

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

www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

ANNUAL REPORT



Report for the year ended 31 August 2016



Photo: Bob Williams

As a prelude to a major exhibition of the Collection in Bath Abbey, which occurred after the period described in this report, a small number of works were on show over the last weekend of May at Walcot Methodist Church. The photograph here shows the President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Steve Wild together with the Revd Rachel Borgars, Minister of the church at the time.

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 art outside the Vatican”. Included were leading names from the British art world of the last 100 years, such as Edward Burra, Elisabeth Frink, 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 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 200,000 people. There are Methodist churches in nearly every country in the world and global membership numbers some 60 million.

— Cover

The Chapter House at Lincoln Cathedral where the Collection was on show throughout Lent 2016: the result of a partnership between the Lincolnshire District of the Methodist Church, the Cathedral and the Diocese of Lincoln.
Photo: Chris Vaughan/Chris Vaughan Photography

EXHIBITIONS OF THE COLLECTION THIS YEAR

Many people encounter the Methodist Modern Art Collection via websites or in print, but it is through exhibitions that its principal work is carried out. At an exhibition, people can engage with the works at first hand: a very different experience from seeing reproductions. Although numbers are not everything, the year ending Aug 31 2016 was a remarkable one, with over 30,000 people seeing the Collection at the four venues at which it was on display.

Works from the Collection at Epworth Old Rectory

Epworth Old Rectory is the birthplace and childhood home of John and Charles Wesley. It has been owned by the World Methodist Council since 1954 and has Grade 1 listed building status as well as being an accredited museum. Having learnt in spring 2015 that the Collection would unexpectedly be available later in the year, the Old Rectory Trustees submitted an application for some of the works, these to be displayed throughout the house with, and within, the Old Rectory's collections.

Eight works were chosen and were on display between August 15 and October 31 2015. Development manager Gillian

Crawley explains that each was chosen for a specific place in the house with the aim of enhancing the Wesley story and the Methodist Heritage objective of 'Heritage as Mission'. Thus John Brokenshire's *Untitled – Pentecost* was hung in the Wesley Bedroom which is the room in which the guides recount the story of John Wesley's conversion experience of May 24 1738.

Considerable publicity was carried out in the neighbourhood with the aim of making local people aware that there was something new to see at the Old Rectory. Since the art works formed part of the tour it was not possible to determine how many



The Old Rectory, Epworth, Lincolnshire. Photo supplied



The *Dalit Madonna* by Jyoti Sahi in Lincoln Cathedral.
Photo: Chris Vaughan/Chris Vaughan Photography

people came especially to view the paintings, but visitor figures did show a significant increase from the same period in the previous year – from 700 to 1,600.

Lincoln: Passion in paint

Between February 8 and April 2 2016 the Collection was in Lincoln Cathedral; this the result of two years of partnership planning between the Cathedral, the Diocese of Lincoln and the Lincolnshire District of the Methodist Church. Recognising that many of the works have a special relevance to the season of Lent, the title 'Passion in Paint' was chosen for the exhibition. The Revd Dr. Terry Nowell, Methodist minister and co-ordinator of the project, reports that the end

result drew much admiring comment and visitor numbers gave cause for real satisfaction: 10,000 people were recorded as viewing the works over the five week period.

The Cathedral's 13th Century Chapter House proved an ideal venue for the exhibition and the expertise provided by the city's Usher Gallery, in curating and hanging the art works, was greatly appreciated.

An allocated budget of some £22,000, together with the tenacity of a strong Steering Committee, guaranteed the successful promotion of the exhibition. A thought-provoking short film, made available as a DVD ahead of the arrival of the works, proved very popular and undoubtedly

EXHIBITIONS OF THE COLLECTION THIS YEAR

had a positive effect on the number of visitors. It remains available on the Collection's webpages (see under 'Resources and Publicity' below).

Five hundred schools' packs, intended for Primary, Secondary and Special Needs use, together with 5,000 copies of a specially produced Lent study booklet for local churches, were widely distributed; the booklet a joint initiative by the Rt Revd Christopher Lowson, Bishop of Lincoln and the Methodist Chair of District, the Revd Bruce Thompson. The schools' material has been made available to the Collection's Trustees as a resource for future borrowers.

Five hundred copies of the 'Guide to the Collection' and 1,800 postcards were sold and copies of the 2014 Annual Report and current Friends' Newsletters were also available to visitors.

A programme of lectures during Lent was not hugely attended but much appreciated by the listeners each week. Guest speakers included Art Historian, Dr Jonathan Koestle-Cate, the Revd Graham Kent, the Revd Bruce Thompson and the well-known authority on Modern Christian Art, the Revd Dr Richard Davey. There was also an opportunity to promote the first of an intended series of Focus Groups, initiated by the trustees of the Collection.

