

# NEWSLETTER

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Methodist Modern  
Art Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



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*Young People's Perspectives on the Collection*  
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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring issue of the Newsletter.

The Management Committee always aims to work ecumenically. Our latest exhibition, which you can read about in this issue, is at the Focolare Centre for Unity. And I was delighted when senior Anglican, and writer on religious art, Fr. Nicholas Holtam, accepted my invitation to write our In Focus article.

The Committee also strives to engage with children and young people, so I am very excited to be able to publish three really insightful pieces by A Level art students at Kingswood School.

Our next exhibition will shortly be opening in Eastbourne. Do check out the back cover for more details.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

### Management Committee Members

Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Sarah Allard, Katharine Farnham-Dear, Emily Fuggle, the Revd. Catherine Hutton, the Revd. Graham Kent, David Maddock (Secretary, Friends Group), David McEvoy, Corinne Miller (Vice-Chair), Peter Shears, the Revd. Adam Stevenson. In attendance: Jo Hibbard (Director of Engagement), Liz Millard (Collection Administrator), Olivia Threlkeld (Heritage & Collections Officer).

### Patrons of the Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

The President of Conference, the Revd. Gill Newton, The Very Revd. Nick Bury, Phil Allison of Cultureshock Media, Lord Leslie Griffiths of Bury Port

### Liz Millard

Administrator

Phone: 020 7467 5214

email: [artcollection@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:artcollection@methodistchurch.org.uk)

[www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection](http://www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection)

### David Maddock

Secretary to the Friends of the Collection

30 Kingsmead Road,

Knighton

Leicester LE2 3YB

Phone: 07800 981262

email: [friendsofmmac@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmmac@gmail.com)

### Katharine Farnham-Dear

Newsletter Editor

Phone: 07908 843589

email: [KatharineFD@aol.com](mailto:KatharineFD@aol.com)

Produced by Cultureshock Media

Art Director: Alfonso Iacurci

[www.cultureshockmedia.co.uk](http://www.cultureshockmedia.co.uk)

Front Cover: Paul Gateshill and Stephen Hibbert hanging Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of the Holy Communion* at the Focolare Centre in Welwyn Garden City (photo: The Editor)

# NEW MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

We are delighted to introduce David McEvoy and the Revd. Adam Stevenson who have been co-opted to the Management Committee

## DAVID MCEVOY



David took early retirement from his full-time job as a trade union education officer to train as a Reader (licensed lay minister) in the Church of England. He lives, works and worships in Greenwich, South East London. He is continuing his studies, working for a Master's Degree in Theology, Imagination and Culture at Sarum College in Salisbury. David's first degree was in the History of Art and his current course allows him to revisit this area and combine it with his interest in faith and theology. He has a particular interest in British religious art of the twentieth century. He believes that the visual arts can engage people in faith and spirituality in new and refreshing ways and that the Collection is a wonderful resource for this. He is very excited about being involved with the Collection and is currently writing short biographies of the Collection's artists for the website.

## ADAM STEVENSON



Adam Stevenson is the Superintendent Minister of the Forth Valley Circuit in the Scotland District and worked in personnel and governance before training for the ministry.

He has always been interested in art and the Methodist Modern Art Collection in particular, using it in worship and as an inspiration for his own collecting.

Adam spends a lot of his spare time in Kirkcudbright, where members of the Glasgow Boys and Glasgow Girls visited and settled. Today many of their works can be seen in the Kirkcudbright Galleries, a favourite spot for Adam in town.

Adam is also researching Kirkcudbright artist William Robson, when not visiting the galleries of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee.

We should also mention that Helen Stanton has decided to step away from her role due to work commitments. We thank her for her engagement with and enthusiasm for the Collection and look forward to staying in contact. We wish her well in her new role.

# *A View from the Chair*

Professor Ann Sumner

As I write, a selection of 25 works are showing in an exhibition at the Focolare Centre for Unity called *Deepening the Mystery – ‘Unexpected treasures’ of art*. Since Welwyn Garden City was founded by Sir Ebenezer Howard in 1920, it has been an inspirational and radical example of 20th century British town planning. So, it is very appropriate for some of our most popular 20th century British paintings to be shown there, giving context and provoking thoughts about post-war aspirations for the arts. Welwyn Garden City was built primarily to architect Louis de Soissos’ masterplan, and he worked on the buildings there until his death in 1962, the very year the Collection was founded. Now, one of our key strategic aims is to encourage Ecumenical interaction. As the Focolare Movement seeks to build unity within Christian churches, it is highly appropriate that we should be exhibiting at the Movement’s UK centre. We are grateful to Paul Gatheshill and all the team for their dedicated work bringing the exhibition to fruition and to Committee members Graham Kent, Katharine Farnham-Dear and Corinne Miller for their supportive roles.

Much of my time has been spent recently supporting Committee Member Sarah Allard with the next exciting exhibition, *New Visions*, opening at Emmanuel Church in Eastbourne on 19 May (see back cover). This will be the first time the Collection has been shown in a newly built church. I hope to see many of you there this summer.

Meanwhile, work continues apace with the Bradford City of Culture programming for 2025 with the appointment of Verity Smith in a Faith and Arts Development Lead role. Verity will be employed by the Methodist District and based at Touchstone, Bradford, to facilitate connectivity, and ensure deep and lasting engagement

with communities. My particular thanks go to the Revd. Kerry Tankard, the District Chair and his colleagues, for their support of the loan programme for the City of Culture. Some of you may remember Verity who served on our Committee previously. She lives and works in the Bradford area, and we are delighted with her appointment to help coordinate and programme the exhibitions. The loan of our Roper sculptures to Woodhouse Grove Chapel has been extended so the school can participate in the Bradford 2025 programming. We are most grateful to the Gibbs Trust who are supporting our Bradford 2025 loans with a grant.

Much work is also being done on inputting full details of the Collection on the ArtUK website. We are inviting guest curators to create small online exhibitions, using the ArtUK tools, for the Methodist Conference in June. This will ensure that our Collection reaches online communities and researchers, significantly raising our profile. Friends might be interested in having a go themselves - the curating tool is easy to use and there are already a number of interesting curated online shows on religious themes. Do contact us if you are interested.

It has been a particular pleasure to work with our new committee members recently. Emily Fuggle has taken on the Convenor role of the Exhibitions and Planning Working Sub-Group, bringing much experience and insightful advice as we plan ahead. David McEvoy is researching and writing new biographies of the artists in the Collection for our website. David Maddock, who has already been so involved in the administration of the Friends, spoke at the Focolare opening. We have also been delighted to welcome the Revd. Adam Stevenson to the Governance and Fundraising Working Sub-Group.

Sadly, there are goodbyes to say as well. I particularly want to thank Rebecca Gibbs for her dedicated service to the Committee. She joined in November 2017 and played a key role in our Rejuvenation Pause, taking on the role of Convenor of the Governance and Fundraising Working Sub-Group from 2021 until last year. She was responsible for our induction programme and often assisted with interviews for new committee members. Now Rebecca’s term of office has sadly come to a close, we will miss her greatly, but we know we will stay in close contact.

The hunt for a new permanent home for the Collection continues and I’ve enjoyed fruitful visits to Cliff College in Derbyshire and to Kingswood School in Bath during January, to continue discussing the potential of working together. This Newsletter includes reviews by three Kingswood students who responded to our works while they were on loan to the school last year.

I’m delighted to have been asked to talk to the Methodist Luncheon Club in April. A number of Committee members are always happy to speak about the Collection, with PowerPoints on a variety of topics, so do please contact us if you would like a talk at your church or community.

We hope the Collection will inspire reflection and quiet moments of prayer as well as deep aesthetic satisfaction this spring and summer, both in Welwyn Garden City and in Eastbourne. As always, I thank all our Friends for their continued support.

*Ann Sumner*

artcollection@methodistchurch.org.uk



# Nicholas Holtam

## In Focus

The Right Reverend Nicholas Holtam retired as Bishop of Salisbury in 2021 after 42 years ordained ministry. He is now an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Chichester. He is the author of *The Art of Worship*, National Gallery, 2011.

The first group of youngsters I prepared for Confirmation in Stepney in 1980 were not very good at reading and writing. I bought comic books of the Bible with titles like 'Moses Desert Commander'. They weren't excited by them or about reading anything and even in simplified forms the Bible was too big and intimidating to be interesting. They were much more at home with the visual, so I decided to take them to the National Gallery to look at some paintings of Biblical scenes.

We started with Rembrandt's *Adoration of the Shepherds*. We were struck by the darkness of the Dutch barn, the not very bright lamps carried by the working men to whom the birth of Jesus had been made known first, and the radiant light of the infant illuminating Mary, Joseph and the shepherds

knelling in adoration. We were in Luke's Gospel and the youngsters got it.

Then we looked at Gossaert's *Adoration of the Kings* in which the infant Jesus, sitting on the lap of his mother, is receiving gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh from sumptuously dressed kings from the ends of the earth. They were in the ruins of the old dispensation with a star and angels above them announcing a new beginning, a corridor behind them leading to a donkey and a gate towards the distant city. Joseph looks anxiously up to a frieze on which Abraham is taking his son Isaac to be sacrificed. There are links back - salvation comes from the Jews - but this is pointing forward to the end of the story, making disciples of all nations. It is Matthew's Gospel in one painting.

Both paintings opened the text and proved to be marvellous introductions to the Bible, as they have been for centuries.

Jan Gossaert *Adoration of the Kings*  
© The National Gallery, London



Rembrandt (or pupil of Rembrandt)  
*Adoration of the Shepherds*  
© The National Gallery, London



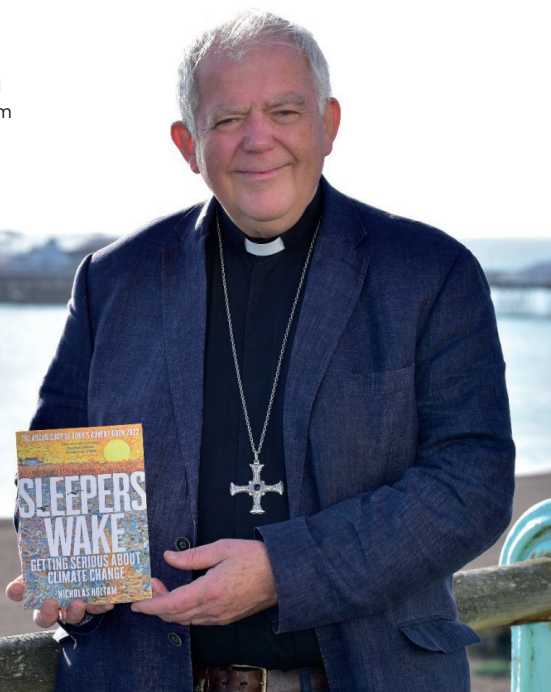


# Nicholas Holtam's Choice

Later, as vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, I was the parish priest of The National Gallery. About a third of the Gallery's paintings are of Biblical scenes. The Gallery was preparing for an exhibition to mark the turn of the millennium, *Seeing Salvation*. It was an opportunity for churches to explore the art of worship. We planned a Lent course for St Martin's, and anyone else who wanted to join us, in the Gallery following the Passion in Paintings. One of the Gallery staff talked about a painting, I read an appropriate passage of scripture and we had a conversation in front of the painting. At each, I ended with a prayer recognising the purpose of the painting in the Gallery's secular space. Astonishing numbers of people attended.

