

Methodist **Modern**  
+ **Art** Collection

ANNUAL REPORT



*Report for the year ended 31 August 2014*



All images from the Collection used here - © TMCP

## WHAT IS THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION?

The Methodist Modern Art Collection comprises paintings, limited edition prints and reliefs. In the early 1960s John Morel Gibbs, a Methodist layman and art collector – realising that many Non-conformists had little appreciation of the insights that contemporary artists could bring to the Christian story – decided to create a collection of prime examples of such work that could be toured around the country. This he did, with the help of Methodist minister, the Revd Douglas Wollen. The works they acquired became the core of the present Collection – described as ‘the best denominational collection of modern religious art outside the Vatican’. The Collection includes leading names from the British art world of the last 100 years, such as Edward Burra, Elisabeth Frink, Eric Gill, Patrick Heron and Graham Sutherland.

In recent years the Collection has acquired works by artists from the world church, including Jyoti Sahi from India, Sadao Watanabe from Japan and John Muafangejo from Namibia. Still expanding, works by artists such as Craigie Aitchison, Peter Howson, Susie Hamilton, Clive Hicks-Jenkins and Maggi Hambling have been acquired, and today it comprises 50 paintings, prints, drawings, relief and mosaic works. The Collection is valued as a key resource for mission and evangelism, whether on a denominational or an ecumenical basis.

The Collection, in whole or in part, is available as a touring exhibition, and has travelled widely, to town and city galleries, cathedrals, churches and schools, showing at four to six venues a year. When not on tour, the Collection is stored under the care of the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University.

The Methodist Church is the fourth largest Christian Church in Britain, after the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, and the Church of Scotland. It has more than 6,000 churches and a total membership of approximately 200,000 people. There are Methodist churches in nearly every country in the world and global membership numbers some 60 million people.

— Cover

Eularia Clarke (1914 – 1970) *The five thousand*, 1962,  
65 cm by 62 cm. This painting was used as the lead image  
for the two Yorkshire exhibitions in the summer of 2014.

— Opposite

Michael Edmonds (1926 – 2014) *The cross over the city*, 1962,  
Polyester, brass and mosaic, relief panel, 150 cm by 90 cm.  
This work was the ‘flagship’ for the Ellesmere Port exhibition.



## EXHIBITIONS OF THE COLLECTION THIS YEAR

### *Faith in Focus*

Between Sept 26 and Oct 26 there was a major showing of the Collection at two very different venues in Salisbury: the Cathedral and the Young Gallery.

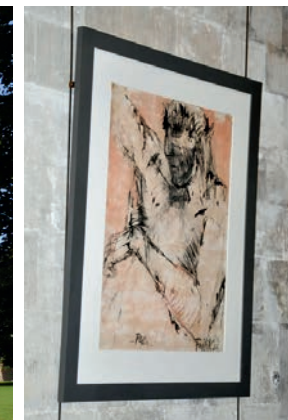
Individual works were also on show in two city centre churches. The opening event was held at the Young Gallery, with speakers including John Glen MP, Councillor Penny Brown (Mayor of Salisbury), the Right Revd Nicholas Holtam (Bishop of Salisbury), and the Revd Dr Andrew Wood (Chair of the Southampton District of the Methodist Church). A special celebration Evensong was held, at the Cathedral, on the preceding Thursday.

Salisbury Methodist Church spearheaded the necessary organisation and fund-raising with Churches Together in Salisbury and the Salisbury Circuit all playing a vital role. A grant of £1,000 was received from Wiltshire Council and a range of generous donations from individuals helped things along. Indicative

of the local determination that the whole exercise should be a success was the fact that some 65 people, from 10 different churches, acted as stewards at the Gallery (stewarding at the Cathedral being covered by their own permanent arrangements).

Visitor numbers were gratifying. 1,590 visitor 'footfalls' were recorded at the Gallery. The Cathedral estimate that it received 16,500 visitors during the month of October: and although there is no means of knowing how many of these viewed the exhibition, Cathedral guides reported great interest. The week of the City Art Trail (an annual event, held this year from 5th – 13th October) saw significantly more people passing through the Gallery. The presence of a number of visitors from overseas was noted and there were visits from several school groups, including one from a special school.

The exhibition was supported by various reflective and interpretive talks in the Cathedral, the Gallery and at the city centre church of St Thomas, the location



Images from Salisbury Cathedral

of the *Dalit Madonna*. The best attendance (over 50) was at a Saturday morning talk by a well-known local art expert. On another occasion the Revd John Turner gave an illuminating talk on the two Rouault aquatints that were to be seen hanging in the North Nave Aisle of the Cathedral, revealing many different elements within the two paintings. Rouault had an overwhelming interest in the Passion: as an artist he was a perfectionist and it is horrifying to learn that, just before he died, he burnt some 300 works that he considered unfinished or which fell short of the ideal image that he sought to achieve.

Locally produced Reflective Guides to the works were available at both main venues: that in the Gallery (by the Revd Cecil King) was particularly well received. Both in the Cathedral and at the Young Gallery, the provision of Bible passages linked with the works added to the whole visual experience. Eighty-five copies of the *Guide to the Collection* were sold: always an indicator that an exhibition has made a real impact.

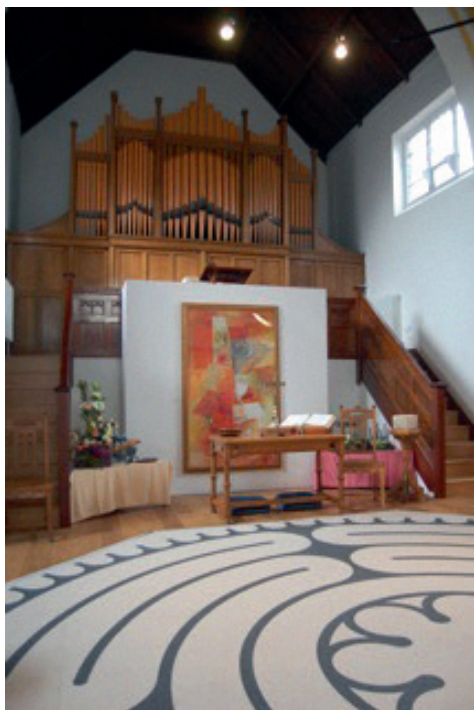
Exhibition co-ordinator, Revd Margaret Jones, herself pivotal to the success of the venture, commented that Curators Jacqueline Creswell, at the Cathedral, and Peter Riley at the Young Gallery, together with our Custodian Peter Forsaith who offered support from a distance, were to be warmly congratulated. 'Their combined endeavours have certainly ensured that the exhibition has left a lasting legacy to the life of Salisbury, both in bringing the City and Cathedral together in an unprecedented manner and, indeed, in raising the profile of the city's churches within the community at large; bringing faith into focus in and around Salisbury'.

### *Along the Way*

A commitment, back in 2006, to bring the entire Collection to Ellesmere Port in the spring of 2014 was something of an act of faith: at the time the very future of Trinity Methodist Church was in doubt. However, a remarkable collaboration with the Ellesmere Port community gave rise to an imaginative plan: to promote a 'Port Arts Festival' and transform a number of buildings as



The opening at the Young Gallery



The Collection at Ellesmere Port: Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of Holy Communion*, in situ, at Trinity Methodist and children participating in a re-enactment of Jesus washing Peter's feet.

key venues. At the same time, there was a campaign to galvanise a support network of local organisations to ensure the provision of a large team of trained volunteers.

By the time the Collection arrived Trinity Methodist itself, the hub venue, had been transformed from a distinctly gloomy Victorian church with fixed pews and a gallery, into a light, multi-purpose community space, featuring a healthy living café and meeting area complete with 'labyrinth': all timed to dovetail perfectly with its 2014 Centenary.