During the exhibition, an exciting opportunity for cross-fertilisation came when trustee Ann Sumner chaired a day conference called 'Twenty First Century perspectives on Murals and Art for Public Spaces.' This brought together speakers from the art world and education sector, exhibition visitors and members of the general public. The keynote talk was given by German artist Lothar Götz, whose work was inspired by the Duncan Grant murals in

Art Historian, Dr Jonathan Koestle-Cate viewing the works at Lincoln.
Photo: Chris Vaughan/Chris Vaughan Photography



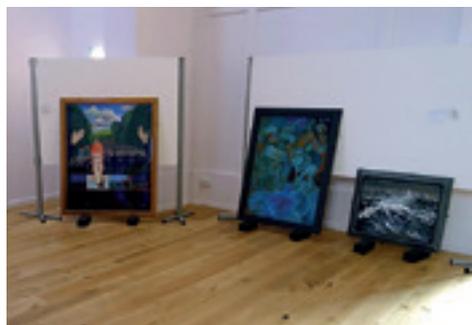
the Russell Chantry in Lincoln Cathedral. The Götz mural was on display in the Usher Gallery alongside two works from our Collection: Sutherland's *The deposition* and Beyer's *The son of man is come*. (A full account of this conference can be found in the Friends Newsletter for Autumn 2016.)

Ealing: Visions of the Sacred

One of the remarkable things about the Collection is the diversity of venues at which it is exhibited. Barely a week after being at one of the world's greatest cathedrals it opened in the sanctuary of Ealing Green Methodist & United Reformed Church in London. Under the name 'Visions of the Sacred' it was shown there between April 9 and May 22 2016.

The Minister, the Revd Dr Jennifer H. Smith, describes how the exhibition was three years in the planning, it having been decided that, with a major refurbishment being completed in November 2015, an exhibition of the Collection was an excellent way of launching the new building in its local community.

She records how once the display boards and paintings had arrived, the task of preserving sightlines for the organ and choir, pulpit and communion table without either crowding the works or isolating them looked daunting! Most importantly, the Church wanted the succession of images to reveal themselves slowly, intentionally drawing the visitor into a sense of the sacred as he or she moved into the sanctuary. 'We did not get there on the first arrangement, but then suddenly



Ready to hang at Ealing Green.
Photo supplied

everything fell into place. It took about six hours of experimentation and elbow grease, but by the end of the day we had an exhibition remarkably close to the scale plan, and ready to receive visitors'.

A 'Messiah from Scratch' was performed while the exhibition was on; local artists visited and regular worship thrived. Within the Ealing Trinity Circuit of the Methodist Church, the exhibition was used for local (lay) preacher-training. Children's activities and non-traditional worship were offered amongst the art works. Part of the preparation had been a Circuit-wide worship series during summer 2015 called 'Picnics and Storms,' using a different image from the Collection each week. This has now been made available to download as individual acts of worship or a complete series, from the Methodist Church website. 'We were also delighted to host our local MP and Mayor, along with trustees of the Collection, for a reception with a talk about the public role of church and the public role of art'.



'Messiah from Scratch' performed at Ealing Green amid the works from the Collection (which have been pushed back for the occasion). Photo supplied

The exhibition was open for general viewing on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons. Over 230 individuals came in 'off the street', with many offering strong responses in the guest book and spending long minutes engrossed in a single painting. 'Some were glad of a listening ear over a cup of tea while others, clearly, wanted to be left undisturbed'. The self-administered volunteer rota worked surprisingly well, and there was only one day on which there was difficulty in providing staffing. Nine organised groups made special visits, including one youth group from the French Reformed Church who slept overnight in the church.

Ealing Green had a budget of £5,000 for the whole exhibition and this proved

sufficient, with the major expense being specialist delivery and installation. When the crew from C'ART returned to take down and crate the paintings in May, amidst the relief of a work complete, there was real sadness at seeing the art works leave the sanctuary. Jennifer Smith concludes 'For any church or group planning an exhibition – be brave and have a go! : the Art Collection is an extraordinary resource for our local churches, the trustees offer excellent practical support and advice, and the exhibition will exceed any expectation you have'.

Llandudno: Art and Faith

Between June 24 and September 3 2016, the Collection was exhibited at St John's Methodist Church Llandudno and at nearby Mostyn (the town's contemporary art gallery). The Revd Bev Ramsden describes how, in early 2015, church members had begun to think about how they might celebrate the church's 150th anniversary. Inspiration came from "Heaven and Earth", the January 2015 exhibition of the Collection at Wrexham, with the first requirement being to think how the Collection could best be presented in the very different town of Llandudno: a seaside resort packed with holiday-makers in the summer season.

