

NEWSLETTER

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Methodist **Modern**
Art Collection



Geoff Cornell: A Tribute

Nick Mynheer – His 'Flight to Egypt' series

War and Peace and Reconciliation – The Collection at Banbury

Nick Bury reviews Crucible II at Gloucester Cathedral

DEAR FRIEND

We are again delighted to bring you the first Newsletter of the year. The recent decision to mail out a printed copy, to the entire Friends' membership, has been widely acclaimed; a policy we intend to pursue.

The Collection with its full and inspiring supporting programme of events has been very well received during its recent showing in Wrexham. A full report will feature in the autumn edition of the Newsletter.

In the meantime the Collection is set to cross the Irish Sea for the first time and will be showing in Ballymena in County Antrim.

Managing Trustees of the Collection
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THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION IN WALES

'The Methodist Modern Art Collection in Wales', a very readable little booklet, compiled by trustee Sarah Middleton, is now available on our online website www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection (See 'Art Collection Resources'). Devised for the benefit of visitors viewing the Collection when it visits the Principality, it proved very popular at the recent Wrexham exhibition and will again be available for Llandudno in the summer of 2016.

INTRODUCE A FRIEND

Can you persuade a friend to become a Friend of the Collection? We are enormously grateful to our loyal core of Friends but, with ever increasing expenditure very much in mind, we are keen to increase our numbers. The Secretary is always delighted to receive new Applications! The appropriate forms are, of course, available at exhibition sites – or may be downloaded from the website (Friends of the Collection section).

Front Cover: Nicholas Mynheer
(b 1958), *The Flight to Egypt
(with angels)*. 2009. Oil on
canvas. Copyright the artist.

A TRIBUTE TO

Geoffrey Richard Cornell

1949–2014

As we reported in the Autumn 2014 Newsletter the sudden death, in early October, of Collection trustee, the Revd Geoff Cornell, came as a terrible shock to all who knew him.

The following is an edited version of the address given by the Revd Stuart Jordan, Chair of the London District, at the Thanksgiving Service for Geoff at The Bourne Methodist Church, Southgate on 29 October, 2014.

'Church members and colleagues from the whole of that ministry will doubtless have their own memories to share. But all, I suspect, would unite to affirm those core features of ministry at which Geoff excelled...

As a pastor he was committed, compassionate, wise, always supportive – but also seeking to help people grow and move on, so encouraging or challenging as needed and not unwilling to grasp nettles but never withdrawing care or prayer in the process. *As a mentor:* working alongside those new to ministry or to British Methodism, or to a new personal situation; generous in the gift of his time and his experience, able to guide, model practice and if need be correct – all out of a profound respect for the other person, which both honoured and empowered them. *As a strategic thinker,* willing and able to see the bigger picture and to reflect on it – honing his innate reflective skills when he completed an MA in Consultancy for Ministry & Mission in 2002. *As a meticulous administrator* – always preparing carefully for meetings, but also offering perceptive comments to self or others afterwards, in order to assist his own and everyone else's learning. And perhaps, above all, *as one of Mr Wesley's preachers,* crafting sermons in which his skill with words, his theological literacy, his

pastoral instincts, his love of liturgy and of sheer performance consistently melded together to inspire and uplift week after week after week. Of course his preaching and pastoring, his mentoring and his leadership did not just depend on technical skills. They were so effective, so positive and so joyous because they drew on the vast hinterland of Geoff's interests and involvements as a human being.

There was also the range of his reading and cultural interests: Shakespeare and the theatre; novels and poetry (especially RS Thomas); classical and other music; photography, film, DVDs; the visual arts of course and his very active involvement as a trustee of the Methodist Modern Art Collection – knowledgeable, perceptive, recognising the significance of the arts for interpreting as well as celebrating human existence and relationships.

For the sake of his own integrity, and that of those to whom he ministered, he embraced the need to look for clues, hints of transcendence, finger-prints of the Spirit in the most unlikely places of experience as well as in the rich storehouse of suggestive imagery drawn from all the poetry and literature, art and music he avidly consumed.