The flagship exhibit was Michael Edmonds' relief, *Cross over the City*, which, hanging at The University C.E. Academy, very neatly linked with the Festival theme *Along the Way*; both titles offering the opportunity to consider both Christ's and our own life journeys.

The 55 works that currently comprise the Collection were shown at four venues (West Cheshire College and the Paperboat Gallery being the other two) and continued for a bravely ambitious eight weeks. Over this period there was a rich assortment of activities which included a programme of weekly Lenten Reflections and a talk, at Trinity, by artist Ghislaine Howard on her work in general and on *The Washing of the Feet* in particular. Keen to achieve a sense of depth and movement within the painting, Ghislaine embraces the use of charcoal, PVA glue, sand and, of course, acrylic paint.

Further talks took place at the College (Nicholas Mynheer) and at the Paperboat Gallery (Adrian Sumner). The Young Offenders Group worked on their version

of *Cross over the City* and a very moving evening event, featuring Colin Parry of Foundation for Peace, was held at the Port Arcades Shopping Centre. There was also an opportunity to view a complementary display of panels from the Quaker Tapestry.

The 828 recorded visitors to the exhibition were predominantly from Cheshire, Lancashire, The Midlands and North Wales but those from further afield included people from London, Devon, the Isle of Man – and even Dubai and Western Australia! Bob Crompton, the Mayor of Ellesmere Port, managed to attend every event throughout the Festival: an admirable achievement.

Trustee Geoff Cornell spent some time in Ellesmere Port during the Festival while on sabbatical and offered the following observation: 'The Exhibition is a striking example of how the Collection is a vital tool for the Mission of the Church. The simple fact of such wonderful works being offered into a deprived area is very much of the Gospel. The partnerships, the conversations that the works are able to generate across civic, cultural and educational divides is remarkable. The impact of individual works on individual visitors is, we know, considerable – and, as I witnessed with the School visit, can generate understanding, insight and awe'. However, Geoff was struck by the old problem of biblical literacy affecting the visual as much as the textual and oral depiction of the Christian story - 'How much supporting information should we be providing and what lines of approach can we offer that are helpful but not too prescriptive...?'

The trustees would like to record their thanks to the Revd Christine Jones for working so hard and effectively on the whole project.

### *Artists of Faith*

With the arrival of the Tour de France in the summer of 2014, the eyes of the world were on Yorkshire and the Bronte Parsonage Museum, Haworth, was delighted to be able to play host to the Methodist Modern Art Collection during this period. It is the first time that the Collection has been curated in an historic house setting.

Between 1 May - 27 June highlights from the Collection, including works by Elisabeth Frink, Patrick Heron, Ceri Richards and Graham Sutherland, were displayed at the Parsonage Museum where they were seen by national and international tourists at the height of the summer season. The showing was curated by Nick Cass, Research Associate at the University of Leeds, who is currently writing his PhD on the contemporary artistic interventions at the Parsonage over the last ten years. This kind of academic curatorial collaboration is also a first for the Collection. He carefully selected ten works, seven of which were displayed in the historic rooms where the Bronte sisters lived.

'Methodism touched the lives of all the Brontes' says the *Oxford Companion to the Brontes*. The Revd Patrick Bronte met his wife Maria when he was examiner at the Wesleyan Methodist Boarding School in 1812. Maria and her sister Elizabeth who, after Maria's death, raised the





The Bronte Parsonage Museum exhibition included the Graham Sutherland *Deposition*

Bronte siblings and was known as Aunt Branwell, were both from a family of devout Methodists in Penzance, Cornwall. In addition the much-loved family servant Tabitha was a staunch Methodist.

Nick Cass placed the works in the rooms not only to draw connections between the Brontes and Methodism but to ask wider questions about belief, spirituality and social responsibility, so much of which is still relevant to the thousands of tourists who visit the Parsonage today.

