

# NEWSLETTER

NO.9 — SPRING 2013

Methodist **Modern**  
Art Collection



*The bigger picture: Today's art in churches  
Coventry re-visited on its Golden Jubilee  
The Collection in Chester, Piano Nobile and at Monnow Valley Arts*

## DEAR FRIEND

I am delighted that our first Newsletter of 2013 takes us firmly into the future – in terms of design and presentation. This has long been promised but, courtesy of the highly professional input of Phil Allison and his company Cultureshock Media, we now have a document that I feel that we can take pride in. We start this Newsletter with a focus on the increasingly high profile of ‘new art’ in places of worship.



Roy de Maistre, *Crucifixion*, c. 1959, recently exhibited at Monnow Valley Arts.

# Contemporary art in sacred spaces

DR. KOESTLE-CATE SPEAKING AT BATH UNIVERSITY

Nicholas Mynheer, *Jesus and Simon*, limestone carving, seen at the 2012 exhibition, in Blythburgh Church, *Journeying towards Easter*.



In Britain the relationship between modern art and the church is often perceived to be limited to a few high-profile venues like Coventry Cathedral and the Metropolitan Cathedral (‘Paddy’s Wigwam’) in Liverpool. A couple of months ago I was fortunate enough to be able to attend a fascinating, superbly illustrated public lecture, at Bath University. Dr. Koestle-Cate, of Goldsmiths College, considered the degree to which contemporary artwork continues to play a significant role in the life of the church, through a wide variety of projects across the UK.

I have been unable to access a full transcript of the lecture but Friends might like to make a note of some of the highly rated pieces of ‘Ecclesiast’ on Dr. Koestle-Cate’s ‘recommended to view’ list. Early and perhaps better known examples include Henry Moore’s *Madonna and Child*

(1944) and Graham Sutherland’s *Crucifixion* (1946), both in St. Matthew’s, Northampton; Anthony Gormley’s *Sound II* (1986) in the crypt of Winchester Cathedral, deemed perfect for the space and Bill Viola’s video installation *The Messenger* (1996) in Durham Cathedral. Rather more recent commissions include Stephen Cox’s *St. Anselm’s Altar* (2005) in Canterbury Cathedral, Tracey Emin’s widely publicised neon installation *For You* (2008) in Liverpool’s Anglican Cathedral and the two award winning windows in St. John’s, Healey, Northumberland (2011), by James Hugonin and Anne Vibeke Mou (see *Newsletter No. 8 – September 2012*).

Aesthetics and tastes change over time. Guy Read’s beautifully executed stone sculpture of a *Madonna and Child* (2000) initially caused a storm of controversy among the Catholic membership of St. Matthew’s, Westminster. As both the Madonna and Christ Child are shown naked the piece was dismissed by many as blasphemous. Twelve years on it is now regarded with great warmth and affection. Rose Finn-Kelcey’s *Angel* emoticon on an external wall of St. Paul’s, Bow Common (2004) – sadly, only a temporary installation – was guaranteed to turn heads and elicit a smile. Best use of abandoned space (often inviting to contemporary artists) is exemplified by David Holgate’s *Mother Julian and St. Benedict* (2000) in the cathedral at Norwich, as well as Ian Mckillop’s wonderful triptych (2004) set into the rather battered stone medieval reredos in the lady chapel of Gloucester Cathedral (see *Newsletter No. 5 – February 2011*).

Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection (The Supporters of the Methodist Modern Art Collection) Patrons: President of Conference, The Very Revd. Nick Bury, The Revd. Tom Devonshire Jones, The Revd. David Gamble

Bob Williams  
Secretary to the Friends of the Collection and Newsletter Editor  
11, Late Broads, Winsley  
Bradford-on-Avon  
Wilts, BA15 2NW  
Phone: 01225 720188  
bobandmad.thefirs@gmail.com

# Journey into light

THE ART TREASURES OF COVENTRY  
CATHEDRAL – THEIR MAKING AND MEANING

The mention of Coventry Cathedral in my introductory article links appropriately with this review of the exhibition *Journey into the Light*. In his sermon of the 25 May 2012, fifty years to the day after the consecration of Basil Spence's new cathedral, Archbishop Dr. Rowan Williams included the words 'A sacred building should be a building that helps us to see afresh'. Visiting the cathedral to view its special Golden Jubilee exhibition, some forty-five years after my previous visit to this remarkable building, I was most certainly seeing its multitude of treasures with a fresh eye.

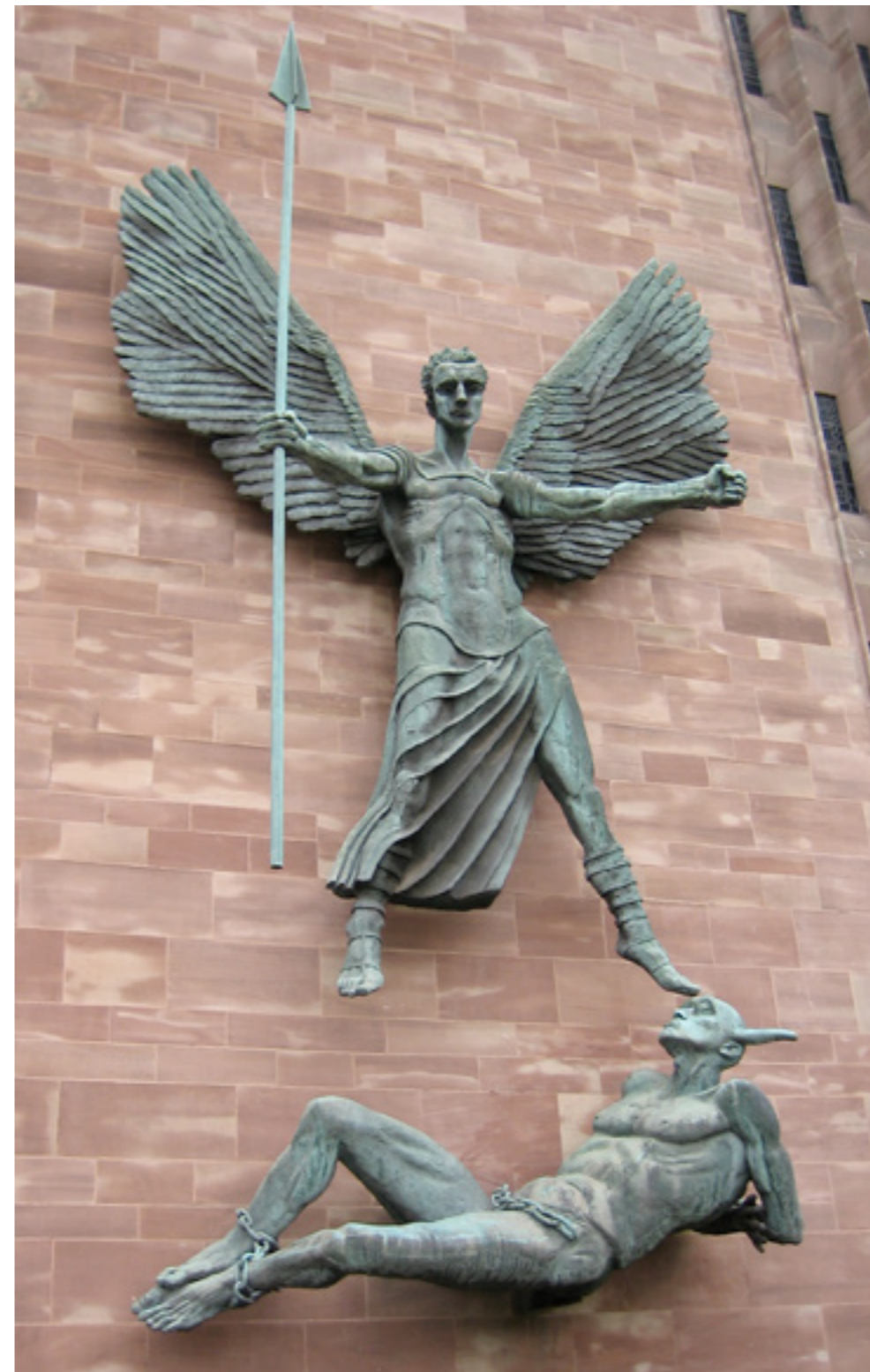
Unique to an English cathedral, the specially commissioned artwork that can be seen in Coventry is integral to the building itself; everything from the windows to the candlesticks, from the doorknobs to the calligraphy. It is readily demonstrated at Coventry that, whereas traditional, religious art was more often telling people what to think, the art of our own time, in whatever media, invites the viewer to think for him/herself and allows the artworks to speak to each one of us as individuals. The work of such luminaries as Graham Sutherland, John Piper, John Hutton, Ralph Beyer, Geoffrey Clarke and Dame Elisabeth Frink are masterpieces in their own right and yet, remarkably, combine in a unique expression of the cathedral's spiritual personality and Mission of Reconciliation which is as relevant today as it was in 1962.

