

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

Report for the year ended 31 August 2012



**METHODIST CHURCH COLLECTION
OF MODERN CHRISTIAN ART**



All images from the Collection used here - © TMCP

WHAT IS THE METHODIST COLLECTION?

The Methodist Modern Art Collection comprises paintings, limited-edition prints and reliefs. In the early 1960s John Gibbs, an art collector and Methodist layman – 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. 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 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, new works by artists such as Craigie Aitchison, Peter Howson, Susie Hamilton, Clive Hicks-Jenkins and Maggi Hambling have recently 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 is available as a touring exhibition, and has travelled widely, to town and city galleries, cathedrals, churches and schools, showing at five or six venues a year. When not on tour, The Collection is stored under the care of a custodian at 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 330,000 people. There are Methodist churches in nearly every country in the world and global membership numbers some 70 million people.

EXHIBITIONS OF THE COLLECTION THIS YEAR

September–October

As part of the bi-annual Chislehurst Festival, the Collection was shown at **Chislehurst Methodist Church** in September and October, under the title *Come and See*. The exhibition provided a focus for the celebration of the newly refurbished church as a centre for spirituality and the creative arts. More than 1,300 visitors were welcomed to the exhibition, with groups coming from a considerable distance.

A preview evening was attended by key members of the local community. There were talks from authoritative speakers, such as the Revd Charles Pickstone. There was also a celebration day for the Circuit, and a creative day, inspired by works in the Collection.

The Guide to the Methodist Art Collection and postcards were sold, and the Church produced its own devotional guide to the works in the exhibition. The visitors' book was full of appreciative comments, and the organisers concluded their report by saying: "All in all a wonderful experience for the church and for Chislehurst."

Frank Roper (1914–2000), *Jesus falls for the second time (Stations of the Cross)* aluminium relief, No.VII



February–April

During Lent 2012, The Heseltine Gallery, a newly created building, was the setting for an exhibition of the Collection at **Truro School**. The opening was well attended by civic and church leaders, members of the board of governors, staff, pupils and members of the school community. The Revd David Gamble, a Patron of the Collection and representing the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, opened the exhibition. At least 26 classes viewed the works, and the pupils produced a variety of responses – some written, some in clay, and there was one large woven wall hanging.

Hannah Woodman was engaged to run the educational programme and deliver talks. Hannah reported: "The opportunity for students to see work of this calibre on site was invaluable, and I feel sure that it has been a great enhancement for the Truro School community and the wider region." Headmaster, Paul Smith, noted how staff would visit the exhibition for quiet reflection: "It was telling that we were never short of stewards, as it was soon appreciated how restorative time spent in the company of such paintings could be." The Exhibition was open to visitors for a number of evenings and weekends and around 200 people took advantage of this opportunity. The school also hosted a Circuit service enabling local Methodists to spend time with the Collection.

Also in Lent, sculptures by Frank Roper, depicting four stations of the cross, were shown in the sanctuary of **Victoria Methodist Church, Bristol**, where there are plans to develop an arts ministry.

June–July

The Collection formed the church's contribution to the **Preston Guild** – a major civic and community festival. Originating in the Middle Ages, it is held at 20-year intervals. One of the organisers, Ken Wales, reported that approximately 1,800 adults and over 1,700 children from 40 primary schools attended the exhibition. The children produced some remarkable work in response to the paintings and also helped to create murals that will be a permanent memory of their experiences. A donation of £500 was given for the Collection's acquisitions fund, to be used to purchase a work from the developing world, preferably one with whom the North Lanes District has partnership links. The report, a well-illustrated blog, and a booklet of prayers by Christine Odell can be found at www.fulwoodmethodist.org.uk.

During the London Olympics, the Collection was exhibited in the basement **Gallery at Westminster Central Hall**. It was entirely appropriate that this exhibition should open on a day when there was a distinct *frisson* of Olympic excitement in the air. Indeed, early arrivals for the private view had to do battle with the Torch Relay, making its way around Parliament Square, with UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, holding the flame aloft to enthusiastic acclaim.

The Revd Martin Turner welcomed guests and paid tribute to the work of the two young curators, William Riding and Danielle Dufort, who had been responsible for the exhibition. Peter Forsaith, Custodian of the Methodist Art Collection, spoke on behalf of



– Top
School pupils in Preston at work on a group collage *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*

– Above
Dr Peter Forsaith speaking at the July 2012 Opening at Methodist Central Hall

the trustees. Weekly artist and curator talks were held over the course of the exhibition, and two trustees, Geoff Cornell and Sarah Middleton, preached at the evening services at Central Hall, taking different works from the exhibition as a focus for reflection.

For the duration of the Olympic sailing events, two sea-themed pictures from the Collection – *Storm over the Lake* by Eularia Clarke and Maggi Hambling's *Good Friday 2006 – Walking on Water*, (see p.6) – were shown in **Weymouth Bay Methodist Church**.



Maggi Hambling, *Good Friday, 2006 - Walking on Water*, oil

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. A new governance exercise was introduced last year and a return, covering objectives and activities, was agreed with the governance officer. 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 2012 are: 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).

