

Venice insider scoops prize

TWO Britons have been recognised in the US's Arthur Ross Awards for Excellence in the Classical Tradition—only six have won in the awards' 27-year history. Alexander Creswell has won the painting prize. He's the only artist to be permitted to paint the interior of St Mark's Basilica in Venice since the 1890s. His exhibition, 'Venice Only', is at the Portland Gallery, London SW1, June 6–27 (020-7493 1888; www.portlandgallery.com). John Simpson, whose company designed Paternoster Square and Poundbury, has won the architecture award.



Alexander Creswell was given rare dispensation to paint the inside of St Mark's Basilica



Students find Tudor cover-up

BRISTOL University students who curated an exhibition of Tudor portraits that opens today at Montacute House, Somerset, have discovered a ghostly figure (left). He's thought to be Shakespeare's only known patron, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, to whom *Venus and Adonis* was dedicated. He'd been painted over with a portrait of his wife, Elizabeth Vernon, Elizabeth I's maid, whom he married in secret after a court intrigue. A portrait of husband and



Does Elizabeth Vernon conceal a ghostly secret?

wife is thought to have been abandoned. Scandal—and virtue—in Tudor women are central to the exhibition, 'On the Nature of Women', run by the National Portrait Gallery and the National Trust and the first to be curated by students (020-7312 2452; www.npg.org.uk).

BUSIEST WOMAN

SARAH BARDWELL



director,
Handel House
Museum

Background I got a music degree and studied the oboe, but switched to arts administration. I worked for the ENO and the Royal Albert Hall and did an arts leadership course in Washington before starting here in 2004. My husband, Rumon Gamba, is a conductor.

Typical day We have constant events. Recently, I've been annoying the staff by continually checking that the pictures for 'Handel and the Divas' are hanging straight. On Mondays, we're closed for maintenance, and often have school groups in for workshops; every Thursday, there's a concert, which I help plan. Baroque music works best here. Americans account for 20% of visitors, followed by Germans, and we have links with Halle, Handel's birthplace.

Best aspect of job Working in this Georgian building, built in 1721. Handel moved in two years later and died here in 1759.

I love my garret office.

Most challenging aspect Coming up with different ways of letting people know about Handel House—we're still a bit of a secret.

Most memorable moment At the end of a performance workshop for the visually impaired, one blind teenager gave her feedback through recitative. It has really stayed with me.

I can't do the job without My husband's cooking.

'Handel and the Divas' is at Handel House, Brook Street, London W1 until November 16 (020-7495 1685; www.handelhouse.org)