The exhibition featured a number of the two hundred individual sketches and design studies, constantly refined, for the Sutherland tapestry *Christ in Glory*. It seems that Sutherland enjoyed a somewhat difficult relationship

with both Basil Spence and the cathedral commissioning team. Clarke's High Altar Cross is a remarkable piece of 20th-century religious sculpture. Anything but orthodox, it breaks out into organic forms with echoes of the charred cross, itself very much a symbol of Coventry, and suggests a bird preparing for flight. Cradled at the heart of the sculpture is a diminutive cross of nails. The design of the cross is totally in sympathy with Sutherland's tapestry; the latter focuses on glory and triumph while the former, poised below, is a permanent reminder of the pain and the cost involved in this victory over death.

Hans Coper's six monumental stoneware candlesticks in the sanctuary; Frink's lectern eagle and her small *Crucified Christ*, added to the pulpit in 1987 to mark the cathedral's Silver Jubilee; Hutton's breathtaking Great West Window, an inspired visual link between the ruins of the former cathedral and Spence's construction, are all exemplars of beautiful work by very differing craftspeople. Then who could fail to be moved by spending time in front of the Piper/Reyntiens Baptistry Window.... 'a creation of immense beauty which not only gladdens the eye, but reaches deep into the soul'.

For those with close associations with the Collection, the opportunity to gaze upon Ralph Beyer's eight large stone tablets, on either side of the Nave and all carved in situ, must always be rather special. We are indeed fortunate to have, within the Collection, the working drawing for the panel that bears the inscription 'THE



Sir Jacob Epstein, *Archangel Michael vanquishing the Devil and Ecce Homo*



SON OF MAN IS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVETH HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP'. Enthused by his period of apprenticeship under Eric Gill, Beyer carved the inscriptions on Haddington Stone, a very personal style of lettering to echo and re-assert the spirit of the earliest Christian inscriptions.

For those who delight in the variety of work contained within the Collection and who are keen to investigate equally exciting work across the UK, I would recommend *Contemporary Art in British Churches*. Published by ACE in 2010, it is a very good read and packed with useful references. It also includes a particularly informative chapter by Paul Bayley who is, of course, one of our Collection trustees.

# GLEANINGS AND REFLECTIONS



## HURSTPIERPOINT LINKS

### *Hurstpierpoint's interesting link with the Collection....*

In the early 1970s, a new frontage was put on Hurstpierpoint Methodist Church and the front window was removed, leaving an arch-shaped moulding on the church's interior. Last year the Church council asked Sarah, Revd. Pauline Crispin's daughter, if she would create a work of art for the church. In the final year of a degree in Creative Arts for Theatre and Film, Sarah designed, painted, mounted and installed the work. She was awarded a well deserved First for the project. The painting is simply entitled *Movement*, inspired as she was by the movement of the Holy Spirit. Others have said it speaks to them of creation and God moving upon the water.

Pauline shares her daughter's love of art and design and has created her own stole, each part of which holds particular personal significance. The rainbow is of course a sign of God's promise; it is also used as a symbol for the Walk to Emmaus movement of which Pauline is part. The crescent moon is firstly a link to the moon in the painting *The Dalit Madonna* (1944) by Jyoti Sahi (from the Methodist Modern Art Collection), the subject of Pauline's dissertation for her Theology degree. In India the image of the moon is deeply related to birth, partly because the crescent moon in Indian skies lies on its back, and looks like a cradle. The crescent moon and the star are also part of the coat of arms for Portsmouth, Pauline's home

town (and you may notice the Portsmouth Millennium Tower on the right). The Downs and the sea represent both her time in Hampshire and Sussex, with the cross clearly visible on the hill. The twelve fish speak about discipleship and the five sheep are a reminder of so many parts of scripture, and the five books of the Law. Five is also the number of people in Pauline's own family and in ministry one must never forget one's own loved ones. The whole design with its swirling motifs and intricate detail, sewn together by Juliet Hemingray, is a work of art and perhaps another representation of 'movement'.

Reproduced from the April 2012 URC/ Methodist Central Sussex United Area Newsletter, by kind permission of Christina Chelmick.

## THE COLLECTION ON ITS TRAVELS...

### IN THE IMAGE

#### *The Wesley Church Centre, Chester (Sept.-Oct. 2012)*

This was a major exhibition in the city to mark the end of Wesley's Year of 200th Anniversary Celebrations. It was formally opened by the Right Reverend Peter Forster, Bishop of Chester, with the Trustees of the Collection represented by the Revd. Graham Kent.

The exhibition was successfully linked with some 10 supporting events including a series of artists' talks that proved popular with the estimated 1,350 visitors. It was pleasing to note that Ghislaine Howard, Clive Hicks-Jenkins and Nicholas Mynheer were among those listed as conducting these seminars, talking primarily about their own work to be seen in the Chester exhibition. It was good to note the inclusion of a popular workshop programme for both local Primary Schools and High Schools. 670 Year 3-6 pupils, 100 Year 8 and 30 Year 10 students were able to participate.



William Roberts (1895-1980), *The Crucifixion*, c. 1922, oil  
From the Methodist Church Collection of Modern Christian Art

### RISEN!

#### *The Piano Nobile Gallery, London (Feb-March 2013)*

After formally opening the *Risen!* exhibition at the Piano Nobile Gallery, the Revd. the Lord Leslie Griffiths exchanged greetings with many who came to see the Collection and works by other contemporary artists on the theme of the Crucifixion and Eastertide. Leslie spoke of the Collection's importance in the witness of the Methodist Church. He paid tribute to the vision of the Gibbs Family, the trustees, and the organisers of this exhibition which will move on to Monnow Valley Arts in Herefordshire.

Report on the Private View and photo contributed by trustee Sarah Middleton.



## THE COLLECTION ON ITS TRAVELS... CONT.

## RISEN!

Monnow Valley Arts and other Border venues (March-April 2013)



Nicola Hopwood, *St. Thomas's Doubt, Ascension and the Coming of the Holy Spirit*, 2012, stained glass triptych

After a successful airing at Piano Nobile this exhibition moved westwards, to Monnow Valley Arts and, enhanced with further works from the Collection, to half a dozen associated venues in the Hereford/Monmouthshire area, including Hereford Cathedral.

The galleries at Monnow Valley Arts featured nine pictures from the Collection and the inclusion of some twenty pieces by other contemporary artists of considerable stature. It made for an impressive show. Seeking out artists whose work I was viewing for the first time, my eye was particularly taken by the paintings of Greg Tricker and Richard Bavin, the stained glass work of Nicola Hopwood and a collage by Qassim Alseady. It was interesting too to compare a work by Roy De Maistre (*Crucifixion* c.1959) with our own *Noli me tangere* from a similar period.

Greg Tricker's *Magdalene – The Grieving* (2009) is a riveting image of the distraught Mary grieving for her lost Lord. This is a work boldly executed in oil, charcoal and acrylic, on rough planks. The grain in the timber is used brilliantly to enhance both the form and the overriding sense of desolation. Tricker is also a skilled exponent of work with antique stained glass. A further striking image of Mary Magdalene, in this medium, was another captivating image included in the exhibition.

Nicola Hopwood's triptych *St. Thomas's Doubt, Ascension and the Coming of the Holy Spirit* (2012), in

stained glass, instantly caught the eye for the manner in which it was displayed; suspended just proud of a large, vertical window against a background of a particularly lovely part of the Herefordshire landscape. I understand that this will become a permanent feature at the gallery. The artist claims that her work is about reflection – a continuous, two-way process between the material (of glass) and the deep contemplation of a theme. It is indeed so.

Richard Bavin's *The Empty Tomb* 2012 (watercolour on paper) is a simple yet immediately powerful image. We view the scene from within the tomb looking outward. It is an image primarily of absence but the emptiness is suggestive of a new beginning, of despair turned to hope. The external crescent of light, revealed by the partially rolled away stone, can be read as the darkness of a total eclipse now clearly receding.

