

# NEWSLETTER

NO. 35 – SPRING 2026  
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Methodist **Modern**  
**Art** Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



*Opening of Guildford exhibition*

*Farewell to Corinne Miller*

*New acquisition*

*In Conversation about F. N. Souza*

## EDITORIAL

On the front cover of this issue is one of our Patrons of the Friends, the Revd. Lord Griffiths. I was delighted to meet him at St. Mary's Church in Guildford when he led an afternoon of meditations featuring some of the MMAC artworks currently on display there. Further details about that exhibition are on pages 8 and 9.

Also in this issue we report on another wonderful acquisition for the Collection.

Sadly, we have to say goodbye to Vice Chair Corinne Miller who is stepping down after six years on the Management Committee. She has been a wonderfully supportive colleague whose expertise, enthusiasm and vision has benefited us greatly.

Finally, we also offer the Friends a special opportunity to help fund the work of the Methodist Modern Art Collection by buying an artwork by one of our Collection artists.

### Management Committee Members

Katharine Farnham-Dear, Dominic Harbour, the Revd. Catherine Hutton, David Maddock (Secretary, Friends Group), Beth McIntyre, the Revd. Sarah Parkin, Peter Shears, the Revd. Adam Stevenson, Peter Wakelin. In attendance: Jo Hibbard (Director of Engagement), Liz Millard (Collection Administrator), Olivia Threlkeld (Heritage & Collections Officer).

### Patrons of the Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

The President of Conference, the Revd. Richard Andrew, The Very Revd. Nick Bury, Phil Allison of Cultureshock Media, The Revd. Lord Leslie Griffiths of Bury Port

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Front cover: The Revd. Lord Griffiths of Bury Port next to Sadao Watanabe's *Christ Enters Jerusalem*, his favourite work in the Collection.



The Revd. Sarah Parkin

## NEW APPOINTMENT TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Company would like to welcome the Revd. Sarah Parkin. Sarah is a presbyter in The Bramhall & Wythenshawe Circuit and a member of the Connexional Council. Her interest in modern art was first kindled by a history of art module undertaken as part of her first degree. During her probationary appointment, Sarah was privileged to see an exhibition of the Methodist Modern Art Collection take shape at Lincoln Cathedral. Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* is one of her favourite pieces in the Collection.

Sarah is particularly interested to support the exploration of the ways in which the Collection can help disciples encounter or reflect on their faith from a different perspective and also how art, and the Collection particularly, can be a means of opening up questions about faith and sharing the gospel.

## THE REV. DAVID MOORE

Bob Williams and Sarah Middleton were unaware, when compiling a tribute to David for the Autumn 2025 Newsletter, that a considerable body of his work was undertaken in tandem with Richard Smith.

Richard was responsible for painting many of David's remarkable sculptural pieces in wood (and, indeed, also much involved with David in the evolution of 'Crisis at Christmas'). Bob and Sarah feel it important, out of respect for both parties, to put the record straight.

## DITCHLING MUSEUM OF ART + CRAFT

Although we reported in the Autumn Newsletter that *It Takes a Village*, featuring a display curated by the Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group, had been extended until mid March, Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft unexpectedly closed to the public on 23 February. Their spokesperson told the Museums Journal the closure was temporary, "in order to reimagine [the] business model due to the challenging economic context" but that the length of the closure was not yet decided. All the staff have been made redundant.

This is a sad reminder of the challenges faced by many art venues with the cost-of-living crisis and why the Management Committee remains committed to staging free exhibitions of the Collection right across the country.

## PROFESSOR ANN SUMNER

We reported Ann's departure in the last Newsletter. In January this year, the Mission Committee of the Methodist Church passed a Resolution acknowledging her transformational work with the Collection: "The Committee extends grateful thanks to Professor Ann Sumner for her leadership of the MMAC Management Committee, her faithful service to the Church and her support and promotion of the MMAC over many years".

## SIMON SOKOROS

The Management Committee were saddened to hear of the death of our former colleague Simon Sokoros who served on the Committee between 2018 and 2022. Before that, he was lead organiser, with Sarah Middleton and the Revd. Paul Glass, of the 2017 MMAC exhibition *Picturing Faith* at the Beaney Art Gallery in Canterbury. As a teacher he brought us vision and expertise for engaging educational institutions more fully with the Collection.

