

Building to be named after 'dearly missed' painter Phyllis, who died this month

Lasting tribute to popular and talented artist

By Amy Nickalls
amy.nickalls@kentlive.news

A BUILDING is to be named after a local artist who died this month.

Phyllis McDowell owned a studio on Myrtle Road in Folkestone and had held exhibitions of her work all over the world.

Since 2010 she ran an art exhibition out of The Grand Hotel in Folkestone and in honour of her memory the glass conservatory is to be renamed as a tribute to her.

Robert Richardson, manager of The Grand, said: "The previous management held art exhibitions in Palm Court but there were some issues with it getting in the way of the restaurant.

"I reached out to Phyllis, who I didn't know very well, and she took it on with two others and it's been a huge success.

"There's been an exhibit in there 365 days a year since 2010 and we're so grateful for all her hard work.

"Her DNA is in that building and we're honoured that her family have said we can make the conservatory a memorial to her."

A plaque will be put up in the entrance to the building with her name on it which the 250,000 people who visit The Grand each year will see.

The name of the building is yet to be confirmed but further details will be announced over the next few weeks.

Extraordinary

Mr Richardson added: "We were told in the autumn that she was ill but didn't expect to lose her so soon.

"I had a real soft spot for her, she was one of the good ones and led an extraordinary life.

"She was one of Folkestone's talents and will be dearly missed."

Phyllis' influence was spread far across the district with Brigitte Orasinski from Strange Cargo also paying tribute to her.

She said: "She was a shining light in the arts community, people with her talent don't come along very often and we will miss her.

"Phyllis was a massively talented and skilful artist whose style was instantly recognisable for its colour, beauty and vitality.

"She was one of Folkestone's best-known artists and someone who touched the lives of many of us.

"She's been a constant friend to Strange Cargo as a member of our Board of Trustees and has supported us from the beginning."

Someone who benefited from Phyllis' talent was local blogger Karen Marwood who said: "I cannot really get my head around the fact that I won't see her again.

"I first met her when I visited her studio on the open day for the Creative Quarter.

"She invited me to go to a painting class and that gave me the push to do more painting.



FOLKESTONE ARTIST: Phyllis McDowell was a familiar sight around town

"I helped her with work with social media and did some blogs for her.

"She was a very talented artist loved by so many people."

Her words of wisdom were passed on to readers of the Folkestone Herald in her monthly column which ran from 2007 until 2015.

When she hung up her pen to

focus on her paintbrushes, she said: "It was wonderful to be able to bring the value of art to people. I've kept every one of my articles from over the years.

"I could pass on painting hints, encourage people to visit exhibitions, and simply talk about art. I don't have natural writing skills, but my ability to put words together improved

with time.

"It was encouraging to know so many people read the articles. I am grateful for a wonderful opportunity that just came my way."

■ **Do you have any fond memories of Phyllis or her work? Share your stories with us by sending them to amy.nickalls@kentlive.news**