia Evans saw this as an exciting way of interesting the children in the exhibition and also teaching them to look at trees and nature in a different light.

Paul's contribution to the



**Forest fun . . . Paul Maple with pupils at Bampton Primary School**

exhibition was taken in Yosemite National Park, California, in an area that had been affected by a forest fire. All that remained were charred and blackened giant pine trees that had taken on a striking, but eerie, appearance.

*Forest* continues at West Ox Arts Gallery, Bampton, until February 2. The opening hours are Tuesday to Saturday from 10.30pm to 12.30pm, and 2pm to 4pm on Sunday. Admission is free.

Trees can dominate a landscape or stand alone, solitary and magnificent against the sky. They are for touching, for admiring, even walking through, which is why the collection of tree photographs on show at the West Ox Arts Gallery, Bampton, are not hanging on the walls.

John Gillett, art director of SATES (Southern Arts Touring Exhibition Service), who put the collection together, said that the point of the exhibition, simply entitled *Forest*, is to create a wooded environment out of the 28 photographic images selected.

Instead of walking around the room staring at images on walls, visitors will find themselves weaving in and out of exhibits. All that is missing is a background tape that would fill the gallery with the sound of rustling leaves and the occasional bird song.

By displaying the photographs as free-standing exhibits the collection can be toured to smaller venues that seldom get used for exhibitions.

"We are always looking for shows that we can take anywhere," said John. "The response we have had since this exhibition began touring the southern area has been really positive, especially when linked with school workshops and lectures that highlight the forest theme."

The photographers were all invited to supply a photograph of a single tree and on the other side they were asked to write why they chose that image.

John said: "This unpromising approach to exhibition-making, a kind of sampling method, is one we have used with success before, most notably in the project *Sticks*, and the results always manage to surprise us.

"With *Sticks* we found we had a collection of gentle statements of environmental concern.

"*Forest* turns out to be a meditation on the subject of time, the centuries that have passed since a particular monarch touched a particular tree, and the fraction of a second in which light from it enters the camera."

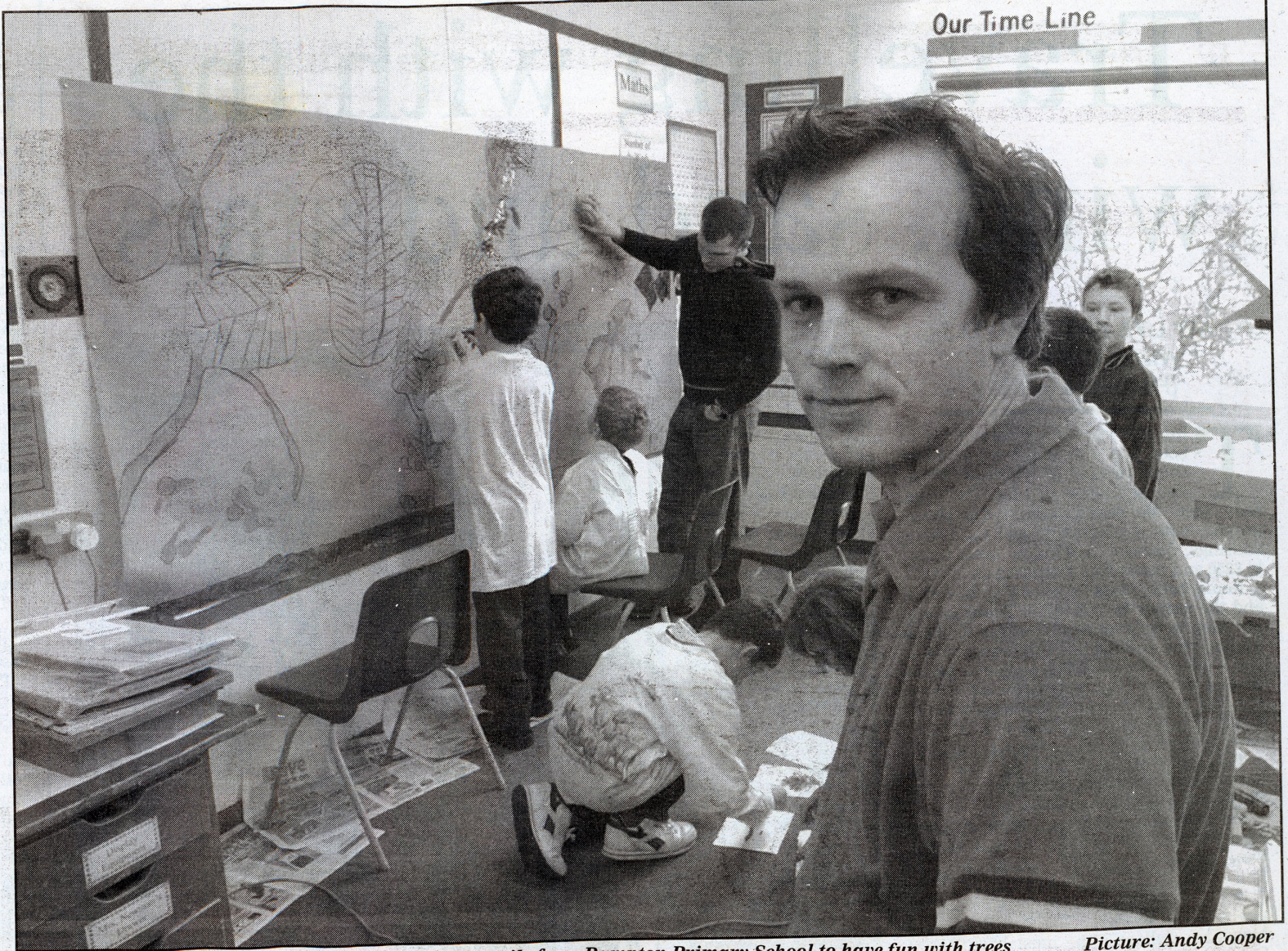
John's favourite in the exhibition was taken by the Brazilian photographer Maria Lucia Cattani in her native country, where she says that the shadow of a tree is sometimes considered more important than the tree itself as it provides shade that protects people from the burning sun. The tree and its shadow she sees as a way of capturing the image that the sun had created.

