

NEWSLETTER

NO.21 — SPRING 2019
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Methodist **Modern**
Art Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



Our 2018 Governance and Practice Reviews

Gareth Powell's Tribute to Retiring Chair, Dr John Gibbs

The Collection in Dublin

EDITORIAL

Dear Friend,

Firstly, as the recently retired Secretary to the Friends Group, can I extend warm congratulations to my successor, Ian Baker. Ian has, over the past year or so, already made his mark within the ranks of the Management Committee and I know that he will represent Friends' interests with efficiency and genuine enthusiasm. The Newsletter will remain an effective conduit as Ian and I continue to work closely together. This recent milestone provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the development of our Friends' Group over its first decade - see P.11.

I am delighted to be able to confirm the addition of a further eminent name to our body of Honorary Patrons, that of Lord Leslie Griffiths, the subject of our In Focus feature in our Autumn 2018 Newsletter.

Following a well-received visit to Dublin the next opportunity to view will be in May and early June when the works will be exhibited, under the title 'Wondering Soul', in Leicester (details on P.16). Thereafter the Collection will be taking a rejuvenation pause in the Tour Schedule while a full programme of conservation is undertaken. Thus Leicester will be the last opportunity for a little while to see the majority of the works on display. Do make the most of it.

As mentioned in the Autumn 2018 edition of the Newsletter, the in-depth Governance and Practice Reviews regarding the management of the Collection have been undertaken and an appropriate summary of findings appears on P.3.

Art Collection Management Committee Members

Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Dr John Gibbs, Revd Graham Kent, Ian Baker (Secretary, Friends Group), Sarah Middleton, Revd Ruth Gee, Rebecca Gibbs, Lucy Cleeve, Simon Sorokos

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"I always draw big; I attack the paper with large sweeping forms..."

With Easter fast approaching it seems entirely appropriate that we feature our treasured Elisabeth Frink drawing, *Pieta*, on the Front Cover of this Spring edition of the Newsletter.

As well as being one of the foremost British sculptors of the 20th Century, Frink was a prolific print maker (invariably in the form of lithographs). Her ability to create the essential line with a pencil – *"I always draw big; I attack the paper with large sweeping forms"* – and unfussy, slightly washed out watercolours, often enhanced with ink, were very much a trade-mark.

Her Times obituary summed up her lifetime's work rather succinctly by noting that there were really three essential themes to her oeuvre: *the nature of Man; the "horseness" of horses; and the divine in human form*. Over a lifetime as a working artist she remained immune to any contemporary movements. She possessed an inner strength and unshakeable integrity in her art. Much of her early output often had brutal undertones, a legacy of growing up in the War Years, compounded by living in France for seven years and being uncomfortably close to the fall-out from the Algerian War of Independence. Over a working lifetime she made more than 400 sculptures – *"I really set out to be a painter, but sculpture chose me!"* – a great many reflecting her love of animals. A number of her bronze pieces have been influenced by her Catholic upbringing and can be found in ecclesiastical settings. The *Altar Cross* in Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, the *Eagle Lectern* at Coventry, the *Walking Madonna* at Salisbury are all fine examples. Her very last piece, *Risen Christ*, positioned over the West Doors of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, worked on against fearful odds when she was terminally ill (she died just seven days after the unveiling), proved the perfect memorial.

The *Pieta*: Should this work actually be considered a *Pieta* – or a *Deposition*?... Some folk would prefer to see it termed a *Deposition* but Frink herself was adamant that, as there is no visual evidence in the drawing of Christ being lifted down from the cross, this drawing should *not* be termed a *Deposition*. Similarly, she maintained that a *Pieta* image did not necessarily have to have a representation of the Virgin Mary to be so titled.

– The Editor



Walking Madonna, 1981. Bronze. The Close, Salisbury Cathedral

Front Cover: Elisabeth Frink (1930-93), *Pieta*, 1956. Black ink, wash and watercolour FS. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

Reflection and renewal: responding to recent reviews

In the Spring of 2018 the Management Committee decided it was important to commission two reviews relating to the workings of the Collection, one concentrating on governance and the other on procedures and practice. Agreed at our May 2018 meeting in Oxford, this became the first task for me to take forward as the new Chair of the Committee, in July.

Professor Mike Tooby of Bath Spa University, was appointed to carry out the governance review. Chezy Brownen, a consultant collections registrar with broad experience, was appointed to undertake the practice and procedural review. A survey, of over half the Collection, was carried out by expert conservators Ruth Bubb and Louise Vaile.

During the period of review, a further development occurred in respect of our long term partner Oxford Brookes University. It became clear to us that the University would not be in a position to provide the required gallery space and improved storage, long term, on their Westminster Campus. This has resulted in the search for a new, permanent home for the Collection becoming a priority. Last autumn the full Management Committee met in Bristol for an inspiring Visioning Away Day both to give consideration to this issue and thought to our future ambitions.

Having received the recommendations of both reviews, the Committee decided to prioritise the immediate care issues highlighted in the practice report. In short, the condition of some paintings had raised concerns; likewise frames and travelling cases. Thus a programme of conservation work has begun already - thanks to funding from the Gibbs Trust.