He always saw himself and acted as a minister under discipline, accountable to the Church. There was a



Top: Susie Hamilton (b.1950) *Ecce Homo* 1999. Acrylic.
Above: Mark Cazalet (b. 1964) *Fool of God (Christ in the garden)* 1993. Oil on paper.
Both from the Methodist Modern Art Collection

transparent and consistent desire to follow Wesley's maxim by 'doing all the good he could, by all the means he could'.

Geoff embodied his own Christian conviction about the need to live life 'in all its fullness'. He did it with style and with a joie de vivre that helps us see that such life needs to be to measured, not in years but in fathoms – not by its length but by depth.

And we recognise – and we too will be eternally grateful for – that familiar *voic*e he found, to joke and banter, to pray, to preach, to lead others in worship and to faith. A voice that speaks to us still today, inviting us to live fully and passionately, to build community, to make a difference – in the light of the gospel story if we can and by the Kingdom values of justice and mercy and compassion where we can't. A

voice which he sensed, as we do; that was used to point beyond itself to the One who upheld him throughout his life and who holds him still – and us with him – in His eternal love.

And we can't ask, nor perhaps do we need, much more than that. To God be the glory. Amen'.

On 29 November Stuart Jordan again officiated at a second, more widely attended Service of Thanksgiving, at Hinde Street Methodist Church, Marylebone. Geoff served as Superintendent of the West London Mission, at Hinde St., from 2001–08.

Each section of the service was accompanied by one of the paintings from the Methodist Modern Art Collection: two as originals at the front of the Church and copied on the service order, the third on a postcard handed out to everyone as they came in.

The first of the three was the acrylic painting *Ecce Homo*, which Geoff chose and described when he was the focus of a profile in our Spring 14 Newsletter. The second was *Fool of God (Christ in the garden)* by Mark Cazalet. As Stuart Jordan said, this was a picture to which Geoff was drawn. The subtitle locates the image in the garden of Gethsemane, but the title alludes to Paul's description of Christian life and his own ministry as being a 'fool for Christ's sake' – involving its own Gethsemane moments of anguish, prayer and discernment. Sometimes, no doubt, Geoff with his wit and ready sense of humour, acted the fool for no particular purpose, other than to cheer and enliven others. He also recognised the ambiguities and costs – and foolishness? – of the ministry to which he had committed himself.

John Reilly's *Raising of Lazarus* was the focus for the final section of the service. Stuart Jordan commented that the picture transforms the ordinariness of a typical English churchyard into an extraordinary riot of colour and possibility. It suggests a reality seen through a new (fish-eye, wide angle) lens, using a high-speed shutter which shows Martha and Thomas twice in different positions at the head of the grave.

For Geoff the language of resurrection, of God's future breaking in, was, as often as not, an invitation to transform the present reality through committed action, but alongside that – as he reflects on the death of a friend during an Easter day sermon in 2012 – he articulates his hope in the God by whom we are held.

'On Friday, in the spring sunshine and ahead of the heavy showers, I went for a good long walk in Trent Park. It was to enjoy the day, to make myself fitter. But it was also



John Reilly (1928–2010) *Raising of Lazarus* 1962. Ripolin enamel.
From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

There was a transparent and consistent desire to follow Wesley's maxim by 'doing all the good he could, by all the means he could'.

to remember. So I walked and remembered. And wondered, not for the first time, and not for the last, about all this talk of resurrection. We want death not to be the end, but where is the evidence? We are so much beings governed by our five senses that we can't envisage what it will be like without any of those senses. We spend our years shaping who we are, setting out our identity, whether through the work we do... or the people we engage with and how they see us... All that we build up, all the markers of who we are, fade, are stripped from us as our body declines. And then what are we? Friends, we are, each of us, a child of God. That's our identity. It is held in God, by God. Just as Jesus was held in God, by God, through his dying and into Easter, when those disciples had those glimpses, for a short while, of the new future in their meetings with the risen Christ. Fleeting meetings, but enough to assure them that the world was not what it seemed. We belong to God. We are held in God. Neither death nor life

can separate us from the love of God. Unseen, unknown, at times unsuspected by us, God is working, the Spirit making things new. What are the odds on God being at work like that, on there being a future beyond this life? It seems ridiculous. But then ...we see signs, dimly, amid all the welter of stuff that comes our way. We are invited to trust it. The world may not know, may carry blithely on, but the truth is different. We belong to God and in Christ we can know we are God's children. 'My sheep hear my voice and I know them and nothing can snatch them out of my hand'.

