

# NEWSLETTER

NO.10 – WINTER 2013

£1.00 WHERE SOLD

Methodist **Modern**  
Art Collection



*Can you persuade a friend to become  
a Friend of the Collection?*

*The Barber celebrates its 80th birthday*

*Edward Robinson remembered*

*A Trustee in profile: Revd. Graham Kent*

## DEAR FRIEND

We have been delighted to receive so much favourable comment on the greatly improved quality of both the Newsletter and Annual Report. I would, again, like to acknowledge our debt to Phil Allison and his Cultureshock Media team. You may like to know that the current Newsletter, latest Annual Report and the new Publicity Leaflet (with Friends Application Form) can all be accessed via the Collection website. Simply go to [www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/creative-arts](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/creative-arts) where you will readily find the Methodist Art Collection listed.

### Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

(The Supporters of the Methodist Modern Art Collection)

Patrons: President of Conference, The Very Revd. Nick Bury, The Revd. Tom Devonshire Jones, The Revd. David Gamble

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## INTRODUCE A FRIEND

*Can you persuade a friend to become a Friend of the Collection?... We are enormously grateful to our loyal core of Friends but, with ever increasing expenditure very much in mind, we are keen to increase our numbers. Please do what you can to spread the word!*



Left: Edward Armitage Robinson, *Resurrection LIV*, 2008. Iroko



Below: Edward Armitage Robinson, *Transfiguration XXXV*, 2008. French Oak

## A TRIBUTE TO

# Edward Armitage Robinson

1921–2013

Edward Robinson, the veteran sculptor, who died in May of this year, is best described as an Abstract Modernist whose work, in many ways, bears the influence of Nicholson and Rothko.

Edward, the brother of theologian John Robinson, was born in Canterbury where both his father and grandfather were Cathedral Canons. A career of contrasts included a long spell in the teaching profession, both in the U.K. and Zambia, a period as a botanist at Kew, a painter and writer (his work includes *The Language of Mystery*, reflecting on our tradition of religious art) and, significantly, a spell at Manchester College, Oxford as the Director of the Religious Experience Research Unit. It was here that he was able to further a particular interest in the influence of the arts on the development of spiritual growth.

A thirty-five year relationship with wood and bronze led him to produce work of an essentially tactile nature. The viewer is encouraged, literally to open doors and touch, as many of his pieces are in triptych or relief form. The use of the triptych, in the Christian tradition, was in itself a form of visual narrative: In Robinson's words 'The Annunciation opening up to the Incarnation and the Incarnation to the Crucifixion. But what lay beyond that Crucifixion? That was not within the powers of human depiction. Thus the triptych can do no more than hint at any such consummation'. Many of his bronzes were based on the moebius ring and are a reflection upon, and response to, Naum Gabo's copper tennis ball.

Edward Robinson had been carving his sculptural forms, and casting the odd piece in bronze, since the 1970s although, sadly, since the early years of this century, failing eyesight began seriously to curtail his output. Thus the delightful little exhibition – *'Forms of Silence': St. Margaret's, Westminster Abbey*. (13 February–25 March 2013) and previous shows, under the same title, in Exeter Cathedral (2007), Canterbury Cathedral (2009) and at the Othona Community, Dorset (2012), were curated by his friend and former studio assistant, David Butler; all exhibitions, essentially, lifetime retrospectives of his thought provoking work.

There are some 160 pieces in Private Collections worldwide with further examples commissioned by institutions in Canada, the U.S.A., Poland and here in the U.K. The book, *'Forms of Silence'* (which includes a foreword by Methodist Modern Art Collection Patron, Tom Devonshire Jones) can be purchased via the website [www.formsofsilence.co.uk](http://www.formsofsilence.co.uk).

The Barber Institute celebrates its  
*80th Anniversary*

I think it appropriate to acknowledge this significant date in the evolution of one of the nation's finest gallery collections outside London. You won't need reminding that our own Methodist Church Art Collection trustees have, within their ranks, Professor Ann Sumner who continues to be the source of much wise counsel. Ann was an outstanding Director of the Barber Institute, at the helm there from 2007–12, having previously held curatorial positions at the Whitworth in Manchester, Dulwich Picture Gallery, the Harewood House Trust, the Holburne, Bath and an influential role as Head of Fine Art at the National Museum of Wales. In December 2012, she was appointed Director of the Bronte Museum, at Haworth.