With the above-mentioned developments in mind, from June onwards the entire Collection will be brought together in high quality, commercial storage where the remainder of the works can be fully condition-surveyed. In order for this work to be carried out, we have agreed a clear rejuvenation pause in our touring for recommended conservation work, while negotiations begin for a new host home for the Collection. We must care for the Collection to the highest, possible standards, preserving it for future generations and ensuring it plays a key role in the missional life of the Methodist Church. We also have ambitions to see it fully researched and interpreted so that the widest possible

audiences have the opportunity to engage with it.

Thus far we have had three serious Expressions of Interest as a new home for the Collection, each offering different strengths and we may well receive more. A careful process to find the most suitable home, with a support structure for the Collection, will now be undertaken. The cost of the conservation of the Collection is being met by the Methodist Church, which is, of course, the owner of the Collection, together with a donation from the Gibbs Trust. We are grateful for the strong support from both sources. Fundraising and applications to broader trusts will be key to our strategic thinking in the future.

Conservation and re-framing will be carried out during the nine-month pause in our touring programme. We also recognise this as a key opportunity, in the history of the Collection, to reflect on our achievements – (the Collection was seen by over 30,000 people in 2018) - and to set out a clear, new Five Year Plan. When we re-launch the Collection it will be in the very best of conditions, many works being transformed by surface cleaning and other interventions, with strong, suitable frames fit for the demands of regular touring.

Please do try to come and see the Collection while it is in Leicester this May and enjoy the thoughtful programme of events being planned by the host team. During this pause period the Friends Newsletter will keep you up to date with developments. We do intend to develop a series of Friends events over the coming years and we hope to hold one in the autumn. Further information on this will be provided once all the details are finalised.

We would like to acknowledge our long partnership with Oxford Brookes University and thank colleagues there, especially our Custodian, Peter Forsaith for his dedicated service. We look forward to this time of reflection and renewal for the Collection and thank you all for your continued support.

– Ann Sumner

A tribute to retiring Chair of the Management Committee, John Gibbs

*'Very many of us have looked and
seen more than a painting...'*

John N Gibbs: Helping to broaden the horizon...

'What are you reading?'

This simple question began, for me, a much greater awareness of – and engagement with – the visual arts. I hope that John will not mind me recounting this, but it was asked of me by his father – John Morel Gibbs, a former Vice-President of the Conference, who was interviewing me as a candidate for ordained Methodist ministry. I now realise I was reading very little and making very little time for the visual arts. So, Dr Gibbs supplied novels and suggested exhibitions to visit. That encounter marks the start of my awareness of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

That it was John's father that should spark within me a greater awareness of the visual arts is, of course, significant. Many years later I have had the very good fortune of seeing something of John N's passion for and dedication to the exploration of God's grace as he has overseen the development of the Collection.

In his role as Chair of the Management Committee of the Collection John has been much more than a chair of meetings. He has held before the Methodist Church the possibilities of the Collection and in so doing has enabled all manner of communities to reflect on the power of the visual. We can record the numbers of those who have viewed the Collection, but we can only imagine the scale and depth of its impact. To draw an analogy with the Parable of the Sower, the Collection may be seed, sower and soil in different ways for different people. That is the task of Christian mission – a task that John not only enables, but lives. The Collection is testimony to his concern that the community of the risen Christ understands the breadth of all that God has made.

In 2004 the National Museums and Galleries of Wales staged *'An Art-Accustomed Eye: John Gibbs and Art*

Appreciation in Wales 1945-1996' at the National Museum in Cardiff. I was serving as Chaplain to Cardiff University and, as such, it was easy to view the exhibition time and time again. What a pleasure it was, and what an opportunity for students at the Chaplaincy to engage with art that captures the richness of creation. The exhibition gave a glimpse not simply of the tastes and interests of John's parents, but rather of their understanding of the centrality of art to everyday life. The fascinating catalogue recounts how John and Sheila Gibbs purchased works for the home and gave paintings as gifts to mark family birthdays and anniversaries. Indeed, I seem to recall that John and Elizabeth loaned to the exhibition a piece given to them by John and Sheila as a wedding present. The exhibition could easily have been about a generous benefactor to Welsh life. Instead, it was about a way of seeing the world. That expansive vision has been passed on to John and his brothers, to Methodism – and not only to those who see the Collection, but all who (in a variety of ways) are influenced by it.

John N has developed the generous spirit of John M, and has encouraged Methodism and the wider Church to see differently. Very many of us have looked and seen more than a painting; we have seen afresh glimpses of the grace of God. That sort of encounter transforms our experience of the world. That is no mean task and for it we owe John a very great debt of gratitude indeed.