Easter sermon, April 2012

Stuart's concluding words – 'As we give thanks for all our memories of Geoff together today we too are eternally grateful – for the husband, father, brother, colleague, mentor and friend whose life and ministry we have been hugely privileged to share and whose memory will continue to inspire us'.

Managing Trustees of the Collection

OUR TRUSTEE IN PROFILE IS PAUL BAYLEY



I grew up in Leicestershire and studied Politics and Philosophy at Leeds University, graduating in the grim recession of the mid 80's. More by accident than design I found myself working in the archive at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. I then successfully applied for a junior curator's position at

the Tate Gallery, for which I was completely unqualified and quite unprepared! I was still in my early 20's when I moved to London to take up what was a fantastic apprenticeship for the career I subsequently undertook. Its new Director, Nicholas Serota, was then transforming the Tate and I worked on all aspects of administration within the Exhibitions Department. However, to work directly with artists I really needed to work for a smaller institution.

So I left the Tate to go to Cornerhouse in Manchester, which had a cutting edge reputation. Initially Exhibition Organiser I was, subsequently, promoted to the position of Exhibitions Director. Another real stroke of luck for me was that this coincided with an exciting, boom time for contemporary art in Britain. I worked with Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, and the other young British Artists of that period, just as they were establishing their reputations. This was a happy and fulfilling role, however by 2002, I was managing a team of ten and becoming slightly weary after too many years of administrative and budgetary grind that such a position of responsibility inevitably brings.

I made an impulsive decision to join my wife to be, who was working for the BBC, back in London and reinvent

myself as a freelance curator and project manager. I did however apply for what I thought might be a short-term job with an organisation called Art and Christianity Enquiry to help stimulate contemporary art activity in churches. I was again fortunate in that this enabled me to work directly with the late Revd Tom Devonshire Jones (a Patron of the Collection), a charismatic and encyclopaedic guide to the territory I would find myself occupying for the next decade. One of the first things he told me to do, with a twinkle in his eye, was to view the dreary sounding Methodist Art Collection, then being exhibited across three churches in the City of London. I was amazed to be able to wander into those deserted sacred spaces and directly encounter such powerful, museum quality, paintings. I was delighted, some years later when I was asked to become first an advisor to the Collection then, subsequently, invited to join the Board of Managing Trustees. Our small acquisitions budget means we have to be strategic about every new work. Having participated in purchases of works by Maggi Hambling, Craigie Aitchison, Susie Hamilton and David Jones and the wonderful commission undertaken by Clive Hicks-Jenkins. I can say that these works not only complement thematically some of the acknowledged 'stars' of the collection but also sit comfortably amongst them on their own artistic merit.

I am currently the Director of the Florence Trust, an emerging artists' studio and mentoring programme in north London and still find time to undertake freelance curatorial work.

A work in focus

TRUSTEE PAUL BAYLEY NOMINATES HIS CHOICE



William Roberts (1895-1980). *The Crucifixion*. Early 1920s. Oil. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

I have chosen William Roberts' *The Crucifixion* for two reasons. First, it has some claim to be the most avant-garde work in the Collection. Completed shortly after the end of the First World War its jagged zigzag composition and depiction of humans driven to savagery

is powerful and unsettling. Indeed it seems to have direct relevance to the times we are currently living through. Is that a 'Peace Wall' in the background? Are those uniforms of militiamen in the foreground? Roberts was a founder of the Vorticist movement in thrall to the machine age at the start of the last century. His exposure to the reality and barbarity of war tempered his move towards kinetic abstraction but this canvas combines both modernist bravado and humanity and it remains a vital work of art.

On a more prosaic level I gave a talk to a group of ordinands about the ability of contemporary art to give a transformative experience. I couldn't help but notice that one of the group was completely disengaged from every example I showed, despite the enthusiasm of his cohorts. I then led the same group around a small selection of works from the Collection and, as I started talking about the Roberts, I could see this person literally wake up in front of my eyes. Suddenly he was asking questions about the artist, pointing out details in the canvas to his fellow students; he became completely mesmerised by the work. It showed me that sometimes all it takes is a personal response to a single work to prove the quality of a collection.

THE COLLECTION ON ITS TRAVELS...