The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham

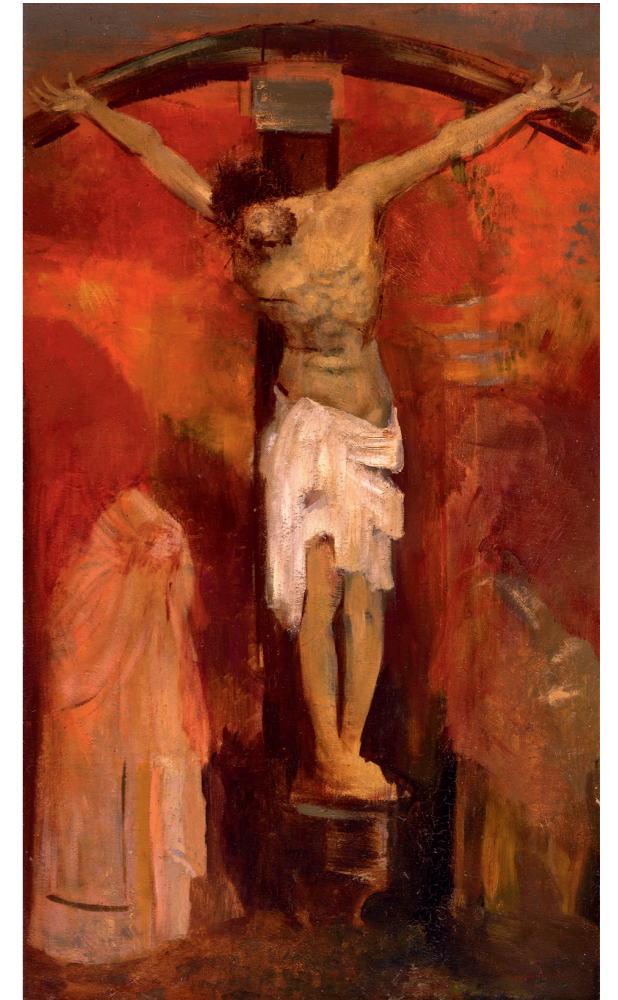
**THE BIRTH OF A COLLECTION**

*(22 May–1 September 2013)*

Recognising the bond of friendship between Professor Thomas Bodkin, the Barber's first Director, and Kenneth Clark, the legendary Director of the National, this landmark 80th Anniversary enjoyed an appropriate focus at both venues. The first twelve paintings bought by Bodkin, largely on Clark's advice, were on show through the summer at the National, under the banner '*Birth of a Collection*'. Their appearance in London attracted considerable interest and, indeed, minor controversy; this in the form of the discordant views expressed by the notorious Telegraph and Evening Standard critic, Brian Sewell who chose to describe the twelve paintings in question as a '*poxy little display*' and the Trecento Crucifixion, specifically, as a '*nasty little wreck*'. So much nonsense of course, but I suppose his jaundiced views do help to sell his employer's newspapers.



Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), *Ecce Homo*, c.1625. Oil on canvas



Odilon Redon (1840-1916), *Crucifixion*, c.1904. Oil on canvas

**ABOUT FACE**

*(17 May–1 September 2013)*

The Barber, in its turn, took a loan of a number of the National's finest Old Master portraits to 'fill the gaps', giving them the collective themed title of '*About Face*'; the first time in its 80 year history that it could claim to have a major Rembrandt, Goya, van Leyden and a Cezanne on its walls.

While at the Barber I took the opportunity to re-evaluate the quality of its religious art and in particular its telling of the New Testament story, in painting, over some four hundred years. There are about a dozen major works within this genre ranging, chronologically, from Botticelli's '*Mother and Child and the infant St. John*' of 1480, through

to Odilon Redon's Symbolist '*Crucifixion*' of c. 1904. Fra Bartolommeo's chalk drawing, '*Mother and Child with Saints*' (1508), remains significant as the very first purchase made, back in 1936, to inaugurate this fine collection. Other works that catch the eye include Peter Lely's '*The Penitent Magdalen*' (c. 1650), currently on long loan from a private collection, and Murillo's majestic painting, recently restored, '*The Feast at Cana*' (c. 1672); so much to take in from this enormous canvas. However, in my humble opinion, the silver and gold medals, respectively, go to van Dyck's powerful '*Ecce Homo*' (c. 1625) and Matteo di Giovanni's '*Mother with St. John and St. Michael, the Archangel*'; serenity personified.

Long may the Barber continue to delight and impress; a visit is a 'must do' to add to any art lover's list.