*– The Revd Canon Gareth J Powell, Secretary of the
Methodist Conference*

Retirement of two long- serving members of the Management Committee



Meryl Doney and Bob Williams with retiring Chair John Gibbs

Meryl Doney retires from the Management Committee after more than ten years of service, initially as an ecumenical adviser and in the later days as Vice-Chair. She has made a major contribution to the development of the Collection's exhibition management, bringing her experience of working at the Hayward Gallery on London's South Bank, at St Paul's Cathedral (where she curated *'Presence: Images of Christ for the Third Millennium'*) and at Wallspace, the gallery in All Hallows on the Wall Church, London Wall, which she created as a 'spiritual home for the visual arts'. A splendid exhibition of the Methodist Collection was staged, by Meryl, at Wallspace in 2010. This included a Friends' Evening in the presence of a number of the Collection's artists. Roughly half the Collection was shown at the Greenbelt Festival in 2011 with around 7,000 people seeing it over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Meryl had first shown the Collection at Greenbelt in 1995 and went on to orchestrate this successful sequel exhibition. In 2017 she organised the display of F N Souza's *The Crucifixion* at St Paul's Cathedral as part of the India-UK Cultural Exchange, with the Opening attended by the Indian High Commissioner. Meryl's particular passion and expertise was introducing the work of new artists, from various parts of the world, to the Collection's Acquisitions Committee. She played a major role in the acquisition of Craigie Aitchison's *Pink Crucifixion* and Maggi Hambling's *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006*. We shall miss her wise and capable leadership.

Bob Williams will be known to readers of this Newsletter as its excellent editor and the first Secretary to the

Friends Group. He took up this post in 2008 as the Friends Group was launched - some of you may remember meeting Bob at Wesley College in Bristol on that occasion or at the northern regional launch in York in March 2009. Since then Bob has worked assiduously, recruiting new Friends and connecting them (indeed a wider readership too) not just to the work of the Collection but to news elsewhere in the art world. He has taken the early 'personal letter' format of the Newsletter onto a most professional level (through collaborating with staff at Cultureshock Media), but never lost the personal touch of his editorial. I know this has been greatly valued by the readership. Bob has also played a large part in the compilation of the Annual Report and the Collection's web pages. His skills in photography and presentation have been invaluable in telling the story of the Collection on tour, and in the creation of Friends publicity leaflets. In the words of John N Gibbs, paying tribute to Bob, "how much the Friends Group has benefited – as have a number of local organisers whose hands he has held so effectively!" I would echo those words, having shadowed Bob in supporting the Llandudno and Bath exhibitions, and acting for many years as Newsletter proof reader - I'm always delighted by what he has confected. It's good to know that Bob will continue as editor whilst he passes the Friends Group mantle to our new Friends Secretary, Ian Baker.

– Sarah Middleton

The Chair of the Management Committee in focus



It was while at Kingswood School in the late 1970s, that I first became interested in the History of Art and was introduced to the Collection. Two teachers inspired me, Philippa Bishop and Keith Duchars; I will always remember their passion for art. From Kingswood, I went on to the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, where I studied, for my BA in History of European Art and Architecture, under Neil McGregor, Anita Brooker and Ben Read. Then it was off to Newnham College, Cambridge, where I obtained my PhD and volunteered at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

My career in museums and galleries began at the National Portrait Gallery, London. By the mid 1980s I was Assistant Curator at the Holburne Museum. My career path then took me to the Whitworth Art Gallery, the Dulwich Picture Gallery, as Keeper, the Harewood House Trust in the 1990s as Senior Curator before returning to the Holburne as Keeper in 1996. In 2000 I was appointed Head of Fine Art at Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum of Wales where I was in post for over seven wonderful years, one of

the most exciting periods of my career. I return to Wales regularly, being honoured last summer to be made a Fellow of Aberystwyth University.

In 2007 I moved to Birmingham, initially as Director of the Barber Institute, (University of Birmingham) and Professor of Fine Art and Curatorial Practice, followed by a spell overseeing the Birmingham Museums Trust. Most recently I have been engaged as Head of Fine Art at the University of Leeds, leading on their Public Art Project with its focus on British 20th century sculpture. I am passionate about the Collection continuing to travel and to be accessible to as many people as possible whether in urban or rural communities. It was particularly satisfying to see it last summer in Cromer, as part of an overall mission to the homeless in the area. I remain very busy with my academic and consultancy work.

I first became involved in hanging the Methodist Modern Art Collection when I met John Gibbs in the early 1990s. I was able to help John hang the exhibition when it showed at the Maltings, Farnham, in the spring of 1993. Then, when I moved to Cardiff in 2000, John and I met up again as he had re-located back to Wales and I was fortunate enough to work with colleagues on the 2004 exhibition, 'An Art-Accustomed Eye: John Gibbs and Art Appreciation in Wales 1945-96', which focused on John's father Dr John Morel Gibbs (1912 – 1996). As founder and architect of the Collection, he believed that visual art could provide a powerful and meaningful social experience and spent a lifetime devoted to this cause. A year later I was approached by John about becoming a Managing Trustee, a role I was delighted to accept in 2006.

The quality of this Collection is outstanding and I have enjoyed expounding on this at the launch of the Friends organisation in Bristol in 2008 and giving talks on the work of the Collection around the U.K.

It is an exciting period for the Collection and I am, as Chair of our Management Committee, pleased to be working with colleagues who give so generously of their time. I look forward to moving forward, with this excellent team, following the recent reviews, to ensure that the Collection is cared for to the highest standard and to find an appropriate new home.

Professor Ann Sumner's choice...

My favourite painting in the Collection has always been *The Supper at Emmaus* by the Welsh artist Ceri Richards who came from Swansea and trained at Swansea College of Art. He was much influenced by the Davies sisters' Impressionist Collection. His career was really forged in London, where he had been awarded a scholarship at the R.C.A., although he did return to Wales as Head of Cardiff School of Art during World War II. It was Mike Tooby who introduced me to the work of Richards when I was in Cardiff and Mel Gooding was curating the impressive exhibition there.

The subject of this painting is taken from St Luke's Gospel (Chap. 24: v 30-31). Two of the disciples were walking to Emmaus after the Crucifixion when the resurrected Jesus joined them, although they did not know him. This vibrant study is a small but powerful depiction of that very moment of realisation when Christ, having accepted an invitation to stay and eat, blesses and breaks the bread, and the apostles recognise him. Christ is central, his hand raised in a blessing, highlighted by the yellow background which forms the shape of a cross, incorporating the table. The composition is innovative and the viewer is instantly drawn into the action. One imagines Richards must have been familiar with the iconic depiction of the subject in the 1601 painting by Caravaggio that hangs in the National Gallery. Here a figure also pushes his chair back away from Christ but there is no sense in Caravaggio's painting that Christ is about to vanish. In contrast, Richards shows the figure of Christ blending into the bright yellow background, as if he is disappearing before our very eyes. It is the colours of this watercolour that are so arresting, predominantly yellow and blue with green.

The picture was an early inspired purchase by Revd Douglas Wollen who wanted Richards represented in the Collection and had seen both his *The Deposition* at St Mary's Church in Swansea and the famous *Supper at Emmaus* altarpiece, in the chapel of St Edmund Hall, Oxford. Our painting is a sketch for, or possibly made after, that finished work, which resulted from an open competition. It is interesting to note that two other artists represented in the Methodist Collection, Lee-Elliott and de Maistre, also submitted entries. Wollen acquired the work directly from the artist who, at the time, was about to exhibit at the 1962 Venice Biennale, his reputation on the rise. It is really worth



(From top) Ceri Richards (1903-71), *The Supper at Emmaus*, 1958. Pen and ink, watercolour and gouache. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection; The Ceri Richards altarpiece in the chapel of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford

going to see the final work in situ in Oxford, but do arrange access in advance. The similarities between our Collection study and the fine finished work of the altarpiece can be seen in the images below. This remains for me one of the most inspirational paintings in the Collection. Small but perfectly formed and enormously powerful.

SALT AND LIGHT

Trinity Methodist Church
and St. Andrew's Methodist
Church, Winsford
7-30 September 2018

'The Collection being displayed in Winsford has added a little flavour to our lives, very much as salt does, and shed some light on the stories of faith in a new way...'



Early September 2018 saw a large lorry draw up to offload an assortment of heavy wooden crates at our two exhibition venues in Winsford. Thus arrived the Methodist Modern Art Collection in the Mid-Cheshire Circuit, to be exhibited at two contrasting buildings, Trinity Methodist Church and St Andrew's Methodist Church (one a 1890's building, and the other dating from the 1970's) for three weeks in September. The title for the exhibition 'Salt and Light' came first from Winsford and the area's historic and present links to the salt industry. The Cheshire Salt Mines date back to Roman times and, today, Winsford can lay claim to be the largest of its type in

the U.K. We were also very much aware of the instruction given by Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount when He speaks of the salt and light and where He calls those who hear Him to have an impact on their surroundings.

During the time the Collection was with us in Winsford one key aim was to engage with, and respond to, the works so all could see that faith can be expressed through art. This started with the Messy Church the day after the exhibition opened. Here a range of media and techniques were used by the families attending to show a response to some of the works on display, exemplified by the modelling clay form of *The Washing of the Feet*, the

Roman helmets made in response to *The Mocking of Christ*, or ideas around a good meal when looking at the *Supper at Emmaus* paintings.

During the time the Collection was in Winsford we worked with the Cross-Hatch Community Gallery, and Makerspace. This revolved around art engagement, be it the drop-in events throughout the exhibition, one of the formal talks that focused on the relationship between modern art and religion, or the Legacy Exhibition which took place over November and December. This supporting event was planned from the start as something that would extend the impact of the main exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints from the Methodist Modern Art Collection and be another way that people could respond to the works. The Legacy Exhibition was hosted at a number of venues around the town, including the local library, again increasing the profile of the Collection during its stay in the area.

It can be said that the Collection being displayed in Winsford has added a little flavour to our lives, very much as salt does, and shed some light on the stories of faith in a new way.

– Revd James Patron Bell

WINSFORD TRAINING DAY



Willing executive hands put the Burra watercolour to bed. Photo: Ann Sumner

The artworks in our Methodist Modern Art Collection do not enjoy the charmed existence of hanging in a gallery for most of their days but instead follow a touring lifestyle with periods of rest in exhibition venues or storage of differing standards. There is clearly a positive in this as the mission purposes of the Collection are met but also a negative in terms of the greater level of exposure to wear and tear compared to largely static collections.