Qassim Alseady is another very interesting artist. As an Iraqi who initially trained at the Baghdad Academy of Fine Arts in the '70s, his work is deeply rooted in the tradition of Iraqi art of the 20th century. He has lived through difficult times, experiencing both imprisonment and exile. His work reflects the eternal struggle of war, hatred, ugliness and wickedness – and their opposites: peace, love, goodness and beauty. Brought up as a Muslim, Qassim Alseady has

Qassim Alseady, *Crucifixion with nails*, 2004, mixed media



a profound respect for the prophet Jesus. In his painting *Crucifixion with nails* (2004) the suffering, crucified Christ is represented by the rusted nails driven into the board. Around the nails and corpus from an 18th-century devotional crucifix are hieroglyphs or indecipherable

writings suggesting an unknown language from ancient times that roots the Christian narrative in the land of Alseady's birth.

# ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD...

## THE OCEAN IN A TREE

*Snape Maltings, Suffolk....*

The Maltings, the home of Benjamin Britten's music, is well known for its engagement with art and artists. From September to December 2012, the Concert Hall Gallery hosted a very moving, magical exhibition of drawings, paintings, chalk works and prints by artists Roger Wagner and Mark Cazalet (whose works we have in the Collection). The title of the show, *The Ocean in a Tree*, is drawn from lines from Wagner's Fire Sonnets and admirably sums up the spirit of the exhibition:

*And that exulting love which made  
all things  
Whose laughter is the ocean in a tree  
That rustles like a thousand angels'  
wings  
Stirred by a wind no human eye can see.*

The artists have in common a love of the Suffolk countryside around Snape and Aldburgh, which was clearly evident in the works shown. Cazalet contributed a series of chalk drawings, each made on the spot, in one sitting, in Parham wood, a place that has become central to his inspiration in recent years. Each work offered a shimmering impression of colour, light and shade and the combined effect of the works shown in close proximity was inspired.

The tree theme was further drawn out in a number of works by Roger Wagner from his Biblical narrative prints, miniature oil paintings and jewel-like mixed media works such as *Oak Tree with Gold*.

The artists were in two minds as to how to present the exhibition. Wagner says, 'despite the similarity of inspiration our paintings use very different palettes – mine often cool, Mark's often warm – and the question was, should we separate the work or mix it up? In the end we decided to mix and juxtapose our paintings, which has I think produced a more interesting and certainly a more collaborative exhibition.'

—  
As your Editor was, sadly, unable to view this exhibition for himself the above review is kindly contributed by fellow trustee, Meryl Doney.

## BRONZE

*at the Royal Academy....*

What an immensely interesting show this was; an absolute feast for lovers of sculpture in metal. There were votive sculptures in abundance and a veritable army of Greek, Roman and Indian gods although, sadly, not many works of Christian spiritual significance. Nevertheless, there were three pieces that certainly caught the eye: A Donatello relief, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1460), a hefty bronze, *Seated Christ* (1607) by Adriaen de Vries, and the imposing, larger than life-size trio of sculptures by Giovanni Francesco Rustici (1506–11) of *John the Baptist Preaching to a Levite and a Pharisee*. Although frozen in time for more than 500 years, this is a wonderful image of John's audience of two being enraptured in what he has to say.

## THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE: DÜRER TO HOLBEIN

*at the Queen's Gallery*

Exhibitions at The Queen's Gallery, in Buckingham Palace Rd., are all too often overlooked. It is not the easiest venue to access by public transport but well worth the effort of doing so. The exhibitions never disappoint and the Dürer to Holbein show was no exception; wonderful work by both these masters of the art of drawing. Included in this exhibition, under the banner of the Northern Renaissance, was Peter Bruegel the Elder's *Massacre of the Innocents*, which was acquired for the Royal Collection by Charles II some one hundred years after it was painted. With echoes of both the ferocity and beauty of our own recent severe winter weather, it is all too easy to dismiss this work as another of the artist's snowy landscapes (with very little evidence of shocking goings on) but it is, in fact, a painting with quite a history.

The artist set out in 1567 to depict one of the Bible's darkest moments, Herod's massacre of all infant boys in Bethlehem. But he plainly had another purpose, too. His homeland, Flanders, suffered horribly at the hands of Spanish armies and German mercenaries in the cruel religious wars of his time. By coupling the hated Spanish with the reviled Herod, Bruegel was striking the only blow he could against the invader. But that invader, in the form of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, was himself soon to come into possession of the painting. He rapidly decided that the events depicted were too ghastly to gaze upon and too easily mistakeable for actual

events within his empire. It was too valuable to destroy, so instead he had it altered. At various points on the canvas there is (sometimes rather crude) evidence of over-painting images of doomed or murdered children with a swan, a calf, a boar and even loaves of bread.

## TRUSTEE SARAH MIDDLETON

*Guest Speaker at the AGM of Friends of Renewal Arts (UK)....*

We are delighted to record that Sarah was invited to address the above organisation, speaking about the history and work of the Collection, on the occasion of their AGM, held in London SW1 on 26 January last.

## PICTURES ON THE MOVE

*Tim Egan speaks to the Bradford-on-Avon Arts Assoc. about his years with Amgueddfa Cymru/ National Mus. of Wales....*

On 3 February a Friend of the Collection, who will be familiar to a number of you, gave a most erudite talk on the pitfalls involved in the business of moving valuable artworks around the globe on loan exhibitions. Stress related anxieties involving hours of pre-planning, security, insurance indemnity, deadlines, and the vagaries of the weather were part and parcel of the day's work for Tim who was, for twenty-three years, the Registrar at the National Museum of Wales.

—  
Tim is also a much-valued adviser to the Trustees on matters of conservation and restoration. Ed

## THE ART OF THE GOSPEL

*Sister Wendy Beckett...*

I do hope that you managed to catch this gem of a programme screened on BBC2 on Christmas Day, in which the inimitable Sister Wendy talks about the cultural importance of the Gospel Stories. Now 82 years of age, she was born in South Africa, gained a First at Oxford under the tutelage of Prof. J.R.R. Tolkien, and became an instant TV star when first appearing on the small screen in the 1990s. In the programme she talked, for the first time, frankly, humorously and profoundly about her life and spirituality, making some very pertinent reflections on the contemporary world and lamenting upon today's widespread lack of public knowledge of key Bible stories. Using no notes, she gives a performance that comes from the heart. Her wonderfully lucid interpretation of Veneziano's painting of the *Annunciation*, Bassano's *Good Samaritan* and Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* left us, the viewers, in no doubt as to what the artist was intent on putting across. Likewise, her views on Lorenzo Lotto's *Woman taken in Adultery* revealed another great painting in an entirely new light. I would give anything to hear her views on Clive Hicks-Jenkins' working of the same theme which, of course, we have in the Collection.

## ROBERT HUGHES

*The Shock of the New....*

The death in August 2012 of the Australian author and art critic (thirty years with *Time Magazine*) robbed us of an extraordinary observer of the evolution of 20th-century art. I suspect that a good number of Friends took the opportunity of viewing the repeat screening of his remarkable series *The Shock of the New* (BBC Time-Life 1980). His book of the same name (still available on Amazon!) was described in an obituary as 'much the best synoptic introduction to modern art ever written'.

# FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

## 2013

8 – 29 June

### **Peterborough Cathedral**

Contact: Mr. Ian Cornall  
01733 649345  
e-mail: [iancornall@sky.com](mailto:iancornall@sky.com)

August

### **Oxford - Christ Church Cathedral**

(A number of works on display, in conjunction with a meeting of the Oxford Institute).

28 September – 26 October

### **The Young Gallery**

Market Place, Salisbury, Wilts,  
SP1 1BL - and Salisbury Cathedral.  
Contact: Revd. Margaret  
Jones (Churches  
Together in Salisbury) 01722 421224  
e-mail: [m.jones@jsb.myzen.co.uk](mailto:m.jones@jsb.myzen.co.uk)

25 – 28 November

### **Bath and Wells Diocesan Retreat**

Swanwick (not open for public viewing)

## 2014

5 March – 29 April

### **Trinity Methodist Church**

South Wirral Circuit  
Contact: Revd. Christine M Jones  
0151 355 1294  
e-mail: [christinemjones@methodist.org.uk](mailto:christinemjones@methodist.org.uk)

July – August

### **Leyburn/Yorkshire Dales**

Yorkshire Dales, Leyburn  
Contact: Revd. Alan Coustick, 01969 625749, Email:  
[alan.coustick@methodist.org.uk](mailto:alan.coustick@methodist.org.uk)



Rock of Ages, Monnow Valley Arts Sculpture Garden.

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

*‘There’s great grace there, in the paintings of the Gospel Stories, for those who care to look’. — Sister Wendy Beckett 2012*