



Alexander Creswell (second left) and his wife, Mary (far right) celebrate the artist's success in New York with their friends and art collectors from Ewhurst, David and Sara Delaney. (c)

Visionary artist receives top award in New York

EWHURST-based artist Alexander Creswell was in New York on Monday to receive a prestigious award from America's Institute of Classical Architecture (ICA).

The internationally acclaimed watercolourist and British architect, John Simpson, were both presented with Arthur Ross Awards for Excellence in the Classical Tradition.

The painter joins a small, but select band of UK winners of the award, all hailed by the ICA as "visionaries" who have "significantly contributed to the preservation and advancement of the classical language in art, architecture, artisanship and education on both sides of the Atlantic".

Mr Creswell, who has enjoyed six years of success in New York, is now back home and preparing for a major exhibition of his work at the Portland Gallery in London, which opens next

month. The new show, *Venice Only*, features more than 70 works and is the first in a series of his spectacular watercolour exhibitions, capturing the splendour of Venetian interiors and other rarely seen aspects of the city.

Mr Creswell was the first artist since the 1890s to have permission to paint the magnificent interior of St Mark's Basilica and he has been given unprecedented access to other famous interiors, including the staterooms of The Doge's Palace, the Cini Foundation and many private Palazzi.

He is internationally acclaimed for his unparalleled proficiency in the use of watercolour, reverence for natural light and vast architectural knowledge that enables him to capture the true "spirit of place" and atmosphere of his subjects.

Unlike the many artists who are drawn to Venice, Mr Creswell has

learned the city on his *sanpiero* – a traditional Venetian wooden skiff – from which he paints, explores the canals and sails the Lagoon, even in the cold mists of winter.

Hailed as one of Britain's greatest living artists, he is the only watercolourist in the world to work on a grand scale, with some of his paintings being as large as nine feet on a single sheet of custom-made watercolour paper.

His historic commission for the Royal Collection in 1992 to depict the result of the fire at Windsor Castle and the subsequent restoration in 1997, is catalogued in the publication, *Out of the Ashes*.

Mr Creswell has also travelled on tour with the Prince of Wales as official artist.

Venice Only opens at the Portland Gallery on June 6.