# Managing Trustees of the Collection

IN THIS EDITION WE TURN THE SPOTLIGHT  
ON LONG SERVING TRUSTEE, THE REVD. GRAHAM KENT



Graham Kent is Secretary to the Trustees of the Collection and has been involved with its management and tours for many years. He has worked in London, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester (most recently as Ecumenical Officer for Greater Manchester Churches Together) in urban, rural and ecumenical settings. He studied Theology at Kings College London and later took a Masters' Degree in Art History at Leeds.

Graham writes: 'I have always been interested in art, design and architecture from school studies, working in a contemporary furnisher in the holidays and visiting country houses and galleries as a teenager. School trips to Italy and Greece really blew my mind.'

I can still recall the extraordinary impact of visiting the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.'

'I first saw the Collection in the early 70's when a friend introduced me to Douglas Wollen. This resulted in my being asked to convene conversations about its future, creation of a body of Trustees and taking on most of the administration and the programme of tours for quite a while! Over the years we have established much goodwill and, I believe, an enviable reputation for our endeavours, not only through the extensive programme of tours but also in the use of images in publications and liturgical experiences. I am pleased to be part of the group that, as the opportunity presents itself, seeks to acquire new works.'

'The Collection is a remarkable channel for conveying our teachings and feelings we have about God and faith. If, in some small way, promoting the Collection assists in this evangelistic purpose then it is time well spent.'

Graham is currently the incumbent Minister at Fairfield Moravian Church in Droylsden, Greater Manchester. He is also a Member of the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity and Mission.

# A work in focus

TRUSTEE GRAHAM KENT'S CHOICE

Graham Sutherland's *'Deposition'*, 1947, oil. Purchased for the Collection in 1964, this painting was first owned by the poet, Stephen Spender. Sutherland is, of course, represented in numerous national collections with the London Tate and the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, being home to the best of his archive in the public domain.

'This painting has long attracted me as it speaks so powerfully about the death of Christ. We know that it springs from Graham Sutherland's own spirituality, which draws on his love of landscape and organic forms, but also his awareness of photographic images of the liberation of the concentration camps at the conclusion of World War II. So this says to me that Christ is constantly present in the agony of the world and part of the material landscape of which we, as created beings, are very much a part. His skill with creating varying surfaces and different colours, over a few centimetres of the canvas, draws one into a work which is in the tradition of great devotional art in Europe.'

Graham Sutherland (1903-1980),  
*Deposition*, 1947. Oil. From the  
Methodist Modern Art Collection



# GLEANINGS AND REFLECTIONS



Mark Cazalet (b. 1964), *Fool of God: Christ in the Garden*, 1993. Oil on paper. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

## BELIEF

*Mark Cazalet in conversation with Joan Bakewell. BBC R3.*

This was a most interesting half hour programme in which Mark Cazalet talked about the tensions he experiences between the rationality he requires of himself as an artist and the ecstasy he has as a Christian about the dilemmas of working to ecclesiastical commissions.

In the course of the programme Mark talked about a coming to faith as a clearly definable physical experience while he was still at school and a subsequent 'severe cooling off' from a strong evangelical background. He has little time for artificial denominational divisions, a viewpoint that allows him to engage wholeheartedly in ecclesiastical commissions 'across the board'. He also gave us a fascinating insight into his brief period studying at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, in Paris, giving him, as he put it, a free pass to the Louvre to spend long periods soaking up the influences of so many great artists. Similarly, time spent in India played its part in shaping him as the artist he is.

Mark concluded his remarks on air with a reference to important areas of his work as being privately contemplative and conjured up a lovely painterly metaphor, equating watching the early morning sunrise in favourite woodland with the words of the Magnificat and the fading of the evening light, in the self same landscape, with the Nunc Dimittis. Altogether a fascinating insight into the work and thinking of one of our popular Collection artists whose work can also be seen in Manchester, Worcester and Chelmsford Cathedrals.

## THE COLLECTION ON ITS TRAVELS...



Far left: The Revd. Peter Hancock and the Rt. Revd. Donald Allister opening the show

Left: Works displayed in Peterborough Cathedral

## RISEN

*'Art of the Crucifixion and Eastertide' (23 March–21 April 2013)*

Further to the full report on this exhibition at Piano Nobile/ Monnow, carried in our Spring edition, you will be interested to know that the 2013 Annual Report, now in preparation, will include a review of the various satellite exhibitions, in Hereford and the Borders, which ran concurrently with the Monnow Valley Arts show. The comment on the inspired hang at Hereford Cathedral makes particularly interesting reading and includes the following – 'The smallest painting had, arguably, the most privileged place: right at the end of the High Altar rail. Here, De Maistre's Christ at the table at Emmaus looked down with love on those who recognize him and come to his Supper'.