Photo supplied

'WAR AND PEACE AND RECONCILIATION' Banbury (29 September – 23 October 2014)

What an extraordinary gift to the Methodist Church, and beyond, is this Collection! Over the years it has been an inspiration to see the various ways that the works of art have been exhibited and used. So when Revd Rob Anning, then Superintendent of the Banbury Circuit, and I were looking at different outreach possibilities, we wondered about using these works of art to enable conversations about faith with the wider community. The trustees were extremely helpful; we found a window of opportunity for October 2014 and, then set about getting the seal of approval and financial backing from the Circuit. But what 'title' for an exhibition? How to appeal to those outside the Church as well as deepen understanding for those within? Importantly too, how to find the most appropriate venue for transformative conversations to take place?

From the outset, we felt it important that the exhibition was 'owned' by ecumenical friends and, when attempts to find more neutral 'public spaces' failed, the staff of St

Mary's Parish Church (adjacent to Banbury Cross itself!) were happy to involve the exhibition as part of their 'Living Arts' programme. To link in with the various war anniversaries of 2014, we agreed on 'War and Peace and Reconciliation', choosing five works to illustrate each of the three sections. The emphasis was on moving beyond war and even peace to the reconciliation that lies at the heart of God as exemplified in the life and death of Jesus. We started with *Cain and Abel* by John Reilly and made Jacques Iselin's stunning *The Elements of the Holy Communion* the end-piece of the exhibition that stood poignantly in the war memorial section of St Mary's.

Before the exhibition began we were enabled and encouraged by some sponsorship of our leaflets and posters from Methodist Insurance, as well as advice from the trustees. Sarah Middleton, then Geoff Cornell – who so sadly died just after the exhibition in Banbury had started, and a hands-on Peter Forsaith notably helped us in practical ways to mount a successful showing of these wonderful works of art. It's never easy to measure success for an art exhibition, but we were encouraged to have more than 500 'official' visitors over the twenty showing days; we know many others looked at the works on Sundays before and after services, as well as when other 'Living Arts' events were on in the evenings. Our official figures refer to the people to whom the stewards (volunteers from the Circuit) handed specially-produced leaflets during our 10am to 4pm opening hours and which provided many ways into shared conversations. Continuity was provided by Hazel Stagg, lay worker in the Circuit, who most days could be found

literally on her knees sketching different paintings; Hazel's input and insights were invaluable.

Most of our objectives were therefore met. It would have been ideal to have had the exhibition in the middle of the shopping centre, but I'm not sure what the insurance implications would have been! As it turned out, there was a great deal of ecumenical input at St Mary's. We would have loved to have been busier, but would the stewards have had such meaningful conversations? No, the one sadness was that, despite notifying all the educational establishments in the area, only one junior school came and engaged with the paintings; and their huge enthusiasm made it all the more disappointing that others, albeit in these days of prescribed curricula, had not been able to spare the time too.

Individual paintings themselves clearly moved many visitors and this wonderful collection of art was appreciated at so many levels. Together, the fifteen works that made up 'War and Peace and Reconciliation' enabled the Circuit to promote an enjoyable and meaningful month of conversation about God's love for the world.

I am indebted to Michael King who not only curated this particular showing of the Collection but also found the time to provide us with this comprehensive report on the whole event.



Mike was, for eleven years, leader of the Methodist Church's World Church Relationships Team and also Vice-President of Conference in 2012-13.
– Ed

Art For Our Sake...



From top to bottom: Peter Rogers (b.1933) *The mocking of Christ* 1961. Oil; Eularia Clarke (1914-70) *The five thousand* 1962. Oil; Clive Hicks-Jenkins (b.1951) *Christ writes in the Dust: The Woman taken in Adultery* 2011. Acrylic on panel. All from the Methodist Modern Art Collection

This poem was penned especially for a recent Poetry Evening held at Wrexham Methodist Church, in celebration of the visit of the Collection to the town. Its author is Welsh poet David Subacchi, who seems to express so well the capacity the works of art have to 'draw the viewer in' and reinforce the very special impact that the Collection seems to make wherever its port of call.