The Management Committee has recognised the need to foster a higher level of care and conservation of the Collection beyond all that has been accomplished to date - within cost constraints. It was decided that a training day should be devoted to a programme focusing on loan arrangements and responsibilities, understanding how condition reporting should be undertaken, packing arrangements, buildings security, environmental conditions and volunteer

training. The timing also seemed appropriate given the significant changes in the Management Committee with some long serving members retiring and five new members joining. Monday 1 October 2018 presented an opportunity being just after the Winsford 'Salt and Light' exhibition closed and before transport arrived to take the artworks onward to Dublin. Members able to attend were joined by Chezzy Brownen, who had been commissioned, in July, to undertake a wide-ranging procedural and practice review of the Collection. As pictures were being taken down she used them to illustrate particular issues and a number of practical handling tasks were undertaken by committee members. In the afternoon Chezzy shared some of the preliminary findings from her review. We were also able to see work being undertaken to provide a detailed baseline record of the condition of each picture that will serve to prioritise later conservation work.

This full day represented another useful stage in trying to ensure the Collection remains in quality condition and a valuable resource available for future generations. Thanks must be expressed to those from the Winsford team for accommodating this day at a time when they simply wanted to dismantle and take a well-deserved rest. Across their two church sites they provided a visible reminder of all a local group has to tackle in hosting an exhibition and how borrower perspectives need to be factored into our guidance and requests.

– Ian Baker



(From top) A young member's interpretation, in clay, of Ghislaine Howard's *The Washing of the Feet*, at a Messy Church session; Works on display at St Andrews, Winsford

FAITH AND THE ARTIST

The Royal Hibernian

Academy, Dublin

14 November – 21 December 2018

The visit of the Methodist Modern Art Collection to Dublin represented another exciting ‘first’ – an exhibition of the Collection *beyond* the borders of the U.K and the Crown Dependency of the Isle of Man. From the outset, members of Curator Neil Payne’s Steering Committee were clear in identifying their three objectives: - to provide an educational and spiritual experience for those who visited the exhibition, to raise the profile of the Methodist Church in Ireland and to engage with folk of all ages beyond the relatively small Methodist community within the Republic.

Footfall within the Royal Hibernian Academy over the five-week period of the ‘Faith and the Artist’ exhibition exceeded 23,000. Although RHA Reception do not differentiate in counting between visitors to different galleries within the building, we understand that the vast majority saw the Collection on display. From comments received, the RHA’s skilful hanging, although only using 30 works from the Collection, proved particularly effective. It is perhaps to be regretted that there was no actual presence in the exhibition area to welcome visitors and be able to talk about the works, but the rules of the RHA did not allow for specific stewarding in the exhibition gallery itself.

Management Committee member Sarah Middleton had conducted a well-received seminar ahead of the Opening and there was a further programme of talks with popular appeal. Three schools engaged, on pre-arranged visits, with guided tours, taking advantage of the schools’ material thoughtfully prepared and available to young visitors. A number of other schools made their own arrangements. Other groups taking advantage of guided tours were the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland, local Vocational History and

Art Appreciation Groups, together with students from the National College of Art and Design. There was an excellent website available throughout the period of the exhibition (with the core element of it still available for viewing today: methodistartdublin.ie). Posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram served to underline the extent to which it is possible, these days, to reach an even wider audience and confirmed the extent of interest in the Collection during its stay in Dublin.

Some words of Dr Gesa Thiessen, reviewing the exhibition in the Irish Times, make for interesting reading. Dr Thiessen is a theologian who lectures both at Trinity College, Dublin and at Sarum College, Salisbury: *‘From the 1980s onwards theological research on the relationship between faith and the arts has proliferated on an unprecedented scale. A curious and remarkable addition to this development is the Methodist Church Collection of Modern Christian Art currently on exhibition at the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin. It is curious and remarkable indeed as one might not have expected the Methodists, originating from the non-conformist*



Left to right: Revd Billy Davison (President of the Methodist Church of Ireland), Lynda Neilands (Lay Leader) Neil Payne and John Gibbs. Photo: Revd Dr Peter Mercer

dissenter tradition, to venture into collecting religious art. But then, when one considers the life of John and Charles Wesley one may be less surprised, as neither ever left the Church of England. Ranging from stark existentialist works to more decorative, illustrative depictions, there is nothing showy or sensational here. Rather one will encounter works of art that were created with a profound sense of artistic integrity, prompted by an intention of trying to grapple authentically with the enduring themes of Christian faith’.

Compiled by the Editor, based on information supplied by Neil Payne, Chair of the Steering Committee appointed by the Dublin District of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

REFLECTING UPON THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF THE FRIENDS GROUP

The early seeds of an idea that a supportive body of Friends of the Collection might be established was first floated at a Trustees’ (now the Management Committee) Meeting, held in Oxford, back in May 2007; *the Minutes on that occasion read “A Friends Group would foster interest and good will”*. Trustees Sarah Middleton and Angela Dewar were asked to formulate the early planning on this and research the logistics of a Friends Launch, to be held in Bristol, in November 2008.

The Minutes of the October Trustees’ Meeting confirm that *“Bob Williams, who had recently come to the attention of the Trustees, should be asked to take on the role of Membership Secretary for the Friends Group”*.