## WORD IN FRAME

*Peterborough Cathedral (8–30 June 2013)*

Peterborough Cathedral, with its splendid 15th C. Fan vaulting, proved an impressive setting, during the month of June, for the display of 38 works from the Collection. Arranged by 'Churches Together in Peterborough', in partnership with 'Vivacity Peterborough' and the Methodist churches within the city, the exhibition enjoyed the joint patronage of the Revd. Peter Hancock (Chair of the Northampton District of the Methodist Church) and the Right Revd. Donald Allister, the Bishop of Peterborough.

Some 500 folk visited the cathedral precincts specifically to see the exhibition, together with an un-quantified number who took a peek while passing through. Linked to the 'Word in Frame' theme was a solo drama performance – *'Impossible God'*, by Mark Topping, and also a well attended talk by artist Mark Cazalet.

# ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD...

## BRILLIANCE AND GRACE

*Federico Barocci at the National Gallery (27 February–19 May 2013)*

While the RA and the British Museum were both witnessing an unseemly scramble to meet the demands of the viewing public (the *Manet – Portraying Life* and *Ice Age Art* / *Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum* respectively) it seemed to go largely unnoticed that the Barocci drawings and paintings exhibition was quietly showing at the National from late February to mid-May. Barocci bridged the 16th/ Early 17th Centuries and this relatively small show, mounted in the Sainsbury Wing, was well worth viewing.

The exhibition included some dramatic altarpieces and a gloriously colourful and remarkably contented looking Holy Family, taking respite on their Flight from Egypt (from the Vatican Art Coll.). It was, however the stunning quality of the chalk studies and preparatory drawings that really caught the eye. The delightful little studies of hands, fingers and toes, and the incredibly expressive heads of the likes of St. Francis, Joseph of Arimathea, Zacharias, Nicodemus confirmed the view that he has to be ranked as one of the world's greatest draughtsmen. Certainly, his skilful manipulation of coloured chalks on paper puts him right up there with Raphael.

## ODYSSEY

*Bath Abbey (5 April–6 May 2013)*

This was a small exhibition of some seven pieces, co-curated with the bo.lee Gallery, Bath, which featured sculptural pieces by Tessa Farmer, Patrick Haines, Damien Hirst and Koji Shiraya, together with an imposing mixed media collage by David Mach. The two dominant exhibits were undoubtedly Damien Hirst's powerful piece *'St. Bartholomew: Exquisite Pain'* – first seen at the 2006 Sotheby's *'Beyond Limits'* Chatsworth House sculpture show and, subsequently,

at Gloucester Cathedral (*'Crucible'* exhibition, 2010). The other was the enormous David Mach framed collage *'Jacob's Ladder'*, set within the South Transept, offering a startling and contemporary rendering of the Bible story which has, for six centuries, been so closely identified with Bath Abbey.

Quoting Alan Garrow, Vicar Theologian of Bath Abbey – 'This is an exhibition that resonates with the big questions of life, death and eternity; questions that echo loudly in this place in the days following Easter, hopefully a rich experience for everyone who spends time with these particular exhibits'.



Damien Hirst, *Exquisite Pain*, 2006. Bronze

## MASTER DRAWINGS

*at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (25 May–18 August 2013)*

I had the pleasure of viewing this very fine exhibition in the company of a fellow trustee following a busy day, in conclave, at our annual Oxford gathering at Westminster, Oxford Brookes. Press credits included *'Dazzling'* and *'Show of the Year'*.

A chronological display, taking us through the great names of the Italian Renaissance, on through the best of what European artists could offer us over the full 400 year period spanning the 17th–20th Centuries.

The extraordinarily fine touch achieved by the likes of Titian, Michelangelo, Leonardo and Raphael, when using their favoured medium of chalk – particularly red chalk – is, to me, one of the great mysteries of the art world. Michelangelo's *'Samson and Delilah'* and Raphael's studies of two apostles, for the *'Transfiguration'* (1518–20) painting that is in the Vatican Collection, were two such drawings.

The 17th and 18th Centuries were well represented by the likes of Ludovico Carracci, Rembrandt, Watteau, Tiepolo and our own Thomas Gainsborough and Sir David Wilkie. Drawings on display from the 19th and 20th Century featured a progression from the work of 'Brits', J. R. Cozens, Turner, Samuel Palmer, both Gwen and Augustus John to the still extant David Hockney. A strong French presence was evident in the work of Gustave Courbet, Pissarro and Degas.