The exhibition was opened, on 1 May, by Revd Ruth Crompton, Superintendent of the Airedale District, with speeches by Sally McDonald, Chair of the Bronte Society and Nick Cass. Some 50 people attended this evening event.

### *Seeing is believing*

By mid-August the whole of the Collection was in Yorkshire, being hung in the new auction centre of Tennants Auctioneers, an impressive building in the village of Leyburn. The exercise enjoyed the whole-hearted support and generosity of Tennants auctioneers under Rodney Tennant, Chairman of the Group and owed much to the perseverance and enthusiasm of Revd Alan Coustick, the outgoing Superintendent of the North Yorkshire Dales Circuit, who worked with our Secretary of Trustees, Revd Graham Kent.

The grand opening of the exhibition took place on a gloriously sunny 17 August. A warm welcome was extended to the 300 people present, by Rodney and by the Revd Janet Park, the incoming Superintendent. A joyful service, conducted by Janet, then took place, with the Leyburn Brass Band accompanying the hymn singing. During the service images from the Collection were used for the purposes of contemplation. Our trustee, Ann Sumner,

introduced the Collection and stressed its illustrious history and the important relationship between the art world and our trustees, which helps ensure that we are able to continue to expand and enhance the Collection today. The hang of the exhibition was very effectively themed by Alan Coustick, moving from the nativity of Christ, through to his ministry, resurrection, and revealed glory.

Excellent dedicated leaflets were available and there were two talks organised by cultural historian Barbara Morden, and a lunchtime tour led by Graham Kent. Related church services also took place at Richmond, Leyburn and Middleham Methodist churches with two more occurring at Tennants Auction Centre.

On most days there were more than 50 visitors with the numbers occasionally reaching the 100 mark (usually on auction days) and there were a number of dedicated coach visits such as that by retired Unison Trade Union members. It is clear from some of the complimentary comments in the Visitors book that the Art Collection

has reached new audiences (see photo below). It was particularly interesting to see just how frequently the word powerful appeared within these comments. A team of volunteer stewards, which included Alan and Janet, has reported back on the sheer enthusiasm of visitors.

The lead image for all publicity at both exhibitions in Yorkshire was Eularia Clarke's *The five thousand*. (see Cover Picture). At the Parsonage Museum Nick Cass spoke of the links he saw between the sense of community instilled by her 1962 painting, depicting holiday-makers eating fish and chips on Canvey Island in Essex, and the concerns the Brontes had in their day for food poverty - which continue today in Yorkshire. The two bicycles, at the left side of the picture made it an entirely appropriate image in cycling-mad Yorkshire over the summer of 2014!

We are grateful to our trustee Ann Sumner for providing these descriptions of the Yorkshire exhibitions and acting as an important contact along the way.



The opening at Leyburn with, from the left, The Revd Alan Coustick, Trustee Professor Ann Sumner, Rodney Tennant of Tennants Auctioneers and the Revd Janet Park

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The owner of the Collection is the Methodist Council but responsibility for its care and development is devolved to a team of curatorial trustees. The trustees normally meet three times a year – twice at Methodist Church House in London, and once at Oxford Brookes University.

### THE TRUSTEES

The aims of the trustees are to care for, develop and promote the Collection, in order to encourage people to enter into conversations about God in Christ in the contemporary world, and to offer material that can bring new dimensions to study, worship and spiritual life.

The trustees as of 31 August 2014 were: Dr John Gibbs (Chairman and Treasurer), the Revd Graham Kent (Secretary), Bob Williams (Secretary, Friends Group), Paul Bayley, Meryl Doney, the Revd Geoff Cornell\*, Sarah Middleton and Professor Ann Sumner, together with Collection Custodian Dr Peter Forsaith (Research Fellow, Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History).