At St Martin's we were preparing for a major buildings renewal and wanted to commission art alongside it, financed separately from the main project but integral to it. The aim was to renew the beautiful aesthetics of a church with a strong ethical tradition. A few smaller commissions helped us learn how to do this – Mike Chapman's *Baby in Stone* now on the portico and Tomoaki Suzuki's *Christmas Crib* for Trafalgar Square. When Sirazeh Houshiary's east window was first revealed most people loved it but I thought it might be ten years before we knew if it is really great art that it now so obviously is. Other commissions followed and we learned that lots of artists, not just Christian artists, wanted to work with us because churches are, in Larkin's phrase, "a serious house on serious earth".

The Right Revd  
Nicholas Holtam



*Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)* by Mark Cazalet © TMCP, Fr. Nicholas Holtam's choice from the Collection

The visual engages our senses and imaginations. Those responsible for the Methodist Modern Art Collection have collected good art, beautiful and interesting in itself, capable of nourishing faith and sustaining the public exploration of belief and meaning. I have known it since I was a student, training alongside Methodists at Wesley House in Cambridge. It is a wonderful treasure.

When I went to St Martin-in-the-Field in 1995 several people described it as "the Christmas church". It has a lot of Christmas, certainly, but for many people it is a Good Friday church. The people who belonged there knew about brokenness either in their own lives or at close second-hand. So, the pictures in the Methodist Modern Art Collection that I have looked at most closely are Good Friday paintings and three stand out. Craigie Atchison's *Pink Crucifixion* (see page 12) which he says is the most horrific story he has heard so there no need to highlight the suffering. Maggi Hambling's mesmerising *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006*, (see page 10), one of an annual series produced on that day in memory of her mother, an image of life and death at one and the same moment. But if I have to choose one it is Mark Cazalet's *Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)*. By showing the kernel of the story in deep, dark colours he conveys the universal truths of the drama with its all too human agony, facing the events of Good Friday as at some time we all have to do.

I now live in Brighton and am very much looking forward to seeing the Collection again when it is exhibited along the coast in Eastbourne after Easter. (See back cover)



# Seeing the Spirit Level

## Behind the scenes, hanging the Collection in Welwyn Garden City

Readers who have visited previous exhibitions of the Collection may have been struck by the artworks; but I wonder how many have thought about the work that goes on behind the scenes to put those artworks on the walls.

Borrowers usually start planning exhibitions many years in advance, helped by the Guidance for Borrowers available on the Methodist Church's website. A lot of careful thought is needed, and the Management Committee help as much as they can by providing two volunteers to act as Links between them and the borrowers, to deal with practical questions and support the planning of the exhibition and the events programme.

Then there is the moment when the artworks actually arrive on site, no longer just beautiful thought-provoking images, but three-dimensional physical objects that borrowers



encounter not just with eyes and minds, but with (suitably gloved) hands. I had the privilege to witness this moment recently at the Focolare Centre in Welwyn Garden City as the team there received the artworks they were borrowing for their exhibition *Deepening the Mystery - 'Unexpected treasures' of art.*

The pictures are transported by specialist art companies (left). This is usually one of the biggest costs of hosting an exhibition. Each one has its own heavy-duty, bespoke crate to protect it from the elements and some of these crates are very large (bottom left). Wheeled trolleys are a necessity.

Some borrowers hire specialist art technicians to hang the artworks, but at Welwyn there was a team of volunteers to do this under the guidance of Vice Chair of the Management Committee, Corrine Miller. This was a three-day process, the first day being taken up by the arrival of the crates and the construction of temporary walls.

Before the works are hung each one must be checked carefully and a condition report prepared (above). The crates then need to be stored somewhere safe for the duration of the exhibition.

Hanging the artworks definitely needs great teamwork (bottom





## *View from the Secretary to the Friends*

**David Maddock**

The Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection have been described as ‘ambassadors’ – which might sound a little grand, but the word ‘ambassador’ more or less sums up what they are about – which is, basically, representation and support. The Friends is an affiliation of people who not only enjoy the exhibitions but also appreciate the purpose of the Collection itself and wish to play a role in its welfare and development.

A copy of this biannual Newsletter, occasional email bulletins, and an Annual Report all help to keep the Friends abreast of the programme of exhibitions and related events, and aware of issues arising from the Collection’s care and conservation such as the ‘Rejuvenation Pause’ for conservation and re-framing between 2020 and 2021, and the Review of Management and Operations which preceded it in 2018 which brought the management systems into line with Arts Council Accreditation standards. And, of course, most recently, the search for a new permanent home for the Collection; a suitable base from which to tour.

What sort of people are the Friends? The answer is that they are people from all walks of life. They include enthusiasts, supporters, people who are knowledgeable about art, and people who simply love the works in the Collection.