All in all an exhibition that certainly lived up to the critics' lavish praise and served to remind one of the wealth of treasures that the Ashmolean holds within its own archives.

## REMBRANDT & HIS CONTEMPORARIES; PAINTINGS FROM THE ROYAL COLLECTION

*The Holburne Museum, Bath (22 May–29 September 2013)*

This *'exhibition of pure pleasure'* (The Independent) was recently on offer in the elegant setting of the Holburne. Described by the Museum's Director, Alexander Sturgis, as *'a breathtaking group of Dutch and Flemish masterpieces'*, this was but a glimpse of the enduring legacy of a life time of collecting by George IV, primarily when Prince Regent. It certainly caused a frisson of excitement to have a couple of outstanding paintings by Rembrandt van Rijn passing through the city.

Invited to respond to these two works, on a well-presented audio guide, Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury and Collection artist Maggi Hambling offer a very personal insight...

Nicholas Holtam, on *'Christ and St. Mary Magdalene at the Tomb'* (1638): 'One marvels at Rembrandt's genius in being able to focus on the human condition... capturing the quality of surprise in Mary's expression... that sense of promise of the new dawn conveyed in the skilful play of light'.

Maggi Hambling, reflecting on Rembrandt's *'An Old Woman, called the Artist's Mother'* (1629) and the artist's

strong influence on her own approach to portraiture: *'I admire Rembrandt's un-erring touch with paint to achieve a sense of the moment of looking. The great painters, and particularly Rembrandt, take you into a place where life and death co-exist; a central premise of the point of art'*.

Also included in the exhibition was a very fine oil sketch by Rubens, *'The Assumption of the Virgin'* (1612), painted as a presentation piece for a commission for the High Altar in Antwerp Cathedral.

## THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

You may be interested to know that this very useful little book, latterly out of print, has just re-appeared, in paperback, in a 2nd edition, now edited by the Revd. Tom Devonshire Jones (Director Emeritus of ACE and Methodist Modern Art Collection Patron).

# FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

## 2014

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5 March–29 April

### **Trinity Methodist Church, Wirral Circuit**

Contact: Revd. Christine M Jones  
01513 555 379  
christinemjonesmethodist@gmail.com  
www.trinityellesmereport.org.uk

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30 May–1 June

### **Methodists for World Mission Conference**

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick  
(not open for public viewing)

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Summer

### **Haworth, Yorks.**

Brontë Parsonage (tbc)

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17 July–21 September

### **Yorkshire Dales, Leyburn**

Tennants Auctioneers, The Auction  
Centre, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 5SG  
Contact: Revd. Alan Coustick  
01969 625 749  
alan.coustick@methodist.org.uk

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1–14 October

### **Banbury Circuit**

Contact: Mike King  
01295 678 958  
mpk\_mcb@hotmail.co.uk

## 2015

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Mid-January–end March

### **Wrexham Methodist Church Regent Street**

Wrexham, North Wales, LL11 1RY

### **Oriel Sycharth Gallery, Glyndwr University**

Mold Road, Wrexham, LL11 2AW

Contact: Revd. Richard Sharples  
01978 361 489

rvsharples@phonecoop.coop

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(tbc)

### **Post-Easter: Ballymena, N Ireland**

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(tbc)

### **Autumn: Cambridge Methodist Circuit**

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## 2016

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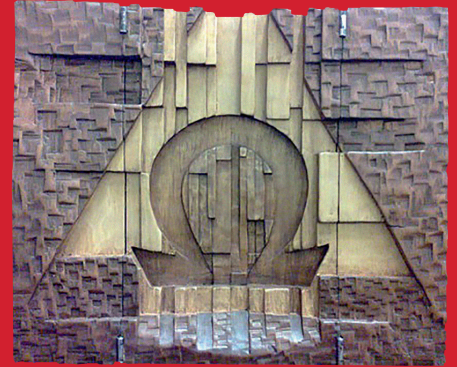
(tbc)

### **Lent: Lincoln Cathedral**

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(tbc) April–June

### **Ealing**



Edward Armitage Robinson,  
*Alpha/Omega IV*, 1996. Mahogany.  
Image courtesy of David Butler

## A THOUGHT TO LEAVE WITH YOU....

*'All works of visual art may be thought of as forms of silence yet can still speak to us. Art can be an embodiment, an incarnation of a mystery: a mystery which Christians believe is both concealed and revealed in all aspects of the natural world and it can tell a story'. — The late Edward Robinson, sculptor*