\*Although it fell outside the reporting year, we must record our distress at the sudden death in October 2014 of the Revd Geoff Cornell. He was a most effective trustee as well as an inspiring friend and colleague. A tribute to him has appeared in the Spring 2015 issue of the Friends Newsletter (see elsewhere for more information on the Newsletters).

## ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE DURING THE YEAR

### *Financial position*

The Methodist Church provides a budget to cover the cost of trustees' meetings and the Secretary's expenses. The Church also pays the insurance premium.

Monies required for the care and conservation of the Collection and for the production of new interpretative material etc come from the income generated from the loan fees, sale of publications and so on. This income is held in a special fund at Methodist Church House and administered by the trustees.

Monies obtained or donated specifically for the acquisition of new works are held in the same fund but monitored separately. During the summer of 2013, the trustees were able to raise funds for future purchases through the sale of a secular picture at auction (see Report for 2013). The sum of £7,500 was raised and credited to the fund at the beginning of the current year. The Acquisition Committee met several times during the year but, in the event no works were acquired in 2013/4.

A statement of the accounts is presented at the end of this report.



The excitement of opening up the travel cases  
(The Art Group at Ellesmere Port)

### *Links with the Methodist Connexional Team*

Our principal points of contact are with the Mission and Advocacy team, and especially with the members of the Communications Office. We are developing connections with the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN): we see this as an exciting period for the use of the Collection in the life of the church.

Our Secretary, the Revd Graham Kent, maintains links with the Revd Gareth Powell, Assistant Secretary of Conference and Head of Governance Support. We are indebted to members of the Finance Team for their assistance with our financial affairs.

### *Administrative support*

The trustees have an arrangement with the Enfield Circuit of the Methodist Church whereby the circuit administrator, Mary Roseweir, spends an average of four hours a week working on behalf of the Collection. Mary has a considerable knowledge of the nature and purpose of the Collection, and of the work of the trustees. She makes arrangements for the trustees meetings and writes the minutes. Over a five year period, ending in August 2013, a Connexional Grant of £4,000 financed this arrangement but with the ending of this grant, the trustees have had to cover the costs from funds in the development account.





### *Care for the Collection*

With a significant commitment during the recent past to conservation work and the provision of new travelling cases, there was no call for much expenditure during the year. The travelling cases necessarily add to the storage problems at Oxford Brookes which are acute whenever the whole collection is at its home base.

### *Visioning day*

In the autumn, as part of the process of assessment and future planning, there was a Visioning Day for the trustees organised and coordinated by Ann Sumner and Sarah Middleton. A draft document was produced and it is intended that this should be completed and sent out to consultation in the near future.

### *Resources and Publicity*

The fully-illustrated *A Guide to the Methodist Art Collection*, published in 2010, continues to sell well, as does the DVD/CD and study booklet *Creative Spirit* which focuses on eight works from the Collection and is intended for leaders of worship, house and other groups. With the help of the Communications team fifteen postcards, featuring some of the newer acquisitions, have been produced. These sell in packs of ten. All these items are available for purchase from the Methodist Publishing list at Norwich Books and Music. Further details can be found at [www.methodistpublishing.org.uk](http://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk)

The high quality design and publication values of this 2014 Annual



The process of repacking and transport (Salisbury)

Report, as with those of 2012 and 2013, are the result of an extremely generous commitment of resources by Phil Allison, Managing Director of Cultureshock Media, a firm which promotes the visual arts at the highest level. Trustee Bob Williams works most effectively with Phil and his team on this project. Sufficient copies of the 2013 Report were produced for it to be widely distributed at the Methodist Conference in Central London in June 2013 and many expressions of approval have been received. It can be seen on our pages on the Methodist Church website <http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/creative-arts/the-methodist-art-collection>

### *Friends Group*

The Secretary to the Friends, Bob Williams, reports: 'There has been a steady increase in the numbers of subscribing Friends to a current total of sixty-seven. We are grateful to each and every one for their loyal support'.

'Cultureshock Media has continued to provide us with their invaluable expertise in the production of the two Newsletters (as of the Autumn edition 2014, now a 16pp publication). A policy decision to mail out a hard copy to all members of the Friends Group has been very well received. The eNews option has, therefore, been discontinued. Archive copies of the Newsletters continue to be available on the Methodist Church website (see address above)'.

### *Reports and Publications*

During his sabbatical, Revd Geoff Cornell wrote a very stimulating paper about the

Collection under the title *Getting the picture*. Also, one of our Friends, Caroline Dawson presented the trustees with copies of her 2013 MA Thesis for the Open University entitled *On the threshold: searching for liminality within the Methodist Modern Art Collection*. Electronic copies of both of these can be obtained from the administrator of the Collection.

An obituary of Michael Edmonds (see his *Cross over the City* inside the front cover) appeared in the *Guardian* (Peter Wakelin 14 April 2014).

### *Relationships with other bodies*

Many of our exhibitions are organized on an ecumenical basis, giving us contact with many denominations. Several trustees are members of FAR (Forum for Art and Religion). Through our trustees Meryl Doney and Paul Bayley, we have good contacts with other relevant bodies. Paul Bayley is the Art in Churches officer for ACE. His job is to encourage artists and church communities to curate and exhibit works of art in places of worship. Fraternal links are maintained with Artserve, the charity that supports the use of all creative arts in worship.

Our links with Oxford Brookes University are maintained via our Custodian Peter Forsaith, although meetings with other key members of the university are arranged from time to time. We have been very pleased to welcome Mrs Susan Howdle to some of our meetings. Mrs Howdle is a member of the Board of Governors of the university and also represents the Westminster College

Oxford Trust (WCOT), a body which is appointed by Conference and which oversees Methodist interests on the site.

### PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

We have an exciting programme of exhibitions planned for the year Sept 2014 to August 2015. These include an exhibition in Banbury in the autumn, Wrexham in Lent and then a trip to Ireland for an exhibition at Ballymena and perhaps elsewhere.

Through an arrangement with the Wales Synod, Synod Cymru and the DMLN, a bilingual booklet on the connections between The Methodist Modern Art Collection and Wales will be produced in time for the Wrexham exhibition of the Collection.

We will explore the possibility of alleviating the unsatisfactory storage situation at Oxford Brookes by evaluating the use, for some of the works, of the National Conservation Service's store at Upper Heyford.

We will complete our visioning document and distribute it widely for consultation.

With the Methodist Church Communications team and staff of Cultureshock Media we will be having discussions to determine the best means of creating a web presence that, while being firmly based in the Methodist Church's site, has design features suitable for the show-casing of modern art.

John Newton Gibbs (Chairman)  
March 2015

## METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION

### Income and Expenditure Account

INCOME (£)	Year ending 31 Aug 2013	Year ending 31 Aug 2014
Sale of literature, loan fees, grants and donations	6,024.70	13,119.40*
Interest	217.48	85.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,242.18</b>	<b>13,195.32</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE (£)</b>		
New travel cases and Conservation work	16,040.12	3,885.66
Surplus for the Year	(9,797.94)	9,233.74
<b>Balance B/Fwd 1 September</b>	<b>20,974.56</b>	<b>11,176.62</b>
<b>Balance C/Fwd 31 August</b>	<b>11,176.62</b>	<b>20,410.36</b>

\*This figure includes £7,000 dedicated for acquisitions (see text for details)



For an update on the locations of future exhibitions and for information on borrowing the Collection please visit the Art Collection pages of the Methodist Church website ([www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/creative-arts/the-methodist-art-collection](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer-and-worship/creative-arts/the-methodist-art-collection) or search under 'Methodist Church Art Collection').

Alternatively, contact the administrator at the following address:

Southgate Methodist Church  
The Bourne  
London N14 6RS  
020 8886 8067  
or e-mail [methodistart@yahoo.com](mailto:methodistart@yahoo.com)