Bev Ramsden also comments 'working with Mostyn was a fascinating learning experience. It was enormously helpful

in terms of marketing, curating, the hanging of pictures etc. There were a few disagreements over the choice of works because, inevitably, each partner was motivated by different aims, but we reached an approach acceptable to both i.e. the more narrative pictures were in the church, the more abstract ones in the gallery'. Alfredo Cramerotti, curator at Mostyn, chose the exhibition title and the headline image, Craigie Aitchison's *Pink Crucifixion*. 'Some of our church members were horrified at first but, of course, he had made the right choice. It was impossible to pass by without being arrested by the shocking pink of the marketing posters and leaflets...'

In the event the aim was very simple – to enable as many people as possible to have the opportunity of an encounter

Director Alfredo Cramerotti, extends an Opening Evening welcome to the Mostyn gallery, the second venue for the 'Art and Faith' exhibition in Llandudno.
Photo: Bob Williams





Trustee Sarah Middleton (centre) discusses *The cross over the city* by Michael Edmonds at Mostyn with the Revd Bev Ramsden and the Revd Peter Jennings.
Photo: Bob Williams

with God. To this end the pictures were incorporated into the normal life of the church and town. The exhibition was explained by the compere at every choir and band concert (held in the church at least twice a week during the summer season). This was done, not only at the concerts run by the church but also by the partner organisations who hire the premises for their own concerts.

Works from the exhibition formed the theme of every Sunday morning service during an eleven week period and also at the evening Summer Praise services held on the last Sunday of June, July and August (aimed particularly at holiday-makers.) One preacher, the

Revd David Halstead, even painted his own version of *The Washing of the Feet* as an illustration of his theme! There was one wedding during the exhibition and several baptisms – pictures were referenced at each event.

The Town Council's Civic Service was held during the exhibition (the church's minister is the Mayor's chaplain) and *The cross over the city* was used to illustrate the Mayor's theme of everyone working together to serve the town and its people. At least six discipleship study groups used the 'Creative Spirit' DVD to reflect on pictures in the exhibition and other church groups came to the exhibition to meditate upon the works.

The budget set for the exhibition was £5000 (as suggested by the Collection trustees) and the church underwrote the costs involved. It received grants of £1000 from the Conwy and Prestatyn Circuit and from the Wales District of the Methodist Church, and was particularly pleased to receive a grant of £500 from Cytun Llandudno (Churches Together). Those viewing the exhibition were generous givers to the donation boxes. Overall, 17,920 visitors viewed the exhibition at St John's. Numbers were not kept at Mostyn, but clearly, well over 18,000 people attended the exhibition overall. Bev Ramsden concludes 'We are delighted'.

Other events involving works from the Collection

As a foretaste of a major exhibition of the Collection in Bath Abbey, which occurred after the period described in this report, five paintings were on show during the late May Bank Holiday week-end in Walcot Methodist Church, which was celebrating its 200th Anniversary. The President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Steve Wild, was the preacher at the Sunday Morning Service.

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 – at Methodist Church House in London, at Oxford Brookes University, and, for a two-day residential meeting, at a venue which varies from year to year.

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 vision statement is: 'The Methodist Modern Art Collection - Seeing the Spiritual'.

The trustees play a vital role, both collectively and individually, by helping local exhibition organisers with advice on planning, and by giving guidance on the suitability of facilities, opportunities for outreach, etc. They also play a vital part in the provision of resource and publicity material.

As of August 31 2016, the trustees were: Dr John Gibbs (Chairman and Treasurer), the Revd Graham Kent (Secretary), Bob Williams (Secretary, Friends Group), Paul Bayley, Meryl Doney, 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 provides a budget to cover the cost of trustees' meetings and the Secretary's expenses. The Church also pays the insurance premium.

Funds required for the work of the part-time administrator, 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 (a statement of the accounts is presented at the end of this report).

Monies obtained or donated specifically for the acquisition of new works are held in the same fund but monitored separately. No works were purchased during the year.

Links with the Methodist Connexional Team

We have close links with the Revd Gareth Powell, Secretary of the Methodist Conference and with Martin Ashford, Head of the Mission and Advocacy team. Through the latter we are in contact with members of the Communications Office. We are indebted to members of the Finance Team for their assistance with our financial affairs.

Trustee Meryl Doney, together with the Revd Jennifer Smith, hosted a very successful visit from eight members of the Connexional Team while the Collection was on show in Ealing.

Administrative support

The trustees have a contract 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.

'Shaping a Future Together': consultation on strategic development of The Methodist Modern Art Collection

In last year's report, mention was made of the intention of broadening the reach of the consultation by holding focus groups at some of the exhibition venues. As described above, one such consultation was held at Lincoln in March 2016 (and more are planned for the near future). As a result of this activity, the following six aims have emerged. They will form the trustees' focus for the next five years and the trustees will seek financial stability for the Collection in order to achieve these aims:

1. Reaching wide audiences by exhibiting the Collection across the UK and beyond
2. Creating a permanent home for the Collection with gallery, storage and research facilities
3. Securing the services of professional staff to manage the smooth touring, the care and the documentation of the Collection.

4. Enhancing the Collection through the acquisition of new works.
5. Strengthening and creating key partnerships within the Methodist Church and with other churches, arts organisations and educational establishments.
6. Raising the profile of the Collection through marketing, press and social media campaigns.

Resources and Publicity

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. It is intended for leaders of worship, house and other groups.

We benefit greatly from the improvements that are being made in the Methodist Church website and are very much encouraged by the welcoming introduction that the Revd Gareth Powell has written for us. The 'Index of Works' provides an excellent insight into the quality and diversity of the Collection and there are now several videos to watch, each demonstrating something different about the way in which the Collection can be used.

In addition, images of the oils and acrylics can be found on the Art UK website (<https://artuk.org>) which was launched in February 2016. This took over from the 'BBC: Your Paintings' website and is expected to have a higher profile. Thus there will soon be a facility to add water-colours

and prints. Our works are listed under Oxford Brookes University (although it is stated that they are part of the Methodist Modern Art Collection).

Friends of the Collection

The Secretary to the Friends, Bob Williams, reports: 'The number of subscribing Friends continues to increase slowly but surely. Our numbers currently total 76, including 17 coming in as Dual Membership. This equates to a steady annual income flow of just over £1,560 (excluding Gift Aid returns and other specific gifts of which there have been a number).'

'As Newsletter Editor I am delighted to report that we seem to have an increasingly rich supply of information upon which to draw, and I am confident that this can be maintained. Certainly the exhibition reports from Ealing Green and Llandudno were quite outstanding. It is also pleasing to see such a wide variety of material available for the 'Elsewhere in the Art World' section. This seeks to provide an overview of the relationship between art and religion beyond the confines of the Collection itself.'

'We continue to be indebted to Cultureshock Media who provide us with their invaluable expertise in the production of two Newsletters each year, as well as our Annual Report. Archive copies of the Newsletters continue to be available on the Methodist Church website.'

Relationships with other bodies

A good proportion of our exhibitions are organized on an ecumenical basis, giving us contact with many denominations. Through our trustees, in particular Sarah Middleton, Meryl Doney and Paul Bayley, we are connected with other bodies concerned with the relationships between art and religion, such as 'Artserve' and 'Art and Christianity Enquiry'.

Our links with Oxford Brookes University are maintained via our Custodian Dr. Peter Forsaith. We are 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 2016 to August 2017. Venues will include Bath Abbey, The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge at Canterbury and Haywards Heath Methodist Church (in conjunction with Haywards Heath United Reformed Church).

A supplement to the 'Guide to the Methodist Modern Art Collection' containing entries on the works that have been added to the Collection since 2010 will be produced. With the help of Phil Allison and his team at CultureShock Media, we are looking forward to an exciting opportunity of working with the very well-respected art critic Tim Marlow (Artistic Director at the Royal Academy) on a short film about the Collection.

As indicated in relation to the Consultation, securing a long-term home for the Collection where there are good gallery, storage and research facilities is a high priority. Our base at Oxford Brookes University has many advantages but suffers from disadvantages in terms of on-site office and storage capacity and lack of display or gallery space. Thus we are currently keeping most of the larger works off-site at the National Conservation Service's store at Upper Heyford, 10 miles north of Oxford. This is matter we will be pursuing actively in the coming year.

John Newton Gibbs (Chairman)
March 2017

METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION

Income and Expenditure Account

INCOME (£)	Year ending 31 Aug 2016	Year ending 31 Aug 2015
Sales of literature, loan fees, grants and donation	4,776.00	4,210.58
Interest	87.59	101.71
Total	4,863.59	4,303.29
EXPENDITURE (£)		
Production of interpretative material, Conservation work	6,144.65	8,325.47
Surplus for the Year	(1,281.06)	(4,022.18)
Balance B/Fwd 1 September	16,388.18	20,410.36
Balance C/Fwd 31 August	15,107.12*	16,388.18

* It should be noted that £7000 of this sum is ear-marked for acquisitions

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/artcollection, search under 'Methodist Modern Art Collection') or e-mail: methodistart@yahoo.com