

Family portraits



Photos © John Carrod

GILBERT AND
GEORGE, while at
St. Martin's School

of Art, London, in 1967, redefined art as themselves, and *living sculpture* was born. Likewise, *Ted Coney's Family Portraits* is not merely a guided tour of his home and artwork but a gentle form of performance art, giving a highly personal view of his life.

Ted Coney has recently retired as Head of Art and Design at Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge. He has been creating paintings about his family for over 40 years and uses his immediate relations to inspire his images, sometimes finding stories from earlier generations to develop his ideas. Most of his work is oils on canvas, although Ted is not afraid of using moving image and *object d'art* when it serves his message; and of course there's Ted's illuminating commentary.

His tours follow a number of themes. Each tour is intriguingly different and many people return again and again to experience a different aspect of Ted's family life. Current themes are: Birth, Marriage, Divorce and Death (significant aspects of family life), Journeys (the journey represented may be a metaphor for something else!), Time

(Looking back, recording the passing of time, the present, or sometimes looking forward), Puppets and Dolls (they can often evoke something about a person more effectively than the image of the person itself), Anniversaries (recording significant family events), Objects as Symbols (how the family has gradually come to be represented by other symbols), Sense of Place (everyone has their 'place' within the family group), Figurative vs. Abstract (looks at how different styles have been used in the paintings)—a tour suitable for those who are unable to climb stairs.

Even if it were not for the artistic presentation, Ted's house is worth having a look around for its charm and character. Situated on Waterside in the historic city of Ely, Cambridgeshire, close to the River Ouse, it is a 300-year-old cottage (a grade 2 listed building) which, although he and his family do live there, he runs as a kind of open studio. A delightful, thought-provoking and entertaining experience is to be found there.

Tours are offered from April – December and are limited to 6 people. Booking is advisable. Visit www.tedconeyfamilyportraits.co.uk or 'phone 01353 650038.