They bought carefully those Methodists
Chose the best up and coming artists
Inspired by their imagination
And moved by their skills
To translate the gospel stories
Into a visual feast

I am there at the mocking of Christ
In the dark sweaty room
Crammed with eight soldiers
As they force a thorny crown
Onto the Saviour's head
Place a reed in his hand
In place of a sceptre
Strike him with contempt

I am there in the park
With the crowd
At the enormous picnic
Conjured from five loaves
And two fishes
We are dressed as if
On a Sunday outing
Not for a miracle

I am there with brutal men
In cloth caps clutching stones
Hidden behind their backs
There as the poor fallen woman
Staggers around in terror
There as he bends to draw
A line in the sand
To end this persecution

They bought carefully those Methodists
One by one they captured
These priceless treasures
Not for profit but to ensure
That the beauty of his word
Would be communicated
Not art for art's sake
But art for our sake.

© David Subacchi
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GLEANINGS AND REFLECTIONS

'CRUCIBLE II'

Gloucester Cathedral

(1 September – 31 October 2014)

'Crucible' was a hugely ambitious exhibition of sculptures set in Gloucester Cathedral in September 2010. It was a remarkable and unexpected success, in that, unlike most exhibitions of contemporary art, it made a huge difference to the regular footfall through the Cathedral. (One hundred and thirty six thousand in two months.) It was like a great snowball – more and more people came as the weeks progressed and the word was spread. The reason was the brilliant placing of the seventy works in this remarkable setting and the very high quality of the work shown – work by Sarah Lucas, Lynn Chadwick, Antony Gormley, Peter Randall-Page, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, Ralph Brown, Leonard McComb, Damien Hirst – the list went on and on.

So it was with some trepidation that I went to the opening of 'Crucible 2', daughter of Crucible, which opened this September, exactly four years later. But I should not have feared. The midwives, Claude Koenig and Jane Buck, are the same and, though they are modest (their names do not appear anywhere in the catalogue), they are very skilled curators. The cast of sculptors, too, is largely the same, with some new names – from Henry Moore, who is represented by *Working Model for Reclining Figure: Bone Skirt*, wittily placed facing the reclining last abbot of Gloucester in his tomb, to Gavin Turk whose moving sculpture *Nomad*, a sleeping bag entirely covering a homeless, nameless person, is placed in just the same place where



Ralph Brown's recumbent *Clochard* was found four years ago. There were about a hundred works, extraordinarily cleverly placed. Here we see Damien Hirst's *Anatomy of an Angel* next to Flaxman's classical angels on a monument to Sarah Morley who died in childbirth in 1784. His other angel, *Fallen Angel* is actually taken from the eighteenth century Canova's *Repentant Magdalene* but Hirst's angel is a victim of drug abuse, though her glorious golden wings suggest she too is redeemed. Rushing out of the south porch are two monumental Lynn Chadwick figures, *Jubilee IV*, a bride and groom, full of joy, in a high wind, celebrating Chadwick's centenary year. Set against the great Perpendicular tower is Kenneth Armitage's 30 foot high *Reach for the Stars*, both piercing the sky, one with its celebrated coronet of open parapet and airy pinnacles, the other with great stubby fingers.

Two other massive sculptures are in the nave – Charles Lutyens *Outraged Christ* and David Mach's crucified

Thief made from coat-hangers. They, unlike many works, refer directly to Christ's story. Others puzzle, like the poor old deflated leather football, entitled *Victoria*, by Marcus Harvey and some are wryly amusing like Jon Buck's *Bombird* set high up in a side chapel. This sculpture is among a number referring to the centenary of the beginning of the First World War, the most moving and visually stunning being Ralph Brown's *Display No More in Vain the Lofty Banner* – a beautiful nude girl proudly walking through the Cathedral, head held high and banner held low behind her. And then there are the animals – Chadwick's *Black Beast* frightens, Michael Cooper's *Tortoise* charms and we smile at finding a number of dodos.

Two sculptors contribute works that are deeply meditative. William Pye's *Vesqua* is one of the best of his water sculptures, reflecting beautifully the first English Perpendicular vault of the south transept and Ann Christopher's *Beyond*



Clockwise from far left: David Mach (b.1956) *The Thief*; Damien Hirst (b.1965) *Anatomy of an Angel*. 2008. Resin; Lynn Chadwick (1914–2003) *Jubilee IV*. 1985. Bronze; Henry Moore (1898–1986) *Working Model for Reclining Figure: bone skirt*

Silence in the cloister and *Split Shadow* in the crypt – both particularly fine examples of this artist's work.