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE DURING THE YEAR

Financial position

The Methodist Church makes available funds to cover the cost of trustees' meetings and the Secretary's expenses. The Methodist Council also pays the insurance premium. In addition there are Development and Acquisition Funds, both held at Methodist Church House. Income for the former comes from loan fees and from the sale of publications. Money is used for activities such as conservation work on the pictures and the publication of new interpretative literature.

At the end of August 2012, there was just under £20,000 in this fund, and the trustees have earmarked a significant proportion for the restoration and reframing of a number of works, and for the provision of new travelling cases.

The Acquisition Fund receives donations for new purchases, and encourages offers of relevant works from donors. Last year saw substantial expenditure on new works, so this fund is currently empty. No acquisitions have been made during this year.

Links with the Methodist Connexional Team

Our principal links are with the Revd Gareth Hill, the Head of Mission and Advocacy and his team, most notably the members of the Communications Office. 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

A Connexional Grant of £4,000 provides administrative support for the trustees. The trustees have entered 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. In addition some of the funds are used for short-term contracts to achieve particular objectives.

Care for the Collection

During the previous year, Tim Egan, formerly the Registrar at the National Museum and Gallery in Cardiff, had prepared a document for each work in the Collection. This described the current frame and its condition, its glazing and its transportation case, and offered guidance as to the best means of bringing each work to a satisfactory condition. At the October trustees' meeting, his report was accepted and a working group was created to take things forward. It was envisaged that, at least in the first instance, the working group would establish links with Pete Goodridge of Artworks, because of his contacts with conservation specialists. After selecting works most in need of evaluation, members of the group met twice at the Artworks store. Vital strengthening was carried out on the frame of *The Stripping of Our Lord* by Philip Le Bas, and both *The Entry into Jerusalem* by Norman Adams and *Pieta* by Elisabeth Frink were reframed and re-glazed. *The Ascension* by Peter Rogers was re-glazed, and provided with a new backboard and liner. The cloudy glazing was removed from the *Feeding of the 5000* by John Reilly.

Publicity and Resources

During the year, the DVD/CD and study booklet *Creative Spirit* has been actively promoted. The resource focuses on eight works from the Collection and is intended for leaders of worship, house and other groups. Trustees Sarah Middleton and Geoff Cornell have been successful in achieving a significant number of sales at conferences and meetings. In addition, Ellie Doney helped to secure new markets on a short-term contract. She made contact with a wide variety of bookshops and other outlets and also explored alternative means of promotion, including social media. By the end of 1 August, 1,413 of the 2,000 copies had been sold, and a further 46 given away.

Friends Group

The Secretary to the Friends, trustee Bob Williams, reports: "Our membership, as at 31 August, was 56. This represents a valuable core of loyal supporters, more than half of whom were Founding Friends back in the autumn of 2008. The subscription income received enables us to offer some assistance with the continuing conservation work, and in other ways. Friends continue to be sent six-monthly newsletters (by e-mail if possible), which touch on a variety of interesting events in the world of contemporary religious art. This year, the newsletters included profiles of trustees Meryl Doney and Ann Sumner.

On the same day as the March trustees' meeting, I, together with several other trustees, had the benefit of a most stimulating meeting with Phil Allison, Managing Director of Cultureshock Media, a firm which promotes the visual arts at the highest level. Phil, the son of a Methodist minister, considers the Collection to be a 'hidden treasure' and has provided us with a clear-sighted report as to how we might move forward in matters of publicity and brand image; this linked to the need for a re-think on the design of the newsletter, enhancement of current online material and advice on possible Friends' recruitment strategy."

Relationships with other bodies

Most of our exhibitions are organised 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 Art + Christianity Enquiry. 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 which supports the use of 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 were very pleased to welcome Susan Howdle to the March trustees' meeting. She is a member of the board of governors of the university and represents the Westminster College Oxford Trust (WCOT), a body which is appointed by Methodist Conference and which oversees Methodist interests on the site. She said how much the University valued its continuing relationship with the Collection.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We are developing ideas to raise the profile of the Collection both within and beyond the Methodist Church.

The work of repairing and renewing the frames of many of the paintings will continue. In addition, several works need specialist conservation of the paint surface. More attention will be given to the creation of lighter travelling cases.

Some important locations are planning exhibitions in 2013. These include the city of **Chester**, a joint exhibition in **West London** and **Monnow Art Gallery**, Wales, and **Peterborough**. **The Oxford Institute** is hoping to show some six to eight works at the five-yearly, worldwide gathering of Methodist theologians and other scholars in August.

Artists, trustees and the Methodist Church itself remain committed to the conservation, extension and promotion of this unique collection. Its influence is far reaching and its mission is a vibrant and essential contribution to the Church and to the worldwide Christian cause.

John Newton Gibbs (Chairman)
February 2013

METHODIST CHURCH COLLECTION OF MODERN CHRISTIAN ART DEVELOPMENT FUND & ACQUISITION COMBINED

Draft	
Income and Expenditure Account 2012	(£)
Income	9,963.83
Expenditure	11,945.42
Internal Grant Received	4,000.00
Surplus for the Year	6,113.40
Balance B/Fwd 1 September	13,699.88
Balance C/Fwd 31 August	19,813.28

For a regular update on the future whereabouts of
the Collection and information on borrowing,
please visit www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection