

NEWSLETTER

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Methodist **Modern**
Art Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



Re-launch of the Collection at Coventry City of Culture

Corinne Miller in Focus

Conservation of Michael Edmonds' The Cross over the City

Review of new book about Ralph Beyer

EDITORIAL

I feel very excited and a little trepidatious as I take over the editorship of this Newsletter. Readers will know, many better than I do, how Bob Williams so generously invested his time and his considerable talents in developing this publication over 13 years, and I cannot attempt to fill his shoes. Enjoy that well-earned retirement, Bob!

This is such an exciting time for the Methodist Modern Art Collection, because works have been on show as an Art Trail in Coventry Cathedral and Methodist churches in the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit, as our contribution to the celebration of Coventry as UK City of Culture 2021. You can read much more about this elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Due to Covid restrictions, the Art Trail was planned in a series of Zoom meetings with representatives from the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee and from the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit. In many cases, it was only on the opening night that we met each other 'face to face' (albeit wearing masks). Similarly, I have for many years been familiar with the works in the Collection on screen or in reproduction, but it was a genuine thrill to be able to see them 'face to face' (and without masks).



In the future, we can look forward to more opportunities for people to 'meet' the Collection as its tour programme restarts after the rejuvenation pause, and we pray it will continue to charm, comfort and challenge everyone it encounters for many years to come.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

Art Collection Management Committee Members

Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Sarah Allard, Ian Baker (Secretary, Friends Group), Katharine Farnham-Dear, Rebecca Gibbs, Revd Catherine Hutton, Revd Graham Kent, Sarah Middleton, Corinne Miller, Verity Smith, Simon Sorokos, Jo Hibbard, Director of Engagement (in attendance)

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NEW APPOINTMENT TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Sarah Allard is a former curator, now based at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester where she manages their placement module and employability programme for postgraduate students. She first encountered the Methodist Modern Art Collection when it visited Leicester in 2019.

Sarah studied Art History and English Literature at the University of Birmingham and, following a bursary year working as curatorial and education assistant at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, she completed an MA in Museum Studies at Leicester. She went on to be Keeper of Fine Art and then Senior Keeper of Art at Derby Museum and Art Gallery, where she worked for seven years, caring for and developing the internationally renowned Joseph Wright of Derby collection, and curating exhibitions of local and regional interest. In this role she gained considerable experience in looking after works on canvas and paper, and also in fund-raising for new acquisitions. During this time she was also able to develop an interest and understanding of modern British art; from the Enlightenment, through the Victorian era and into the twentieth century.

Following a career break to focus on a young family, Sarah started work at the University of Leicester, where she joined the School of Museum Studies in 2015 as Museum Liaison and Employability Officer. Her role at the University is both student and sector facing and she enjoys building and maintaining a network of relationships across the museums, arts and heritage sectors. She hopes to be able to draw on these relationships to support, highlight and share the significance of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Sarah also has long-standing experience in working with volunteers of all ages and is looking forward to supporting the touring programme in this area.

Sarah is a member of Holy Trinity Church, Leicester where she has worshipped and served for over 20 years.

Front Cover: Professor Ann Sumner and Revd Sonia Hicks look at Euryl Stevens' *The Raising of Lazarus* displayed at Coventry Methodist Central Hall (Photo: C Hibbard © TMCP 2021 used with kind permission of Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit)

A view from the Chair, Professor Ann Sumner

Following our major conservation programme and the review of our exhibition administration, 35 carefully selected works from the Collection have been presented across churches in Coventry this autumn in the form of an innovative Art Trail.

This re-launch of the Collection during Coventry's City of Culture year has been our key focus in recent months. Opening the Art Trail with works in Coventry and particularly in the iconic Cathedral, amongst their outstanding masterpieces of 20th century religious art, was particularly appropriate. While the story of Coventry Cathedral and the commissioning of British 20th century religious art by architect Basil Spence is well known, the response of the Methodist Church to the revival of religious painting in post war Britain, with the formation of our unique Collection by the Methodist layman John Morel Gibbs and Revd Douglas Wollen, is much less familiar.

The Art Trail began in the centre of Coventry before moving out to other churches in the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit, enabling community engagement with those hosting the Trail and reflecting how they have responded to the works at a time of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Parallels come to mind between the current time and the post war period when Coventry Cathedral was built and the Collection was formed. The Trail was curated to provide spaces for reflection and healing, and for contemplation and prayer at this time of recovery. It highlighted how the Collection speaks to people of contemporary issues.

After viewing key works at the Cathedral and Methodist Central Hall (where artists in residence responded to our works), visitors moved on to see paintings in Earlsdon, Balsall Common and Fillongley where themes emerged not only around peace and reconciliation for which Coventry is renowned, but also raising green issues, city mission and multi culturalism, as well as the refugee crisis. Wherever possible quotes were included in interpretation from local Church members or clergy, reflecting contemporary stories of change and messages of hope, faith and love.

There was also an eclectic events programme – for instance over the weekend of 11/12 September there was enthusiastic and thoughtful engagement with Representative Synod at Coventry Central Hall led by Sarah Middleton. Balsall Common hosted a creative textile session organised by the

Solihull Creative Textiles group, and artist Jayne Good led a fascinating workshop in oils at Fillongley. I gave an interview for Radio Coventry that Sunday morning. On 28 September at the Cathedral I was fortunate enough to be in conversation with author John Neilson on the lettering of Ralph Beyer (see page 11) and to give a lecture the following evening at Central Hall. As a Committee we also all met together for our Away Day in Coventry and were joined by the Secretary of Conference and Vice-President for an inspiring focus on our future planning.

We worked closely with the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit on this Trail, and special thanks go to Revd Stephen Willey and Christine Welham there. Sincere thanks also to Asha Eade-Green and her team at Coventry Cathedral. After so much preparation ensuring that the works were well presented following conservation and re-framing, with new cases to protect them when they travelled, we were delighted that you, our Friends, were able to experience the Collection again after a two year pause in touring. You can also listen to a new podcast about the Collection and the Art Trail on the Methodist Church website www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection.

My thanks to all volunteer Committee members who have given of their time to support this exciting opportunity and particularly to Corinne Miller for her work on logistics and to the Connexional Team for their broad and much appreciated support.

Ann Sumner



Corinne Miller

In Focus

It is said that I fell in love with the great colourful papercut *L'Escargot* by Henri Matisse as a two year old while my mother pushed me round the Tate in my pushchair. Well, this family tale just goes to show how we embroider our own histories, as this work was purchased by the Tate when I was actually six!

Nonetheless it is a nice story of a young child falling in love with art, and art has sustained me throughout my life, enriching my understanding of the world, providing a sanctuary in difficult times and providing me with a richly rewarding career.

Looking back I realise that it was a bit unusual to have pin ups of George Best alongside Goya's *Portrait of Dona Isabel Porcel*. At school I was the only pupil to take an A/O level in the History of Art, working from my art teacher's hand written notes with the pen and ink drawings of medieval church architecture (in the days before photocopiers what a real act of trust that was!). When called upon to take assembly I naturally chose religious paintings for my reflection.

While I had many friends, art was definitely a private passion, but along the way many people have provided insights and nurtured this love of art. Among my parents' friends were a couple of highly cultured Germans, who as Jews were forced to leave Germany. They had a profound love of art, one took me to art exhibitions all over London and another gave me issues of *Du* magazine as a child. In researching this article I found this quote: "*The Swiss Du Magazine is by all means the most elegant, aristocratic and in-depth going art and culture magazine ever published in Europe....The magazine's editorial board wished to show that art and culture will overcome human cruelty and violence.*". This magazine made a powerful impression on me, and plates from *Du* could be found on my walls. I wonder now to what extent the ethos of the editorial team has affected me even though I could not understand the text - yes I do believe that art has a tremendous power to enrich our lives.

I went on to read Art History at Manchester University attracted by the idea of going to live in the North, which I quickly discovered was not all like the Yorkshire Moors. On



arriving for my interview I was handed a Japanese woodcut and a watercolour of a rather dejected donkey and asked to talk about them. It was a delicious moment, having works of art placed in my hands and getting to study them close up, and I determined that one day I would work in an art gallery.

I have worked with remarkable collections at Wakefield Art Gallery and Leeds Art Gallery where we were privileged to show the Methodist Modern Art Collection during Conference, and finally at Wolverhampton Art Gallery where I was Head of Culture Arts and Heritage until I retired in 2014.

On seeing the vacancy for the Methodist Modern Art Collection I was anxious to apply and give something back to Methodism which, like art, has shaped my life. My father the late Dr Arthur Miller was a lay preacher as were several other relatives. Childhood memories include visits to Stockwell Methodist Church where my father's family were members. We have a stool made by my great uncle with a piece of glass from the bombed out Studley Road Wesleyan Methodist Church. Stoneleigh Methodist Church, however, was the place where my family worshipped and where I went to Sunday School becoming a Sunday School Teacher and a member of the young people's group, Manse Fellowship, which met weekly at the Manse with Rev. Donald Knighton, whose pastoral care was exemplary; he always seemed to be the first to know about something important in our lives. I cannot list here all the Methodists, ministers and members of the community who made me feel loved as part of that community and whose spiritual guidance has shaped who I am today, but I am truly grateful to them all. Methodism showed me the importance of thoughtful personal reflection and taught me to respect the views of others. My father was always quoting John Wesley and in my kitchen is a photograph of the Millennium Stone in Shere churchyard recording *John Wesley's Rule* which has always struck me as a sound set of values:

Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.

I could do better but I try!

Corinne Miller's Choice

The Pool of Bethesda – a reflection

Having worked with the wonderful works on paper collection at Leeds Art Gallery for nearly twenty years, I was drawn to this work by Edward Burra. It is an unusually large imposing watercolour on paper. Executing this would have presented a number of technical challenges.

Painted in 1951/2, this is one of Burra's few religious paintings. It shows the miracle related in John 5:2-13 where Jesus tells a man seeking a cure at Bethesda, 'Take up your mat and walk'. Terence Mullaly called this 'a most pessimistic and horrific interpretation' of the story when it was purchased in 1963.

This subject must have had a particular resonance for Burra who, as a child, contracted pneumonia that forced him to leave school, then travelling in Italy in 1925, was struck down with rheumatic fever. Like the man at Bethesda, Burra had lived with the impact of ill health for over thirty years by the time he painted this. By then, the NHS had come into operation in 1948, offering tremendous hope to those requiring treatment.

Naturally the meaning we attribute to the painting cannot be the same as that which inspired Burra. We look at it through the lens of our own experience. It captures the human fears about illness and pain that have filled our world recently. Burra too experienced a pandemic. Some 228,000 had died of the 'Spanish flu' by summer 1919.

I am drawn first to the shafts of light that spotlight the chaotic, yet hopeful figures waiting in the bath building with the biblical five porticoes. There is no view to the outside, just indications that one exists, with patches of light at the end of narrow passages. The claustrophobic setting reminds me of the eighteenth century prison etchings of Piranesi. Recently I was 'pinged' and had to self-isolate. I know confinement inside is tough, but I do have a garden. Many friends have had to shield for much longer.

The lifting of restrictions is welcome, but sometimes I feel uncomfortable in crowded spaces. Here the crowded picture space adds to the painting's scary undertone. Perhaps this sense of unease is an ominous reference to the end of the biblical account, when the authorities 'began to persecute' Jesus 'because he had done the healing on the Sabbath'.

The composition is all angles and points, taking the eye this way and that, from the ghostly grey figures in the background to the intense clashing oranges and blues of those



Photo: Edward Burra's *The Pool of Bethesda*, reproduced with permission of the estate of the artist, c/o LeFevre Fine Arts Ltd, London

in the foreground. To the left are strange grey figures absorbed in caring for the sick. The disturbing wide open eyes of a dead man stare at us from upside down. Here the awful, the fearful, and the hopeful coexist.

Behind the figure carrying the body is the twisting form of the man in grey. He covers his eyes; perhaps crying at the misery around him, perhaps worn out. Next to him, we meet the gaze of a figure looking out at us. Then we see Jesus, arms outstretched and hands open, speaking to the ill man. His right palm draws us in. The ill man is squeezed into the bottom right corner, his hand cupped to his ear to hear Jesus' words amidst the din. The pandemic has stopped us from touching, so words have become so much more important. We keep 'in touch' by Zoom meetings, emails or phone, but it can never be the same as a hug when life gets tough.

Amidst all this frenetic activity, does anyone else see the miracle taking place? Burra cannot have foreseen the life experience of the viewer in 2021 but, like all great paintings, this considers universal truths about life and living and thus speaks to our times. It reminds me that acts of kindness, perhaps even miracles, do happen but sometimes we miss them in all the surrounding noise.

Corinne Miller



On 3 September a very special event marked the re-launch of the Collection after our rejuvenation pause and the opening of the Art Trail in Coventry.

It began with Choral Evensong in Basil Spence's beautiful cathedral where four of the Methodist Modern Art Collection works were on display. The Dean of Coventry, the Very Reverend John Witcombe, led the service and the Revd Sonia Hicks, President of the Methodist Conference, and Barbara Easton, Vice-President, both shared Bible readings. The Rev Canon Kathryn Fleming sang the versicles and Chorister Theodore Day sang the responses. Choral Evensong gave the attendees an opportunity to pause and

to pray, offering up to God, among other things, the Art Trail.

After the service, attendees moved to Methodist Central Hall where 11 works were on display. Here, the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit extended hospitality in the form of delicious food and non alcoholic cocktails. There were a number of speeches, music, dancing and poetry as part of a vibrant celebration.

Superintendent Minister, Revd Marcus Torchon welcomed everyone to the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit. He believed that the Art Trail would play an important role in the Circuit's 'God-given task to permeate the City of Culture celebrations with the presence of God.'

Revd Stephen Willey, Minister at Central Hall and head of the Circuit's City of Culture Team, shared his vision of 'an Art Trail with a difference', both in the city, and beyond it; both part of the City of Culture, and beyond it; telling Stories of Change now, and building a legacy for the future. He hoped the Trail would bring Hope, Faith and Love after a tough eighteen months and that people would look at the art, and look at one another, and give thanks to God.

Professor Ann Sumner began by saying it had been a great pleasure to put the Art Trail together with Stephen's team from the Circuit, the Dean and his team at the Cathedral, and members of the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee. She thanked all those involved. Giving a very brief history of the Collection, she felt that Coventry was the obvious place to relaunch after the rejuvenation pause because the Collection was begun the same year as the Cathedral was consecrated, and formed part of the same revival of high quality religious art after the Second World War. One of the stories told by the Art Trail was the development of the Collection from those early works to include world art. She hoped the Trail would provide spaces for reflection, healing, contemplation and prayer as the country began to emerge from the Covid 19 pandemic, and that - sixty years after

Top: Barbara Easton, Vice-President, and Revd Sonia Hicks, President of the Methodist Conference with The Very Reverend John Witcombe, Dean of Coventry standing by Elisabeth Frink's *Pieta* in Coventry Cathedral at the launch of the Art Trail *Stories of Change: Hope, Faith and Love*. (Photo: C Hibbard © TMCP 2021 used with kind permission of Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit)

Right: Revd Sonia Hicks and Lord Mayor Councillor John McNicholas (Photo: C Hibbard © TMCP 2021 used with kind permission of Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit)

Page 7: Attendees enjoying pink cocktails whilst admiring Craigie Aitchison's *Pink Crucifixion* (Photo: the Editor)





it was formed - the Collection would engage with new communities and speak to new issues.

Ian Baker, Secretary to the Friends of the Collection, extolled the benefits of being a Friend.

President Revd Sonia Hicks spoke of Coventry's long history of renewal after decline, and of her great pleasure at being in the city now known for its diversity, inclusion and youthfulness. She hoped the Art Trail would remind people of the creative beauty all around us.

Vice-President Barbara Easton, a Patron of the Friends, a 'huge fan' of the Collection and 'very fond' of Coventry, spoke next. She declared that the Church was the custodian of a special treasure in an art collection that comes to where people are, 'taking faith outside faith spaces'. People were more likely to go to an art gallery like Tate Modern, than to a church building, so we needed constantly to find new ways to 'speak unchanging truths in a changing world'. She urged those present to let the

pictures speak to them deeply and to start conversations in their communities, and shared stories of how she had used the Collection in her own ministry.

Councillor John McNicholas, Lord Mayor of Coventry for 2021-22, Coventry's City of Culture year, officially opened the Art Trail. He was accompanied by the Lady Mayoress, June. He called the Art Trail a fascinating and inspiring addition to the City of Culture which he hoped would give everyone in Coventry's multicultural community the opportunity to appreciate art. Equally important, he took the occasion to thank the church for the practical support it had given to that community during the Covid 19 pandemic.

These speeches were interspersed with excellent music (including a steel band) and poetry. A music group from Methodist Central Hall sang the Taize chant *Laudate Dominum* (Praise the Lord) and a worship song *Mwari Vakanaka* (God is good), in Shona,

Zimbabwe's main language, both of which were deeply moving.

Local writer Penny McCulloch read a poem entitled 'Jesus washes the disciples' feet' inspired by Ghislaine Howard's *The Washing of the Feet*. Local Preacher Karen Brooks shared her poem 'Reflection on ... Jesus walking on the water' inspired by Maggi Hambling's *Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006*. Poet Emilie Lauren Jones, Central Hall's Poet in Residence, also read poems inspired by works in the Collection.

(Emilie has subsequently run a well attended poetry workshop based on the pictures at Central Hall. Space does not permit us to reproduce any of the poems in this edition but we promise to do so at a future date.)

The evening continued with more food, with conversations about the Arts and God, and a real sense of excitement and thanksgiving that the long planned Art Trail was finally happening.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

NEW DIALOGUES BETWEEN THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION AND ARTWORKS AT COVENTRY CATHEDRAL



Elisabeth Frink's *Pietà* displayed in Coventry Cathedral (Photo: the Editor)

The *Stories of Change: Hope, Faith and Love* Art Trail began with the four works on loan to Coventry Cathedral, undoubtedly one of the most important post-war public buildings in Britain – a remarkable fusion of 20th century art and architecture. The architect, Sir Basil Spence, commissioned work from Graham Sutherland, John Piper, Ralph Beyer, John Hutton, Jacob Epstein, Elisabeth Frink and many others – often selecting less well-known or early career artists. In September 2021, in this outstanding interior, four Methodist Modern Art Collection works by leading British 20th century artists Edward Burra, Ralph Beyer, Elisabeth Frink and Graham Sutherland were displayed. All were purchased by John Gibbs, and/or the Revd Douglas Wollen, his artistic adviser, in 1962 or 1963. This was at the very same time that the artistic commissioning at Coventry Cathedral came to fruition, with the consecration of the building in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 25 May 1962.

Gibbs and Wollen would have been aware of the Coventry project with their interest in contemporary religious art. The 1960s were a time of

energy and optimism and they made swift initial acquisitions of paintings for the new Methodist collection, often in those early days echoing commissioning at Coventry.

Our large-scale impactful *Pietà* drawing by Elisabeth Frink, was sited in the Cathedral parallel to her famous bronze eagle on the lectern. The drawing was one of the first works to be acquired for the Methodist Modern Art Collection. It was purchased by Wollen from the Waddington Gallery in September 1962, while, in contrast, the great bronze eagle was a relatively late commission for Spence. The architect of the Cathedral approached the young sculptor in 1962. The pulpit and lectern were one of the last things to be designed and Frink created a magnificent eagle, focusing on its heroic nature of hope and reconciliation in post-war Britain. In January 1963, Wollen also acquired from the LeFevre Gallery the powerful large watercolour depicting *The Pool of Bethesda* by Edward Burra, which was included in the first national tour of the Collection in July 1963. This is one of a group of large watercolours of Biblical scenes which Burra painted in the early 1950s. There are no works by Burra at Coventry Cathedral – perhaps Basil Spence thought such large-scale watercolours might fade over time.

Our small Ralph Beyer drawing *The Son of Man is come* is a study for one of the great *Tablets of the Word* in the Cathedral. The artist came to England as a refugee from Nazi Germany in 1937, aged 16. He studied sculpture under Henry Moore at Chelsea School of Art, and was influenced by the artist and poet David Jones, before serving in the British Army during World War II. He was selected to create almost all the lettering for Coventry Cathedral, from the foundation stone to the baptismal font, ensuring consistency across the interior. Our small drawing was purchased by Gibbs in 1963, but maintained in

his own private collection until 1990, when he presented it formally to the Collection. Our drawing was sited next to the appropriate Tablet in the nave.

Graham Sutherland's *The Deposition*, is one of the best known works in our Collection and was acquired on 4 December 1963 at auction at Sothebys by John Gibbs. Sutherland served as a war artist, recording devastating bomb damage of the Blitz in London and damage in South Wales. Here, in this penetrating depiction of the Deposition, Christ's body recalls the emaciated figures of the concentration camp victims which were shown at cinemas and in contemporary leaflets. Such images haunted Sutherland immediately after the end of the Second World War, as they did Burra. Sutherland had converted to Catholicism in 1926. He considered the Deposition of Christ 'the most tragic of all themes', though one that inherently spoke of 'the promise of salvation', suggesting that even in the bleakest moments of suffering, there is always hope, a theme that was reflected throughout this Art Trail.

The small Methodist *Deposition* was displayed close to the vast magisterial tapestry *Christ in Glory in the Tetramorph*, commissioned by Spence. The tapestry is an integral part of the overall concept for the interior, a dominant feature hanging against the back wall of the Lady Chapel. Sutherland submitted designs depicting the risen Christ, surrounded by the symbols of the four Evangelists, as described in the Book of Revelation. Direct comparisons can be made with the Crucifixion at the base of the tapestry and the small Methodist *Deposition*.

All our works created new dynamic dialogues with the direct comparisons in the Cathedral and the integrated interiors showing them in a new light.

Ann Sumner

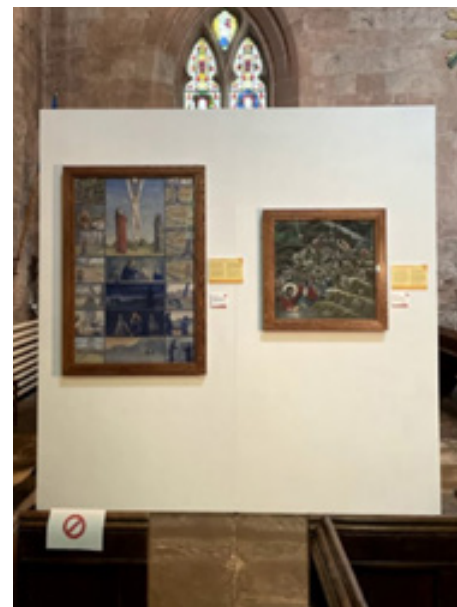
STORIES OF CHANGE: HOPE, FAITH AND LOVE BEYOND THE CATHEDRAL

Ann has written about the four works displayed in Coventry Cathedral and the way they relate to the Cathedral's own works. The remaining 31 were displayed in local Methodist churches. Revd Stephen Willey and his team at the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit wanted the Art Trail to extend 'beyond the ring road' a reference to the A4053 which is seen by some as cutting off Coventry city centre from its suburbs and the more rural areas beyond. So, eleven pictures were displayed at Methodist Central Hall, eight at Earlsdon, seven in Balsall Common and five in Fillongley, all extremely ably facilitated by local volunteers. Together, these sites formed part of the Art Trail *Stories of Change: Hope, Faith and Love*.

Organising an Art Trail may involve more work and thought than organising a single site exhibition - Ann Sumner has thanked those involved and huge thanks are also due to her - but it brings many benefits. All circuit-wide projects have the special potential to promote unity across diverse communities. In addition, the Trail demonstrated the range of pictures in the Collection and their appeal to different people. Members from the four participating churches were encouraged to choose works that



spoke into their current situations. For example, Theyre Lee-Elliott's *Crucified tree form – the Agony* had a particular resonance in the Balsall Common area where there has been public anger at the removal of ancient trees for the construction of the HS2 railway line. Michael Edmonds' *The Cross over the City* (the conservation of which is discussed on page 12) had particular resonance for members of Central Hall, capturing the way they feel about the mission of their church in the city centre. In Earlsdon, Jyoti Sahi's *Dalit Madonna*



and John Muafangejo's *Israel, Jews, Christians, Heathen, Our God for all People* helped celebrate Coventry's richly diverse population.

Different churches engaged with their visitors in different ways. In Fillongley there is an active local Art Group who exhibited works on the same themes of Hope, Faith and Love alongside the Methodist Modern Art Collection's works, and a number of local artists gave talks or ran workshops. Earlsdon hosts a thriving cafe and visitors to that were encouraged to see the works and engage interactively with them. At Central Hall the artists in residence for Coventry City of Culture were able to use the Collection as a jumping off point, and Rev Kathryn Darby led sessions to explore using art to draw us closer to God in prayer.

Katharine Farnham-Dear



Bottom Left, Balsall Common Methodist Church hosting part of the Art Trail (Photo: the Editor)

Top Left, Earlsdon Methodist Church invited viewers to respond interactively to Peter Rogers' *The Mocking of Christ* by using a cocktail stick to add their hurt symbolically to Christ's crown of thorns (Photo: the Editor)

Top Right, Works on display in St Mary and All Saints Fillongley, a Local Ecumenical Partnership. The building dates back to the 12th century, the works by Francis Hoyland and Eularia Clarke to the early 1960s (Photo: the Editor)

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS



Roy de Maistre's *The Supper at Emmaus* on display under purple lights at Chester Cathedral (Photo: Corinne Miller)

CHESTER 'GLOBAL IMAGES OF CHRIST: CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS'

Chester Cathedral (25 September – 30 October)

Recent world events including the Black Lives Matter movement have challenged us to think how we might respond to and value diverse communities. This fascinating exhibition, organised by Chester Cathedral in partnership with the Diocese of Chester's Board of Social Responsibility, brought together some forty artworks which reflect the rich diversity of images of Christ that bring meaning to faith for many.

As one of the most important collections of religious art, the Methodist Modern Art Collection was delighted to be represented with six works:

- *Nathaniel (asleep under the tree)* by Mark Cazalet
- *Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)* by Mark Cazalet
- *Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord Jesus for R. 3.00* by John Muafangejo
- *Noli me Tangere (Touch me not)* by Roy de Maistre
- *The Supper at Emmaus* by Roy de Maistre
- *People visit the Stable* by Sadao Watanabe

The exhibition was presented at various locations around the glorious red

sandstone medieval Cathedral and cloisters, which had been dramatically lit for the occasion. Speakers at the private view included artist Lorna May Wadsworth and a moving provocation from Chine McDonald, author of *God is Not a White Man*.

Corinne Miller

We will report on this exhibition more fully in our Spring 2022 Newsletter.

BIRMINGHAM 3GENERATE

Birmingham NEC (29 - 31 October)

We are thrilled to report that five pictures from the Collection were on display at 3Generate 2021, the Methodist Church's children's and youth assembly which took place at the NEC Birmingham from 29 to 31 October. This year's theme was 'In Tune' where over 600 4 - 23 year olds and their youth leaders explored what it meant to be in tune with each other and with God. The pictures were hung in the designated Art Space, each with a 'big question' to stimulate conversation around them in line with the theme of the weekend. The young people were encouraged to 'be inspired and then create (their) own masterpieces'.

The big questions and the works were:

Why do you think this painting has a pink background?

Pink Crucifixion by Craigie Aitchison

Jo Hibbard discusses John Reilly's *The Raising of Lazarus* with one of the young people at 3Generate 2021 © TMCP 2021



Where do you see yourself in this painting?

The Five Thousand by Eularia Clarke

Why is this scene in a church graveyard?

The Raising of Lazarus by John Reilly

Does the water look rough

or smooth to you?

Good Friday: Walking on Water, 2006 by Maggi Hambling

Who is 'our God'?

Israel, Jews, Christians, Heathen, Our God for all People by John Muafangejo

This display was arranged at short notice and the Management Committee extend our thanks to those who worked so hard to make it happen.

BEWDLEY 'FOR ALL PEOPLE' - A THIRD ATTEMPT

Bewdley Churches Together, a team consisting of six faith denominations in the Worcestershire town situated on the river Severn, first approached the Methodist Modern Art Collection in 2018. They had accumulated experience of working together over earlier Lent and Easter periods on community focused mission and outreach ventures. So hosting 20 works from the Collection alongside a linked programme of events provided another interesting but different opportunity.

Planning and decisions flowed such that they were all set to hold this over Lent and Easter 2020 in the Wyre Forest Gallery situated within the Bewdley Museum complex in the centre of the town. As readers of previous Newsletter issues will know this had to be called off

two days before delivery of the works for hanging following the announcement of the Covid-19 Lockdown 1 on the evening of Monday 23 March 2020. It was hoped that it could take place in the same period of 2021 but the combination of tiers arrangements followed by Lockdown 3 forced another postponement for a year.

A third attempt is now planned for Lent and Easter 2022 and basic details are on the back cover of this Newsletter. Work will be taking place over the remaining months of this year to determine the extent to which their original programme can be replicated or adjustments have to be made. The aim will be for wider communication of the details in the early months of next year

and this will include the Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

It has been for all involved a rollercoaster of emotions, disappointments, loss, and sadness that some ventures might not be possible to revive. However what has been evident throughout has been the fellowship in the team, sense of humour, wise leadership, faith, and their overall resilience. The Advent theme of waiting and the Easter themes of loss and resurrection certainly have been experienced. Do please pray that this third attempt at putting on the 'For All People' exhibition in Bewdley with an interesting programme of related events will finally see the light of day in 2022.

Ian Baker

CONSERVATION OF THE CROSS OVER THE CITY

When it comes to selecting works for a Methodist Modern Art Collection exhibition the Michael Edmonds' *The Cross over the City* is a regular choice by local organisers. It resonates particularly with those living in urban environments as recently demonstrated by Christine from Coventry who said 'It is a symbol of our faith. We are a city centre church here to share our faith with everyone who comes into the city centre'. However as a polyester, brass and mosaic relief panel, it presents some practical care and handling challenges which are heightened by the touring ethos of the Collection.

It was acquired in 1963 so has been part of the Collection for nearly 60 years and was identified as a needy candidate in our recent conservation programme. However finding a conservator for this specialist work was not easy but we were directed to Bronwen Faulkner

who kindly assessed its condition and provided a quotation for the necessary work. Sadly due to a combination of her maternity leave and Covid-19 constraints she was unable to undertake this but put us in touch with Misa Tamura. Her conservation of it involved cleaning to remove ingrained dirt, cleaning of the frame, loss compensation and testing in relation to bloom evidence. We are delighted that it made its newly conserved re-appearance as part of the Art Trail *Stories of Change: Hope, Faith and Love*.

Brian Sharp, who worked for the Methodist Church Division of Education and Youth at Chester House in Muswell Hill, has recently recalled his involvement with an earlier conservation exercise as follows: 'It must have been some forty years ago I had an occasion to make contact with Michael Edmonds. His relief panel, *The Cross over the City*,

was beginning to show signs of wear and tear associated with travelling around the country. Some of the tiles had fallen off or been damaged. It was agreed that Michael should have the panel back in order that it might be refurbished. I can remember motoring to his home with this work, I think in Powys, and finding him a charming and unassuming host, then returning at a later date to reclaim the newly refurbished panel. This was in the relatively early days of the Collection and I transported the panel back in my car. No awareness of safety or security but clearly the work got back to Chester House without mishap despite my naivety. It would not happen now!'

Brian, who is a Friend of the Methodist Modern Art Collection, kindly made a donation in support of our conservation programme when it was first announced. After recent discussion with him, it was agreed to assign part of this to cover the conservation cost of £1,000 for *The Cross over the City*. We would like to thank Brian for his generosity and we hope other Friends might wish to consider following his thoughtful example.

Ian Baker



The newly conserved work on display in Coventry Methodist Central Hall (Photo: the Editor)

BOOK REVIEW

JOHN NEILSON: *THE INSCRIPTIONS OF RALPH BEYER, THE CRAFTS STUDY CENTRE/LUND HUMPHRIES, 2021*



The Methodist Modern Art Collection's Ralph Beyer - *The Son of Man is come* on display in Coventry Cathedral by the Tablet of the Word for which it is a pencil study. (Photo: the Editor)

Most Friends' knowledge of this artist work will derive from his sole work in the Methodist Modern Art Collection: *The Son of Man is come*, a 1961 pencil study incorporating the text of Luke 15:10 and John 10:11 with the image of the Son of Man, Jesus, carrying a lamb on his shoulders. The study is for one of Beyer's *Tablets of the Word*, eight large Hollington stone panels situated on the walls of the new (1962) Coventry Cathedral. At the time, the artist had been a German refugee in Britain since 1937, originally apprenticed to Eric Gill at his Piggotts Chiltern settlement, but soon moving to the Central School of Arts and Crafts a year later. He was interned as an enemy alien in Summer 1940, at Huston Camp near Liverpool (along with ceramicist Hans Coper and Nikolaus Pevsner), however, soon released, he joined the Pioneer Corps, ending up as an NCO in Germany in 1946. Post-war work continued as a letter carver with a Cambridge firm of stonemasons, and would continue with another Gill apprentice, David Kindersley, before undertaking a successful freelance lettering and teaching career.

As the first monograph on the artist, fellow letterer Neilson's study provides a fascinating light on Beyer's Germany and English lives, the influences on his

works, and, of course, commissions great and small. Of particular interest to us with the Coventry Art Trail is the commission he received from the architect of the new cathedral, Basil Spence, for *The Tablets of the Word*. Earlier studies for *The Son of Man is come* are shown in chapter six of which the 1959 version depicts the lamb facing the other way and with a much more 'textured' woolly coat. Photographs of the artist carving as well as chasing up *The Son of Man is come* situated at the lower ('northern') end of the nave give some idea of the scale of these 15x6 foot panels, but justice can only be seriously given to them by visiting the originals in situ.

Chapter 10: 'Memorials' introduces some old friends of the Collection, as it illustrates a memorial inscription to Winifred and the Revd Douglas Wollen, from Wesley's Chapel, carved by Beyer. Wollen, a distinguished Methodist Minister in Penarth, had been John Morel Gibbs's primary buyer in London as the nascent Collection was rapidly growing. His son, Roger, wrote the first summary catalogue of the Methodist Modern Art Collection (then comprising 36 works) then a full-length catalogue and history of it (2003).

A possible alternative career as a sculptor rather than a letterer is discussed, where obviously Henry Moore's influence is present, but this never materialised and it is as a letterer that Beyer is remembered today. Particularly interesting is Chapter 15: a section on the artist's working practices and his assistants. The monograph concludes with a very valuable inventory of known works as well as a geographical index, ideal for church and architecture addicts.

Tim Egan

On Tuesday 28 September Professor Ann Sumner talked to the author of this book at a well attended event in Coventry Cathedral as part of the Art Trail *Stories of Change: Hope, Faith and Love*. Their discussions focused in particular on the Cathedral's *The Son of Man is come* Tablet of the Word and the Methodist Modern Art Collection's preparatory drawing for that work which was loaned as part of the Art Trail.



Ann Sumner chats to John Neilson in Coventry Cathedral (Photo: Coventry Cathedral, used with kind permission)

ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD



The front cover of MONK featuring a section from David Somerville's *After New York*. Used with kind permission

MONK - A NEW INTERNATIONAL ARTS MAGAZINE

The world of specialist magazines is tough to enter at the best of times and let alone when a pandemic has gripped life and living. Despite these challenges MONK has emerged as a new entrant exploring spirituality and the arts. Sophie Lévy Burton as founding Editor is the inspirational catalyst behind it assisted by other contributors and the contents span paintings, fiction, poetry, interviews and essays. It uses an online platform and three issues have appeared to date. A limited edition print anthology drawing on a selection from these is now available through selected independent bookshops at a price of £15. It is a high quality publication and certainly proves that print on paper is far from a dinosaur.

News of this new magazine filtered through to me via the efficient Friends network. I am sure readers will be interested

to learn that articles have included Mark Cazalet on his new *Resonances* works, Rowan Williams on poetry, Jonathan Ruffer on the Auckland Project and one on Clive Hicks-Jenkins. It is hoped that the Methodist Modern Art Collection will feature in a later issue.

This new and enterprising publishing venture is to be welcomed. For further information, including purchasing options, please see: www.monk.gallery

Ian Baker

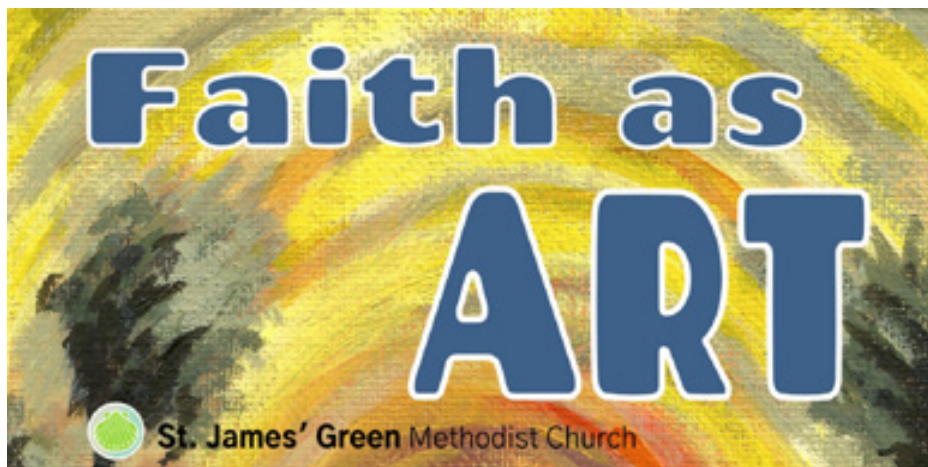
A WORD FROM BOB WILLIAMS...

Your Newsletter Editor has very kindly allowed me the opportunity to express my thanks to the numerous Friends and colleagues who contributed to a departing keepsake. The very touching presentation volume of personal comments so warmly expressed on the verso of those familiar postcard images from the Methodist Modern Art Collection was just perfect; an initiative, one suspects, of much plotting and planning on the part of Ian Baker, our excellent Secretary to the Friends!

This, together with the delightful gift of a richly illustrated volume of Sadao Watanabe's works, received from Phil Allison and his Cultureshock Media team was greatly appreciated. CSM were instrumental in ensuring the timely publication of our Newsletter over the greater part of my time as Editor. Both will serve as a wonderful visual reminder of so many close connections established over my thirteen years association with the Collection.

So, thank you one and all.

Bob Williams



Simon Williamson's *Inspired by John Reilly The Raising of Lazarus 2021*
Acrylic on Canvas 18.5 cm x 13cm. Used with kind permission

FAITH AS ART - THIRSK METHODIST CHURCH

It is always encouraging to learn of how local churches make use of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Another example of a creative approach took place at Thirsk Methodist Church (St James Green) from September to November. They ran five free workshops under the title *Faith as Art* using digital images of 10 works from the Collection. They explored how the individual artist interpreted the theme, the techniques they used, and devoted the greater part of each three hour session to the creation of works by those attending and inspired by their studies.

This was a project of Revd Denise Williamson, Minister responsible for Thirsk Methodist Church, and inspired by Simon, her husband. They worked hard in terms of publicising the

programme within local organisations and outlets, drew on the range of available Methodist Modern Art Collection resources, and used the Tim Marlow video to introduce the Collection to those attending. They were fortunate to receive a small seed grant from the Yorkshire North and East Methodist District to purchase some display screens for exhibiting the works produced by attendees.

We do pray all their work will bear fruit in terms of local community outreach and mission. We are delighted that the Collection has served to inspire this initiative and will cover this further with a report and some pictures in our Spring 2022 Newsletter.

Ian Baker

FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2022

Saturday 26 March
to Sunday 24 April 2022

'For All People'

Bewdley, Worcestershire

Wyre Forest Gallery

Bewdley Museum

Load Street

Bewdley

DY12 2AE

This will be an exhibition of 20 works from the Collection with a programme of associated events in nearby Bewdley churches. Further details including opening times and website to follow once confirmed.

Contact: Jim Ineson, 01299 405645

2023

Saturday 18 February to Saturday
8 April 2023

Victoria Methodist Church, Bristol

Sunday 28 May for six weeks

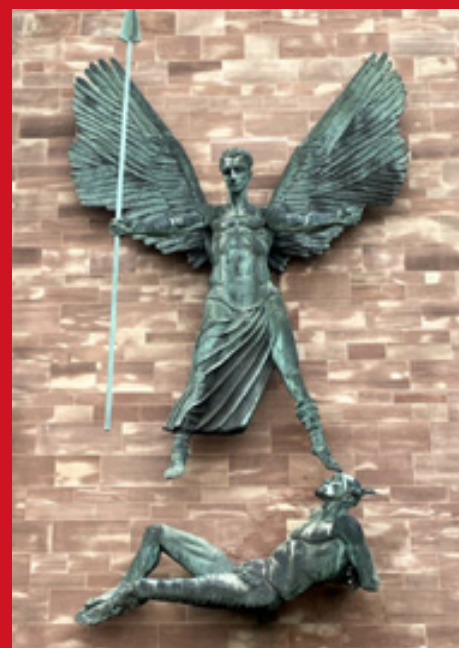
Emmanuel Ecumenical

Church, Eastbourne

(exact dates to be confirmed)



The maquette
(Photo: Wesley House,
used with kind permission)



The statue
(Photo: the Editor)

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

Ann Sumner's article draws attention to the many parallels between the Methodist Modern Art Collection and Coventry Cathedral, but there is one further indirect link. In 1988, the Gibbs Charitable Trust purchased at auction Jacob Epstein's maquette, (sculpted in terracotta then cast in bronze) for the huge statue of *Saint Michael and the Devil* by Jacob Epstein, which adorns the wall beside the entrance of Coventry Cathedral. The maquette was lent to Wesley House in Cambridge on long-term indefinite loan shortly after it was purchased. It has been exhibited with works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection in the past, last at an exhibition at Turner House in Penarth in 1990, and it is hoped that it will be reunited with the newly conserved Collection for another exhibition in the future. As can be seen, there are a number of differences between the maquette and the statue.

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

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