Why join? Verbal persuasion rather misses the point. Ideally, one would decide after a direct encounter with these works because it is only then that their impact is fully felt. We become aware of the way these pictures about the life of Christ by artists of faith, and of no faith, ‘speak’ to the contemporary viewer. The initial impact may wane, but their significance deepens as one senses the authenticity of the statement; the poetic truth that is conveyed through heartfelt narrative and awkward form. And, it should be added, they withstand that most stringent test of art – familiarity.

Readers who are not yet Friends and who wish to support the care and development of this unique collection, may complete the online application form to be found on the Methodist Church website page entitled ‘Become a Friend of the Collection’ which can be found at [https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/31920/meth\\_friends\\_form\\_240130](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/31920/meth_friends_form_240130).

Please feel free to contact me for more information.



right), and heavy works take particularly careful handling and planning. A skilled volunteer had to strengthen the wall with battens to ensure that Jyoti Sahi’s *Dalit Madonna* could be hung safely in an alcove at the Focolare Centre. It was the ideal place to put the painting as an image to welcome visitors to the exhibition, and comfortable chairs were set up opposite it to encourage contemplation and slow looking (see page 13). Meanwhile, volunteers used a spirit level and white cotton gloves to ensure Sadao Watanabe’s *Christ Enters Jerusalem* was hung perfectly straight (above). And because little details count, the metal screws in the ‘mirror plates’ that fix the pictures securely to the walls were disguised with paper stickers and a swish of white paint so they did not distract from the artwork.

Duncan and Pat Harper on the Focolare team had produced an excellent ‘hang plan’, which (as is usually the case) was modified and improved by them in discussion with the team once the actual artworks were seen in situ. I was very impressed with the team’s calm and positive attitude as they came up with new ideas and put them into practice. They were a delight to work with. The final exhibition was a huge credit to that team and all the other volunteers involved.

*Katharine Farnham-Dear*



# The Civic Reception

## Opening the exhibition at Welwyn Garden City

On 1 March the exhibition *Deepening the Mystery – Unexpected treasures of art* was launched with a civic reception at the Focolare Centre for Unity, Welwyn Garden City. Diverse church and community leaders came together in conversation and friendship, demonstrating the broad community engagement at which the Focolare Movement excels.

Focolare's Paul Gateshill welcomed everyone. He was justifiably proud that the exhibition had been organised through the cooperation of many different church leaders in Welwyn Garden City, chaired by the Revd. Canon Norbert Fernandes, and that the spirit of teamwork had continued with over 45 volunteer invigilators coming forward from a variety of local churches.

Artist, Lady Dione, the Countess of Verulam and Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, spoke first with a powerful case for the value of art. She made the connection between the increasing number of young people with mental health issues and their lack of exposure to the arts. She believed the arts help young people not only to understand and explore their mental health, but also to develop a range of interests which could give them life-long cultural resources or even interesting careers. She decried the fact that the arts were often the first sector to be cut during an economic downturn, just when they were needed most for people's wellbeing. So, she was delighted that exhibition, which she called a "wonderful endeavour", would give local people the chance to see first class art. She

shared a quote from Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (art dealer, collector and art historian) which goes to the heart of the Collection's purpose: "in contemplating a work of art we can momentarily escape the isolation to which we are condemned the rest of the time. We are united with humanity, with everything, with God".

The Mayor of Welwyn Hatfield Borough, Councillor Pankit Shah, who was accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Vaishali Shah, spoke next (below left). He reminded everyone that the exhibition had been due to open in 2020, as part of the centenary celebrations for Welwyn Garden City. However, due to Covid, it had been significantly delayed. He praised Focolare's deep engagement with the local community, hosting meetings for faith groups, the council, the NHS, the police, charities and even organising English language courses for Ukrainian refugees.

Next, the Revd. Dr. David Chapman, the Methodist Church's Chair of the Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire District, spoke of his joy at seeing the Collection come to his district (below right). He had personal experience of the benefits of hosting an exhibition of the Collection and praised the Welwyn team's vision, preparation and publicity. At a time of deep divisions, he hoped for unity and dialogue, and spoke of the importance of special encounters with art in making a contribution to that vital process. He commended the potential of the exhibition to promote working together, spiritual unity and encounters. By way of example, he mentioned the







excellent ecumenical Lent Course to accompany the exhibition that had been prepared by Anglicans and Roman Catholics working together, inspired by the Methodist Church's art. He relayed the commendations of Roman Catholic Bishop Paul McAleenan and Anglican Bishop Richard Atkinson, and gave his blessing to all those seeing it, hoping they would be drawn into a profound encounter with Divine mystery.

The next speaker was the Revd. Graham Kent, representing the Methodist Modern Art Collection's Management Committee. He briefly outlined the history of the Collection and spoke engagingly about his memories of working with it since 1987 and the amazingly varied places it had been

exhibited. This included sending works to Northern Ireland as part of the peace conversations there. He promised to speak more about this at his evening lecture at Focolare on 21 March (which we intend to cover in the next issue of the Newsletter). He recalled many Methodist ministers who were sceptical of the role of art but, after a three-day retreat led by Graham, became great advocates for the Collection. He concluded that individuals can be profoundly changed by art, and expressed his delight that the Collection was being exhibited at Focolare.

Finally, David Maddock spoke as Secretary of the Friends. He explained that the Friends were ambassadors who represented and supported the Collection because they had an enthusiastic appreciation of both its artworks and its purpose. He touched on the benefits of being a Friend, and confirmed that people of all backgrounds, all knowledge levels, and from all walks of life were Friends. He invited those present to join the Friends and spoke movingly about the authenticity of the artworks.

After some excellent refreshments, Lady Verulam cut the ribbon to open the exhibition and posed for photos (above). Everyone was impressed by the thoughtful way in which the artworks had been hung and the pictures as they so often do, provoked conversation, delight and the sharing of many ideas (left).

*Katharine Farnham-Dear*





# *Transforming Lives: Critiques by students at Kingswood School, Bath*

## **CRITIQUE BY AMELIE CARDY A LEVEL ART STUDENT**

Titled *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006*, this piece forms part of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Maggi Hambling strives to capture the mysterious power and peace of the sea, evoking the mighty force of nature. The artist draws attention to the first chapter of Genesis: “Each wave can be seen as a self-regenerative force, untameable by man, but speaking of the power of God.”

The composition is dominated by the vast expanse of wild ocean water, churning with a feeling of indefatigable motion that activates the scene. Waves breaking against each other are represented by the fluid texture of the white-capped waves as well as the highlighted prominent wave. The thickness of application on this singular wave emphasises the heaviness and potency of it and builds on the contrast of many diverse textures throughout the painting. This, again, highlights a feeling of danger, building on the uncertainty and cataclysmic power of what seems to be a storm.

A predominantly grey palette evokes an impression of a storm illuminated by the rays bouncing along each wave. Sombre blues and dismal greys communicate the Romantic themes of emotional uncertainty amidst the unleashed

danger of nature. The sweeping motion of the sky provides a smoother texture to the painting, although similar murky colours are used.

Christ’s small, ghostly figure floats across the water, barely perceptible in contrast to the natural forces; he becomes lost in the composition, far from the viewer’s initial gaze. His robe catches the light and reflects it in a similar way to the path of luminosity stretched diagonally down the centre of the canvas. It is almost as if he has created this path of light behind him. A glimpse of a yellow ochre hue, an earthen tone, has been strategically placed in the background. This could symbolise a warmth and safety surrounding Christ, as well as contrasting from the cold tones of greys and blues in the rest of the piece. He appears to be floating or hovering just above the ocean, which could link to this passage from The Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verses 45-51, (New International Reader’s Version):

‘Right away Jesus made his disciples get into the boat. He had them go on ahead of him to Bethsaida. Then he sent the crowd away. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was alone on land. He saw the disciples pulling hard on the oars. The wind was blowing against them. Shortly before dawn, he went out to them. He walked on



Maggi Hambling's *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006* © TMCP



the lake. When he was about to pass by them, they saw him walking on the lake. They thought he was a ghost, so they cried out. They all saw him and were terrified. Right away Jesus said to them, “Be brave! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then he climbed into the boat with them. The wind died down. And they were completely amazed.’

The Chapter describes the disciples as believing Jesus was ‘a ghost’; in the painting, his figure accentuates a ghost-like spirit. He has been placed above the hectic stormy sea and gives way to an aspect of subtle calmness and stillness in the sea as if he has control over its form.

When I saw the selection of Methodist Modern Art Collection pieces at my school, I was drawn to Hambling’s tumultuous scene of dynamic crashing waves. The impasto paint’s tactility drew me, and it was only after some time that the figure of Christ was revealed. It could be seen as Hambling mimicking how the spirit of Christ reveals itself to Christians when they least expect it. Only looking closely could I really see the combing in the underpainting in the middle ground.

On reflection, I believe this piece adds to the recurring motif in the artist’s brilliant series of ocean wave paintings and returns to her experience living near the cold North Sea.

## **CRITIQUE BY CEDRIC YEUNG**

### **A LEVEL ART STUDENT**

Born on October 23, 1945 in Sudbury, United Kingdom, British painter Maggi Hambling attended the Slade School of Art after studying at the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing under Cedric Lockwood Morris and Arthur Lett-Haines. The British artist is best known for her expressive portraits and sublime depictions of landscapes and seascapes. Aside from her really detailed paintings, Hambling has also made a series of public sculptures, including, *Scallop* on Aldeburgh beach and a tribute to Oscar Wilde in central London. The artist soon became the first ever artist in residence at the National Gallery in London and her works are in the collection of the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Tate Gallery in London, and others.

Maggi Hambling’s overall art style is colourful and energetic. I can clearly feel the movement of her brushstrokes when looking closely and carefully at her paintings. Her most well-known works are probably her wave paintings. Painted with water and acrylic, they feature various fluctuations and crashes of ocean waves, a recurring motif in the artist’s paintings. She says, “This sea, the widest of mouths, roaring or laughing, is always seductive. Life and death mysteriously co-exist in the timeless rhythm of the waves”. Through her wave paintings, the artist intends to capture the movements and energy of waves, and she has painted a series of them, each capturing a different movement at a different time of the day and with different energy levels. *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006* was painted by Hambling in memory of her mother, who had sadly passed away; it does not depict

what happened in the gospel story, but Hambling’s own emotional struggles. Using dark and cold colours with rough and powerful brushstrokes, Hambling depicted what it was like for her to be bowled over by grief, with the waves crashing over her and no landmarks on the horizon to give her perspective or direction.

Hambling painted the figure of Jesus in the upper right-hand corner of the painting to suggest the nearness yet distance between the subject and the view, and that grief does the magically depart.

Maggi Hambling chose oil paint for *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006*, as she does for most of her paintings in fact. For Hambling, oil paint is a “live [...] thing” that allows her to consider the subject of her painting “like a lover”, while using the paint “to make love” to them. In this picture Hambling made use mostly of cold and dark colours such as black, dark blue, grey, and brown to paint the sea and the background, while for the waves, bright colours such as white and light grey were used to emphasise the clashing power of the waves. When asked about the textures in her paintings, Hambling told the interviewer that to her, it is more like layers of failure, failure upon failure, to get her to this point. In my opinion, there is something very powerful about this painting; I’m not sure if it is the choice of colour, or the brushstrokes, or even both. The choice of colour itself brings out the raw and intimidating nature of the ocean, while the style of brushstrokes depicts the movement of the strong and energetic waves. Viewing the painting, it is as if you are in the ocean, having the waves striving high up, then dropping down and crushing over you, making us humans feel powerless when it comes to us being in the presence of nature.

## **CRITIQUE BY ISABELLE EVANS**

### **A LEVEL ART STUDENT**

John Ronald Craigie Aitchison was a Scottish painter, best known for his fascination with, and thus many works featuring, the Crucifixion. His career-long enthrallment is known to have been triggered by a visit to see Salvador Dalí’s Christ of *St John of the Cross* in 1951.

Much of the criticism Aitchison has received for his work over the years stems from his seemingly simplistic, “childlike” consideration of colour, with it being the linking motif between all of his pieces (as well as, perhaps, religion). However, I find the strong use of pink in the background of *Pink Crucifixion* to be enrapturing, drawing the audience in and inviting them to enquire about the “apparently unsophisticated drawing” in the context of the Crucifixion.

His simple style with bright, childlike colours defied description, and was compared to the Scottish Colourists, primitivists or naive artists, although Brian Sewell dismissed him as “a painter of too considered trifles”.

The term ‘Scottish Colourists’ is in reference to four Scottish painters: Samuel John Peploe, Francis Campbell



Boileau Cadell, GL Hunter and John Duncan Fergusson, a set of radical artists who invigorated the Scottish art scene with the luscious vibrancy of French Fauvist colours. Therefore, the intensity of the pink used could be representative of the salvation felt following the Crucifixion.

It also seems significant that Christ appears as a solitary figure. His form is hugely simplified, with detailed hands and feet disregarded in Aitchison's interpretation, yet a cut in his side is clearly visible. Because there are so few details in the picture, the viewer has to focus on its meaning – the form itself instantly becomes trivial and it is the message that Aitchison attempts to convey that holds significance.

Aitchison's choice of etching as his medium is interesting when considering what he has covered up: "A Bedlington terrier dog was originally shown at the foot of the cross. A printer trying to help finish the work added a tiny detail to the dog's head but, on seeing it, the artist erased the dog completely. However, its ghostly outline is still visible to the bottom left-hand side of the cross." (A quote from *Seeing the Spiritual*, the catalogue of the Methodist Modern art Collection)

This meticulous attention to detail captures how overcome Aitchison was with his refined consideration of the piece

– he knew exactly what he wanted it to represent and the printer who changed that, even in the most miniscule way, disrupted his vision.

At first, I didn't quite know what to make of this piece; it is certainly one of the more unusual, and perhaps even controversial, works within the Collection. However, the more I studied it in anticipation of writing this critique, the more I realised the weight the work carried – it is less about the final work itself and more about the journey to realisation that the artist went through when creating it. I find it quite jarring to look in detail at the figure; the ambiguity of the face feels disjointed and separate from the narrative of the piece. I suppose that is the point – the Crucifixion was such a monumental phenomenon, and Aitchison is trying to capture his true, undivided fascination with it through *Pink Crucifixion*.



# Slow Looking

It's not rude to stare at art

It is clear that the Kingswood students not only did their academic research, but also spent time in front of the artworks thinking about their responses to them.

Tate have research that says visitors spend an average of eight seconds looking at an artwork in a gallery. They spend longer reading the label. This has prompted them to produce a *Guide to Slow Looking* (available online) in which they ask:

“But what happens when we spend five minutes, fifteen minutes, an hour or an afternoon really looking in detail at an artwork? This is 'slow looking'. It is an approach based on the idea that, if we really want to get to know a work of art, we need to spend time with it. Slow looking is not about curators, historians or even artists telling you how you should look at art. It's about you and the artwork, allowing yourself time to make your own discoveries and form a more personal connection with it. Remember, it's not rude to stare at art.”

Slow looking is an established approach which is not about the authoritative voice of curator, educator, or even artist or theologian, but about visitors establishing a personal relationship with artworks by spending time directly observing and potentially forming a new understanding.

## SLOW LOOKING AT WELWYN GARDEN CITY

The team at the Focolare Centre for Unity embraced this idea, which dovetailed with their own vision of creating an atmosphere of contemplation - 'Deepening the Mystery'. They offered each visitor the Methodist Modern Art Collection's Looking Guides in a folder, but at the front of the folder they said:

“Welcome to this exhibition and these Looking Guides which .... contain some useful information about each of the 25 pictures on show.

Before you look at the Guides you may (or may not) like to follow these simple steps in order to make your visit as enriching as possible:

Silently, and without looking at the following pages, look at each of the pictures in turn.

- Was there one which particularly caught your eye?  
Return to it, pull up a seat and examine it in more depth.  
You might like to consider these questions:
- Why have you chosen this one?
- How does it make you feel?



- Now find out what is written about the picture in this folder. Do you agree with what is written here? You may also want to look at the booklet *Seeing the Spiritual* and read more about it.
- Now go to the next picture that attracted you and repeat the process above.
- If you came with a friend, look at the picture together and compare notes.”

## SLOW LOOKING AT EASTBOURNE

Pat Latham, the Exhibition Curator of *New Vision* at Eastbourne (see back page), agrees. She says:

“It's so important in our fast, digital age that we take time to develop slow looking. Exploring artwork can be such a rewarding activity and bring such joy.

How disappointing on a recent visit to the Rijksmuseum to hear the frantic click of a camera behind me and overhear someone saying to their friend, 'take a photo of it – I will look at it later!'.

I was prompted to think how sad that the time looking at artwork is often so rapid – viewers missing so much - and how important it is to spend time absorbing and enjoying artworks more slowly. It helps us to get so much more out of the work, to be able to make choices and to understand our preferences, and to have confidence and joy when looking at art of all kinds.

Circumstance vary – people might go to an exhibition with preconceived ideas, they might feel intimidated by a lack of art history, or they might have limited time. Whatever the reason, research has shown that people's 'looking' time span at exhibitions is very short.

The team at Emmanuel Church pray that visitors to the *New Vision* exhibition will be able to immerse themselves in the rich selection of religious art works from across the world and to take some quality slow looking time. We hope they will find deep sensory responses as well as reminding themselves of the life of Jesus. As they spend time absorbing the artwork, may they enjoy the valuable interconnection between art and faith afforded by the Collection and the newly built church.”

# Elsewhere in the Art World

## BOOK REVIEW

### Religion and Contemporary Art, A Curious Accord

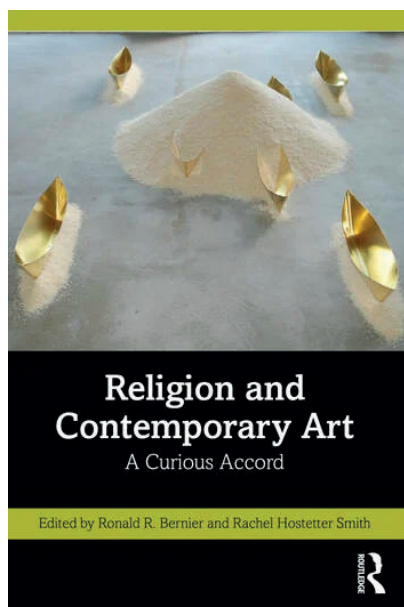
Edited by Ronald Bernier and Rachel Hostetter Smith

Routledge, £34.99

[ISBN 9781032354170]

In sub-titling this volume 'a curious accord' the editors highlight something which is central to their approach in collecting together these thirty essays by a diverse range of contemporary artists, critics, and theologians. The 'curious accord' of the title reflects their view that the early twenty-first century has seen the re-emergence of a theological dimension to contemporary artmaking and art writing, the 'accord' being one of art critics and artists moving beyond what the editors describe as a 'persistent skepticism' concerning the exploration and discussion of religious belief to a position, celebrated and explored in this volume, where issues of faith and belief can be discussed and explored openly by artists, theologians and critics working together in new and original ways.

The essays are split into three parts. Part One contains essays by a wide range of scholars and critics and explores the ways in which the relationship between art and religion is being written and talked about in the 21st century. The title of Jonathan A. Anderson's opening essay, *The New Visibility of Religion in Contemporary Art* encapsulates the book's central theme. Anderson is an artist and critic and argues that 'religion has become both more visible and more discussable in contemporary art'. Having discussed the place of art and religion in the political, spiritual, and theological dimensions



of our experience, he concludes that this coming together of religion and contemporary art invites the exploration of '...what appears most salient and vital for seeing and understanding the world.' Art historian Linda Stratford argues that art historians, critics and theologians should work towards a greater understanding of one another's disciplines. Daniel A Siedell writes from a curatorial perspective. He describes how his own practice as a curator has been informed by his religious faith. The concept of 'exhibition as pilgrimage' is explored more fully in Aron Rosen's essay exploring visual strategies for enabling interfaith dialogue. Rosen describes his own multisite public arts project. In *Stations of the Cross* curators in a range of cities designed their own unique routes, each with fourteen stops marked by works of art and corresponding to the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Rosen's aim as curator was to encourage what he terms 'visual piety', a way of looking at artworks drawn from a range of religious traditions and beliefs which invites theological and spiritual responses alongside the critical and the purely aesthetic.

Part Two of *Religion and Contemporary Art* looks at the themes being explored by contemporary artists interested in religious expression. These include a contemporary look at the icon and identity by Katie Kresser and discussion of new ways of seeing ancient religious artefacts and practices, such as reliquaries and pilgrimages, through the practice of contemporary artists like Anselm Kiefer and Chiara Ambrosio. Rachel Hostetter Smith makes an eloquent and well-argued case for seeing contemporary artists such as Teresa Margolles, Doris Salcedo, and Damien Hirst as being priest-like in that, as she puts it, 'their work constitutes a bridge between the immanent experience of life in this world and the transcendent reality of its significance and ultimate worth.'

This way of seeing contemporary art and its relationship to the religious and the sacred is central to the book, and is developed through essays on art forms such as performance art and video installations. Wayne L. Roosa's discussion of the relationship between the role of the 21st century performance artist and that of the Old Testament prophet opens new possibilities for making connections between ancient and modern expressions of faith. In his essay on multimedia installation art Jorge Lozano examines how light-based artworks communicate Christian themes and beliefs in what he describes as 'post-Christian' societies.