I was thus appointed to the then body of Managing Trustees as Secretary to the Friends, with the brief to progress matters, including the provision of a Friends Newsletter to be published twice a year.

The initial Friends Group Launch subsequently took place on 14 November, 2008, at Wesley College, Bristol. This was a notable occasion kindly hosted by the then Principal, Revd Dr. Jonathan Pye, now Chair of the Bristol Methodist District. An event particularly well attended by members of the Bristol Victoria Methodist Church Art Appreciation Group, of whom a substantial number felt moved, by what they seen and heard, to sign up as Friends.

A second Launch then took place, in the Spring of 2009, to coincide with the Collection showing in the City of York – both at the Minster and York Central Methodist Church. Since which time we have been able to promote occasional Friends events which have, as mentioned elsewhere, included a ‘Meet



(From top) Trustees (as they were then termed) left to right: Sarah Middleton, Angela Dewar & Ann Sumner; Mary Hill contemplates Muafangejo’s *Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord Jesus for R.3.00*, 1972. Linocut; Rachel Newton in full flow at the Friends Launch!

the Artists evening’, at WallSpace in the City of London, to coincide with their 2010 hosting of the Collection. Susie Hamilton and Mark Cazalet were our speakers on this occasion. There have, subsequently, been other events where we have enjoyed listening to some of our extant artists, such as Ghislaine Howard, Nick Mynheer and Clive Hicks-Jenkins, recount their experiences.

Since inception we have been greatly appreciative of the support of our Honorary Patrons. The President of the Methodist Conference is always invited to stand to coincide with his or her year of Office. Very sadly, since 2008 we have lost two who were particularly proactive in this role: Revd Tom Devonshire-Jones and Revd David Gamble (initially as President of Conference then invited in his own right). The current, permanent team, representative both of the art world and Church bodies, are the Very Revd Nick Bury, former Dean of Gloucester Cathedral, Phil Allison, M.D of Cultureshock Media who have been so generous with their services over the years, and, as reported in the Editorial to this edition, the recent addition of Lord Leslie Griffiths of Burry Port, now Opposition Spokesman for the Media and the Arts in the House of Lords.

We continue to be enormously grateful for both the tangible financial support received through subscriptions and donations – and your continuing expressions of appreciation for our endeavours. As I now stand down as Secretary to the Friends I am delighted that Ian Baker will be in post to oversee Friends Group matters and to carry things forward with fresh initiatives.

– *The Editor*

TRUSTEES/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, PAST AND PRESENT, GATHER IN OXFORD



In early February, at the invitation of John and Elizabeth Gibbs, many of those who have, over the years, served as Trustees, Administrators, or on the current Management Committee gathered in Oxford. It was a joy to share in each other's company over a delicious lunch at the Quod Restaurant in the 'High'; a perfect opportunity to share reminiscences of all that had been achieved with the Collection over the 20 years of John's tenure as Chair.

In his words of welcome John gave generous plaudits to all who had served – past and present – as Patrons, Trustees or Management Committee members and included a warm tribute to the work of the late Geoff Cornell and David Gamble. As John commented, we have indeed been privileged in our companions along the way. At the conclusion of lunch, and on behalf of those present, Ann Sumner, Chair of our Management Committee, expressed our warm appreciation to John and Elizabeth for their generosity in hosting the occasion.

– *The Editor*

(from top) Sarah Middleton with Roger Greeves and former Administrator Mary Roseweir; Newly appointed Secretary to the Friends, Ian Baker (centre), with Ann Baker and Chris Shott; John Gibbs, reflecting on two decades of service by the Art Collection team; Ann Sumner, thanking John and Elizabeth for their generous hosting of the Oxford Lunch.

SEEING THE SPIRITUAL - A GUIDE TO THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION

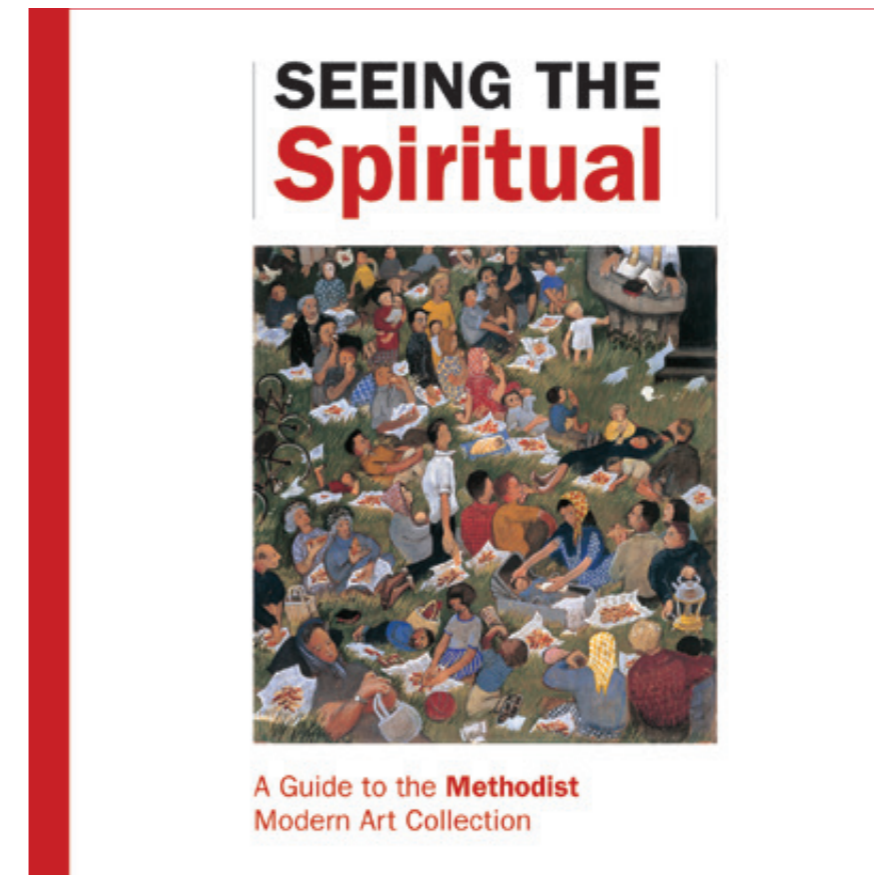
This expanded and revised edition of the Guide to the Methodist Modern Art Collection is based on an original text by Roger Wollen, with additional contributions by members of the Management Committee of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

The Guide features a Foreword by the art critic Richard Cork, a new Preface by Ann Sumner, Chair of the Management Committee of the Collection and an Introduction by Graham Kent.

Famous names from the British art world of the past 100 years are

represented, such as Norman Adams, Edward Burra, Elisabeth Frink, Maggi Hambling, David Jones, Ceri Richards, William Roberts and Graham Sutherland. International artists include Georges Rouault from France, F N Souza and Jyoti Sahi from India, Sadao Watanabe from Japan, and John Muafangejo from Southern Africa.

The Guide costs £7.99 (plus P&P £2.50) and is published by Methodist Publishing. It can be ordered by contacting Norwich Books and Music by telephone 0845 017 8220, or email: orders@norwichbooksandmusic.co.uk



OBITUARY NOTICE

We are much saddened to report the death, in her 102nd year, of Hilda Stevens, of Bath. Hilda was our oldest subscribing member of the Friends Group and always interested in news of the Collection. We extend our sincere condolences to her family.

NEW ROOM MUSEUM, THE HORSEFAIR, BRISTOL

‘What a wonderful way to explain the history of Methodism...’

The radical and exciting re-development of the entire New Room site, the oldest Methodist building in the world, was made possible very largely through access to Heritage Lottery Funding resources, with the Museum very much at the heart of the scheme. Further generous grants from the Bristol Methodist District and from a number of small trusts, including the Leonard Laity Stoate Charitable Trust, were also significant to the overall planning. Opened in July 2017, the first floor space that now houses the Museum tells the story of the Wesleys, from John’s arrival in Bristol in 1739, and of the growth, from small beginnings, of 18th Century Methodism.

The Museum actually occupies the Preachers’ Rooms that Wesley had built immediately above the Meeting Room. The themed rooms are quite small but thoughtfully designed to provide maximum visual information without ever appearing cluttered and, throughout, there are opportunities to access a number of hands-on displays, designed to be accessible to both children and adults. A number of the rooms focus on issues of social justice that resonated so strongly with ‘JW’. Making a particular impact is the gallery devoted to his implacable stance on the Abolition of Slavery.

As with any museum there are fascinating artefacts that catch the eye: the chair from which, at the advanced age of 87, Wesley preached his last open-



The Common Room, showing the ‘Primitive Physic’ Dispensary which, as an early forerunner of the NHS, provided free health care for the folk of Bristol who came seeking it

air sermon in 1790, the extraordinary Adam Clarke ‘Tree Stump’ chair and the recently acquired, so-called ‘Lily Portrait’, of Charles Wesley as a young man. Possibly the most bizarre are both the eye patch and sword belonging to Captain Thomas Webb, one of the early missionary preachers despatched abroad from the New Room (he always carried both into the pulpit when preaching!). He has a rightful claim to be considered the principal founder of Methodism in the U.S.A.

I liked the use of Wesleyan ‘banner quotations’ strategically positioned within the museum space: *‘An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge’... ‘Who can reconcile war – to any degree of reason or common sense’... and, of course, the keynote quotation dating from 1738 – ‘I felt my heart strangely warmed’.*

I do feel it a little disappointing, given the generous space allocated to his other key relationships with women, including Grace Murray, whom he might have wed, that there is simply no mention of John Wesley’s disastrous marriage to Molly Vazeille in the Museum’s coverage. While appreciating

that this rather sad story does not sit too comfortably with the public perception of his great achievements, it can hardly be airbrushed from history?

A Visitors’ Book is always a good indicator of the impact made by any well-planned museum or gallery. The following comments would seem to confirm the Five Star status of this one: *‘Really lovely museum – and, clearly, John Wesley a wonderful man with right-thinking principles’... ‘So much has changed at the New Room in 15 years but the essence of Wesley remains. Fantastic curatorial job’... ‘Brilliant displays; very inspiring. Makes me feel good to be a Methodist minister!’... ‘What a wonderful way to explain the history of Methodism’.*

A helpful audio guide (available in three languages) is included in the admission charge. Altogether well worth a visit. In the meantime an informative website will keep you abreast of New Room news, as will recourse to TripAdvisor.

– *The Editor*

CHELTENHAM - TUESDAY 23 APRIL TO SUNDAY 12 MAY 2019

Cheltenham has acquired a notable reputation for hosting four Festivals covering Jazz, Science, Music and Literature during the course of each year. A fifth is now emerging with its Christian Arts Festival which started in 2016, mainly using churches from across all denominations in the Cheltenham and Gloucester areas as its venues.

Rachel Treweek, the Bishop of Gloucester, has become its new Patron and summed up the first two Festivals as follows:

‘I have witnessed a wonderful showcase where creative artists share their faith through many expressions such as song, visual art, drama and storytelling. The events have been enjoyed by a wide range of audiences from different faith backgrounds, and those of no faith, who respect the Christian invitation to everyone to celebrate, explore and discover more of life in many joyful and vibrant ways’

For those interested specifically in art the 2019 programme offers a variety of practical sessions, an art trail of exhibitions and other related events. Worth highlighting are:

Practical Course

A five days icon painting course led by Ian Knowles, a master iconographer and Principal of Bethlehem Icon School. *Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 April 2019, 10am - 4pm, St Nicholas Church, Prestbury.*

Meditations and Discussion

Images of the Divine – Meditations and Discussion on the paintings of Sieger Köder. *Sunday 28 April 2019, 2.30 - 5.00pm, St Paul and St Stephen, Gloucester.*

Talks

New Altarpiece - P J Crook MBE. *Thursday 2 May 2019, 7.30pm, St Michael and All Angels Church, Bishops Cleeve*

Encountering Gospel Women in Paint - Professor Philip Esler of the University of Gloucester. *Thursday 9 May 2019, 7pm, The Wilson, Cheltenham.*

Imaging the Story – Art and Poetry through the Bible - Gill Sakakini. *Thursday 9 May 2019, 7.30pm, Discover DeCrypt (St Mary de Crypt), Gloucester.*

The full programme and ticket prices can be viewed at www.christianartsfestival.org which contains link details for online bookings. A paper brochure is advertised as being available from mid February 2019. Email contact is nikki@christianartsfestival.org

– *Ian Baker*

‘SEVEN LAST WORDS’

6 March – 22 April (Daily 10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.)

St. Michael’s Church, Discoed, LD8 2NW

I would draw your attention to the biennial exhibition currently showing at St. Michael’s. Fourteen artists have again been invited to complete work on the Lenten theme ‘Seven Last Words’.

A NEW FRANK ROPER CENTRE IN CARDIFF

A permanent exhibition to honour the life and work of British sculptor Frank Roper MBE - of course well represented in our own Collection - has recently opened in the Church of the Resurrection, Grand Avenue, Ely, Cardiff CF5 4HX. The Centre was unveiled in a special service of rededication of the church, led by the Bishop of Llandaff, on Sunday 24 February and will open to the public every Sunday (until 4pm), with specially trained volunteers on hand to provide guided tours of the Roper work on display within the building.

FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2019

2 May - 9 June 2019

'WONDERING SOUL'

Leicester (The Cathedral; Bishop Street Methodist Church; St. Andrews Church; St. Nicholas' Church; Launde Abbey)

Contact: Bethany Piggott
Email: Bethany.Piggott@LecCofE.org
(Also: Revd Fran Rhys
fran.rhys@methodist.org.uk)

Again, in advance of this exhibition, we would flag up the availability of an interesting website which includes a request for willing volunteers in a variety of roles: www.wonderingsoul.co.uk

In addition to the exhibition, there will be a programme of exciting creative events for all ages, including workshops, talks, artist residencies and a county-wide poetry project.

2020

21 March - 19 April 2020

Bewdley, Worcestershire (Wyre Forest Gallery, Bewdley Museum)

Contact: Jim Ineson: 01299 405645
Email: jim.ineson@gmail.com

(TBC) SEPTEMBER 2020

Windermere, Cumbria

Contact: Revd Martyn Coe,
01539 533223
Email: unitedchurch@btinternet.com

WONDERING SOUL
An art trail exhibition through Leicester city centre
using over 40 works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection

2nd May - 9th June 2019 • free entry

PARTICIPATING VENUES:
Leicester Cathedral 2 Peaseock Ln, Leicester LE1 9PQ
Bishop Street Methodist Church Town-Hill Square, Leicester LE1 6AF
St Andrews Church 7 Janom Street, Leicester LE2 7DH
St Nicholas Church St Nicholas Circle, Leicester LE1 4LJ
featuring guest venue Launde Abbey East Norton LE17 9GB

For more details, visit www.wonderingsoul.co.uk @LeicsCathedral

The publicity poster designed for Leicester's 'Wondering Soul' exhibition

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

“Painting is the grandchild of nature. It is related to God.”
– Rembrandt van Rijn

We are delighted to enjoy the support of our Honorary Patrons: Revd the Lord Leslie Griffiths of Burry Port; President of Methodist Conference; The Very Revd Nick Bury and Mr Phil Allison.

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