Another triumph is the wonderfully produced catalogue – superb full-page photographs of every work and often with enlightening words and comments by the artists themselves. Take these words of David Mach on his works made from ordinary everyday objects. "I like that they may, whilst trying to meet the viewer on common ground...confuse and provoke. It's almost as if they tell stories you may find hard to believe."

Is there a theme to this huge exhibition? Of course many of the

artists have strong connections with the foundry in Gloucestershire, Pangolin Editions, from whose "crucible" a good proportion of the works have been cast. But I think an overall theme is set by David Backhouse's *Pilgrim* which greets us in the porch as we enter the Cathedral. We are on a pilgrimage. We meet all sorts of different people and ideas on our wanderings. We hear passionate artists, wryly amusing characters, those who want to make us think, those who make strange connections, those who want to charm and those who want us just to gaze, open our minds and imagine. We overhear conversations between the artists, the

anonymous masons of the past and the ancient stones of the Cathedral. In other words, 'Crucible 2' simply underlines what the cathedral has been doing for almost a thousand years.

— Nick Bury

This review first appeared in the Winter 2014 edition of Art & Christianity Journal. The Very Revd Nick Bury is the former Dean of Gloucester Cathedral – and, of course, a Patron of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. When still in post, as Dean, he was instrumental to the success of the Crucible I exhibition back in 2010. – Ed

COLLECTION ARTIST NICK MYNHEER REFLECTS ON A FAVOURITE THEME - 'THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT'



Nicholas Mynheer *Flight to Egypt in snow*. 2008. Oil on canvas.
Copyright the artist

'I find myself drawn time and again to the themes of 'The Flight to Egypt' and 'Rest on the Flight to Egypt'. It never ceases to amaze me how many times one can paint or sculpt a theme and find something different each time to say, or indeed be told.

Perhaps it is the interdependence of the three characters; the Christ-child dependent on Joseph and Mary for his protection and nurture or Mary's trust in Joseph that is so fascinating. We see Mary's deep faith in her acceptance of God's will that she should bear the Christ-child. When Joseph is spoken to by an angel in a dream Mary follows Joseph's instruction to get up and leave with great haste without question. Joseph's acceptance of his two dreams; firstly the angel telling him to accept Mary's immaculate conception and secondly to take Mary and the Christ-child and escape to Egypt shows his deep faith. He listens to and accepts the Will of God.

In some ways it is remarkable that after the visitation of the shepherds and Magi, the Holy family find themselves once again alone, exposed and in extraordinary danger. They flee like any family of refugees desperate for a new life of safety and security. How often do we see images of contemporary families in the same predicament trying to escape war or famine?

In my *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* 2003, oil on canvas, in the Methodist Modern Art Collection, the family take rest in the shade of a solitary tree. The wild flowers of the desert have come into blossom in the presence of the Christ-child. Similarly the tree under which they shelter has come into fruit.

The Flight to Egypt – with Angels 2009, (see Front Cover), is one of those strange paintings where I started out not knowing what I was going to paint. The image appeared in my head and all I had to do was to paint it. As I worked on it I realised that it was 'The Flight to Egypt'. However, it was only

when it was finished that I noticed the juxtaposition of the two main trees; the tree full of life (surrounded by Angels) and the (apparently) barren tree in the wintry landscape. The Holy family travel through this snowy landscape unaware that they are guarded by the Heavenly Host above.

In another re-working of the same theme *Flight to Egypt in snow* 2008 one senses a resolute determination to reach a safe haven, where the child will finally be beyond the reach of the supreme evil that threatens.

In the carved limestone version of *The Flight to Egypt* (see Back Cover) the interdependence of the Christ-child, Joseph and the Virgin Mary are (for me) accentuated by the carving them out of one block of stone.'

FRANK ROPER CENTENARY

To mark the Centenary of sculptor Frank Roper's birth, on 12 December 2014, a special Evensong was held in Llandaff Cathedral, just outside Cardiff.