Part Three covers case studies of artists ranging from Andy Warhol to Diane Victor. The case studies develop and interpret ideas discussed earlier and celebrate the multiplicity



of faiths and voices finding expression through contemporary art. The editors draw on examples from a wide range of countries, cultures, and faiths. Patricia Karetzky, for example, in considering art and the revival of religion in modern China, provides examples of Daoist, Buddhist and Christian art and, in the final essay in part three, Sascha Crasnow discusses liminality in contemporary Islamic Art.

Finally, four scholars discuss issues raised by the earlier essays. They include Ben Quash, Professor of Christianity and the Arts at King's College, London. They invite us to look more closely at how artworks can be experienced in ways which we may consider to be 'religious'.

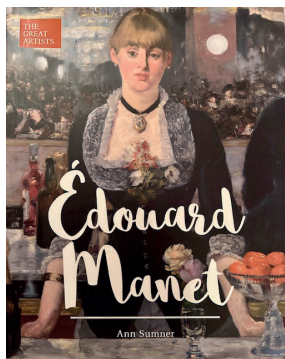
The quality of the illustrations is excellent, enabling the reader to appreciate the scale, composition and context of the artworks being discussed.

This collection of essays demonstrates how artists, critics, and theologians are discovering new ways of communicating. It is recommended for anyone interested in how religion and contemporary art are finding expression in the 21st century.

*By Peter Shears*

## MANET'S RELIGIOUS WORKS

2024 marks 150 years since the first Impressionist exhibition in Paris and the birth of a new artistic movement. This is currently being marked by several exhibitions. Some readers will be aware that Chair, Professor Ann Sumner, has written books on Monet and Manet in the Arcturus Great Artist series. She points out that, as Manet is seen as the father of Impressionism, his religious paintings are often overlooked. She discusses this in her book on Manet (2021) including looking at *The Dead Christ with Angels* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) and *Jesus mocked by the Soldiers* (Art Institute of Chicago).



These works are influenced by Spanish art and, in the case of the later work, the Flemish 17th Century master Anthony van Dyck. Manet paints these scenes in a gritty realistic dramatic style for which he was disparaged by the critics. They remain some of his most powerful works.



## ANOTHER BROKEN ANGEL

Readers will remember Mike Toobey's interesting article about the broken glass window at Coventry Cathedral (No.27 Spring 2022). Very sadly, another window by the same artist, John Hutton, has been vandalised, this time at Guildford Cathedral (see photo above). The broken window panels formed part of a set of sentinel angels, a renowned iconic feature of the west front of the Cathedral and an acclaimed piece of 20th century art.

A man has now been charged in connection with the damage which insurers estimate at more than £15,000 – not including the cost of the repair. Guildford Cathedral has launched a fundraising appeal and raised over 95% of its target. Matt O'Grady, the cathedral's Chief Operating Officer said:

“Everyone at the Cathedral is devastated by this senseless act of vandalism at a holy place. The smashed window was engraved by renowned glass engraving artist John Hutton and is irreplaceable. We hope that the whole community will come together to recognise that acts such as this serve no purpose and that places such as our Cathedral need to be preserved as shrines of peace, tranquillity, and spirituality in a troubled world.”



# FORTHCOMING TOURING PROGRAMME

## New Vision

19 May–13 June 2024

Emmanuel Church, Upperton Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1LQ

[www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk](http://www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk)

Open hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 11.00 am to 4.00 pm. Entry is free and all are warmly welcome to visit. The exhibition is curated by local artist, Pat Latham, and includes a programme of workshops, talks, and reflections. Admission is also free to these events and further details will be on the website.

On Thursday 30 May at 7.00 pm Professor Ann Sumner will give a fully illustrated talk entitled *Seeing The Spiritual: The Story of the Methodist Modern Art Collection*. Booking is through Eventbrite.

The organisers say: “For tens of thousands of years art has rendered images through

creation of sacred forms, rituals, narratives, symbols and creations of praise and worship and the Methodist Modern Art Collection has a rich and varied range of work from famous artists in history and across the world. The 35 pieces selected for our exhibition depict scenes from different events in the life of Jesus Christ. Some of the artists are Christian, others not, and they therefore offer widely differing perspectives on the Christian story. We hope that whether you are a person of faith or no faith, Christian or non-Christian, you will find yourself challenged in intriguing new ways through this exhibition.”

## 3 Gen 2024

4–6 October 2024

The Collection will once again be represented at 3Generate 2024, the Methodist Church’s Children’s and Youth Assembly, at the NEC in Birmingham

## THOUGHTS TO LEAVE YOU WITH

*“In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don’t.” – Blaise Pascal*

*“a work of art does not answer questions; it provokes them.” – Leonard Bernstein*



EXHIBITION

Emmanuel Church, Eastbourne presents  
**Methodist Modern Art Collection**

## NEW VISION

19 May 2024 - 13 June 2024  
Tuesday to Sunday  
11am - 4pm

### Emmanuel Church

Upperton Road | Eastbourne | BN21 1LQ

The Methodist Modern Art Collection is one of Britain’s most important collections of modern religious art, comprising of paintings, prints, drawings, relief and mosaics. The artists include famous names from the British art world of the last 100 years.

Following the opening of its new church building in Upperton Road; Emmanuel Church, Eastbourne is proud to be hosting an exhibition ‘New Vision’ featuring many pieces from this amazing collection.



**Free Entry**

[emmanueleastbourne.org.uk](http://emmanueleastbourne.org.uk) | 01323 502003