Paul Maple photographed his tree in Yosemite National Park, California, in an area affected by a forest fire. All that remained were blackened giant pine trees that had a taken on a striking but eerie appearance. His choice had taken on a particularly unusual shape and perspective and Paul explained it was his way of breathing life back into it.

Justin Quinnell was known for his pinhole photography until he confronted an old oak tree with its gnarled trunk and two waving branches in Leigh Woods, near Bristol. His image has become his favourite picture, particularly as the tree blew down in a gale just a week after the photograph was taken.

The dramatic shot of araucarias set against a Brazilian sunset, taken by Martin Ewaldo Stribel, celebrates the fact that nature protection laws passed in Brazil in recent years have saved these trees, which were under threat of extinction because the forests were being cut down.

Not every photograph on show is



New leaf... photographer Paul Maple helps these pupils from Bampton Primary School to have fun with trees

Picture: Andy Cooper

# You can see the wood for trees

An unusual photographic exhibition in Bampton celebrates the beauty and majesty of trees, writes **HELEN PEACOCKE**



This tree captured by Jimmy Symonds, of Oxford, was taken in the Cairngorms

of an entire tree. David Turner said that modern photography should be wary of getting lost in worn-out romantic images of nature. Intriguingly, he has placed a beautiful tree hugging woman against a tree trunk which is marked for destruction.

Nick Rands wanted to photograph all the trees he saw but decided to

come up with a kind of synthesis of a tree, which he did by superimposing the images of nine palm trees one on top of another, which is particularly effective.

To widen the appeal of the exhibition and photography, Paul Maple held a workshop at Bampton Primary School this week. His aim was to show the children techniques which could produce striking images on photographic paper without the use of a camera. Teacher Julia Evans saw this as an exciting way of interesting the children in the exhibition and teaching them to look at trees and nature in a different way.

■ *Forest* continues at West Ox Arts Gallery, Market Square, until Sunday, February 2. The opening hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10.30pm to 4.30pm and 2pm to 4pm. On Sunday, the hours are 2pm to 4pm. Admission is free.



On view... this picture of this gnarled old oak was taken by Justin Quinnell in a wood near Bristol. The tree blew down in a gale a week later.