A Yorkshireman who studied art at the RCA, Roper became a student of Henry Moore. He was Appointed Head of Cardiff School of Art, as it then was, in 1947 and it was during these years that he began to forge a pivotal relationship with George Pace, architect at Llandaff Cathedral. This ultimately resulted in Roper contributing more individual works to the post-war restoration of the Cathedral than any other artist/sculptor. He invented the process of lost-polystyrene casting, allowing complex structures to be created by using molten metal and a light, strong polystyrene model. His work at the Cathedral includes elaborate church furnishings including three Passion Lecterns and a music stand bearing the cockerel who shrieks Peter's denial. Probably his finest work here is the intricately formed depictions of wild flowers and plants that fill the twelve niches in the medieval reredos. In each case, their Welsh names were cleverly woven into the design.

Frank Roper is of course represented within the Collection in the form of four aluminium relief panels from a set of *The Stations of the Cross*. Some critics dislike the lean metal



Angels supporting a Mitre (*over the Assistant Bishop's stall at Llandaff*)

human figures but Roper maintained that it was his way of expressing the physical and emotional torture of the Passion of Christ in a way that ordinary folk could understand.

Collection trustee, Sarah Middleton, who was present at the Llandaff Cathedral celebration, comments: 'Prayers of thanksgiving were made for the remarkable legacy of Roper's work, not just in Llandaff but in many UK churches and cathedrals. Before the service, a slideshow was given in the Cathedral's St. David Chapel by Nicholas Lambert of Birkbeck University. He illustrated the versatility and ingenuity of Roper. Particularly striking were the stained glass windows, where the sculptor's fine tracery was combined with gorgeous colour, a choice often influenced by his wife Nora who was an artist in her own right.

Towards the end of the service, the congregation were led past Roper's bronze sculpture, *Praised be My Lord for all Beings* (depicting St. Francis in companionship with attentive creatures from the wild), and past *St. Teilo* (one of the Cathedral's patron saints)

through to the Lady Chapel, gazing upon the magnificent gilded *Flowers of Mary* while the choir sang a specially composed anthem'.

Examples of his non-ecclesiastical work can be found in the collections of the National Gallery/ Amgueddfa Cymru, Cardiff and the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Roper was awarded the MBE in 1991, for his services to art.

To see a delightful short film '*Look, Stranger: Sculpture and Singing Fountains*' on the creative partnership of Frank and Nora Roper, particularly informative on the lost-polystyrene casting technique and Roper's mechanical 'toys', go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=B05uWY_uSFY&feature=youtu.be

STOP PRESS:

We are greatly saddened to report the recent death of the Revd Tom Devonshire Jones, Patron and vigorous champion of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Tom was, for many years, vicar of St. Mark's, Regent's Park, founder and Director Emeritus of ACE (Art and Christian Enquiry) and a highly regarded consultant for commissions and exhibitions – including '*Seeing Salvation*', at the National Gallery, in 2000. Author of a number of fine books, he was most recently in print as editor of the revised and updated 2013 version of the Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture. – Ed

Prayers of thanksgiving were made for the remarkable legacy of Roper's work, not just in Llandaff but in many UK churches and cathedrals.

— Sarah Middleton

ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD...

‘REMBRANDT – THE LATE WORKS’

*Sainsbury Wing, the National Gallery.
(15 October 2014 – 18 January 2015)*

One of the major exhibitions of recent months, this was a joint promotion between the National Gallery, London & the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Rembrandt was known, later in his career, for his single-figure oil paintings of key New Testament figures where he was, essentially, seeking to convey an outward expression of religious contemplation. He certainly succeeded with the three featured in this exhibition – *The Apostle Simon* (1651), *The Apostle Bartholomew* (1657) and another version painted in 1661.

Stories from the Old Testament of course feature large in Rembrandt’s subject matter and on show here were oils and etchings of: *Bathsheba with King David’s Letter* (1654), *Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife* (1655) and, my favourite, the profoundly moving image of *Jacob blessing the Sons of Joseph* (1656). It is an oft-quoted truth that a postcard can do no justice to the original painting. Never truer than in this instance; a wonderful piece of work and a joy to have the opportunity to see this large picture here in the UK, having been lent from its home in Kassel, Germany.

Included in this fine exhibition was a wide assortment of etchings and drypoint works, the majority on loan from the British Museum and the Fitzwilliam, Cambridge. Particularly striking were the three states of *The Three Crosses* (1653), described as one of the highlights of Rembrandt’s oeuvre; at the time the largest prints ever attempted in drypoint alone. One could stand in front of them for many minutes, such is the impact of these images.

FROM THE AHMANSON COLLECTION, LOS ANGELES – ‘STILL SMALL VOICE’: BRITISH BIBLICAL ART IN A SECULAR AGE (1850-2014)

*The Wilson: Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum
(17 January – 3 May 2015)*

Could I recommend this small but excellent exhibition – running until the beginning of May? Covering the period from 1850–2014 and featuring work by Spencer, Gill, Epstein, Burra and Sutherland, this is a show described as – ‘exploring ideas around creativity, crisis and human experience; a major exhibition for 2015’. This is a first visit to these shores by this private American Collection that will immediately resonate with supporters of the Methodist Modern Art Collection – and has the advantage of being very accessible to our Bristol Membership!

Over and above his responsibilities as a Collection trustee Paul is, as his ‘Profile’ suggests, busily engaged as a freelance curator with an established track record of showing contemporary artists in sacred spaces. His work enables an encounter to take place between artists, church and the public. We report here on one of his current projects, which has taken him nation-wide...

‘A LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS’

A travelling exhibition that has, since October 2014, already been seen in Winchester Cathedral, St. Leonard’s, Bridgnorth, St. Edmund’s, Rochdale and Holy Trinity, Blackburn. It can still be viewed in St. Werburgh’s, Derby (13 March – 12 April), Holy Trinity, Sunderland (19 – 21 March) and at Norwich Cathedral in June.

This is a small touring exhibition, curated by Collection trustee, Paul Bayley. It features the work of six acclaimed film and video artists and takes concepts of light and darkness as its starting point.

Churches for a long time occupied a central place in most people’s lives. In recent years, however we have to accept that they have shifted to a more peripheral position with many people never having had a firsthand experience of entering a church building. Overlooked and often undervalued, many have fallen out of religious use and ‘gone dark’. Their powerful architectural presence nevertheless remains and often in the central parts of an urban settlement. Film and Video Umbrella have partnered with the Churches Conservation Trust in a joint venture to shine a new light on these fascinating spaces, literally in some cases where the films are presented as large scale projections. In an echo of the churches’ longstanding role as sites of pilgrimage, congregation and contemplation, the artists’ works speculate also as to whether their importance as points of collective assembly, to share a common experience, has perhaps been eclipsed by other arenas – an art museum, a floodlit sports field, a natural amphitheatre..? Each of the short films featured encourages reflection in the viewer, drawing our attention to moments of natural beauty, human endurance and historical relevance.

FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2015

10 May – 18 June

Ballymena, N. Ireland

The Braid Arts Centre
Contact: Rosalind Lowry
02825 635900
Email: rosalind.lowry@ballymena.gov.uk
www.thebraid.com

The possibility of a further exhibition in Ulster, over the summer period, is still being explored. Please check with the website for up-to-date information.

November – December

Oxford Brookes University (selected images)

2016

8 February – 2 April

Lincoln Cathedral

Contact: Revd Terry Nowell
01522 754254
Email: terry@nowell-family.me.uk

(tbc) 9 April – 22 May

Ealing

Contact: Revd Jennifer Smith
020 8579 8114
Email: Jennifer.smith@methodist.org.uk

24 June – 31 August

Llandudno

St. John's Methodist Church
53-55, Mostyn St
Llandudno
Conwy, LL30 2NN

Oriel Mostyn
12, Vaughan St
Llandudno
Conwy, LL30 1AB

Contact: Revd Beverley Ramsden
01492 877799
Email: bev_ramsden@hotmail.com

Autumn

(tbc) Bury St. Edmunds

Contact: Revd Mark Haworth
01284 755374
Email: rectornorthburyteam@btinternet.com

2017

(tbc) January – March

Canterbury

Contact: Revd Paul Glass
01227 785204
Email: pglass@kentcollege.co.uk



Nicholas Mynheer (b.1958) *Flight to Egypt*. Limestone. Private Collection. Copyright the artist

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE WITH YOU....

By way of a tribute to Tom Devonshire Jones, and fondly recalling his memorable one-liners, we offer you the following as one of his best:

*'The long tradition of Christian Art is always
in need of refreshing'*

— Tom Devonshire Jones (1934 – 2015)