# View from the Vice Chair

I have come to the end of my six-year tenure on the Management Committee. Working with such a distinguished collection under Ann Sumner's inspirational leadership as Chair has been a privilege. During this period, we have moved from a rejuvenation phase back to active touring and weathered the traumas of lockdown.

My role has generally centred on collections care and various practical tasks. I have worked on conservation, housekeeping and - occasionally - wielded a screwdriver, making this a fitting bookend for my curatorial career. It is where I began, as a single-handed curator more years ago than I care to remember. Doing it remotely has required new strategies - as a curator I had the key to the stores and ready access to the collections!

It is, however, the people I have met that will remain the most potent legacy of my time on the Committee. Colleagues, Connexional staff, borrowers, and volunteers have been unfailingly generous, thoughtful, and committed. I have been humbled by those who have shared their deepest reflections revealing how profoundly the art has shaped their lived experience.

Among the highlights has been the annual 3Generate gathering. To be among 1,500 young people in one place is exhilarating. Over time, we have progressed from a few walls on the outer edge of the event to full integration in the Creative Zone where people can look, reflect and create. 3Gen also saw our first immersive exhibit with Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand*, a much enjoyed and impressive feat.

Having worked on the Public Catalogue Foundation's first volume at Leeds, I was keen to see the Collection on its successor ArtUK's online platform. Olivia Threlkeld and Peter

Shears have done wonderful work with this. It is now used actively to share the touring programme, as with Alwyn Marriage's *From Paint and Poetry* linked to Guildford's exhibition (see page 10).

We have high hopes of *Pictures for Our Times* as another way of sharing the Collection. The Revd. Denise and Simon Williamson's project in Thirsk prompted a suggestion of high quality reproductions. Then, funded by the Gwen Appleton Trust, we created a boxed set of ten with suggested activities and interpretative prompts. These are now distributed nationwide.

At the heart of MMAC are the artworks themselves. We have resumed acquiring works as we reassess the Collection. When we started discussing the future of Eric Gill's *Annunciation* the Revd. Catherine Hutton's reading of that picture gave me a new understanding of it, and this learning will remain with me - sometimes you just cannot see for looking. Taking time to discuss that which gives these artworks meaning is vital. *It Takes a Village* at Ditchling Museum provided a positive platform for Ann Sumner's groundbreaking work with the Methodist Survivors Advisory Group. We were deeply saddened to learn of the museum's closure.

The acquisition of a painted-glass work by the Irish artist George Walsh allowed me - through Neil Payne - the pleasure of interviewing the artist, exploring the Dublin art scene, and discovering a group of extraordinary women like Mainie Jellett who brought abstraction to Ireland early last century.

Wielding screwdrivers and shifting crates can be physically challenging as we work to tight deadlines, but it has been made lighter by the good humour of colleagues Katharine Farnham-Dear at Focolare, David Maddock



at Kirby Stephen, and our many generous borrowers.

Most recently I travelled to Inverness and Dundee to meet the team preparing to host the Collection later this year. Plans are at an early stage, but it will be wonderful to see our works in Scotland.

I am grateful to Ian Baker, Sarah Middleton and the Revd. Graham Kent for showing me the ropes initially and to all those Committee members I have subsequently worked with. It has been a pleasure! To our new Committee members - Beth McIntyre, Dominic Harper, Peter Wakelin and now the Revd. Sarah Parkin - I hand on the baton and hope you enjoy your work. To you, our Friends, my warmest thanks for your support; may you continue to thrive.

*Corinne Miller*

# *View from the Secretary to the Friends*

*From Darkness...to Light* is a good title. Not only does it encapsulate the Easter story, but it also calls to mind the broader idea of faith in uncertain times. Those who visit the Lenten and Easter exhibition at St. Mary's Guildford encounter 25 of our modernist works displayed within the confines of a Saxon church built in stone around the year 950. Anachronistic as the juxtaposition might seem, those of us who know the Collection will appreciate just how effective that combination of ancient and modern can be. Perhaps the timeless quality of some of the imagery in our pictures might even be thought to be part of its point.

Indeed, renewed interest in time-honoured expressions of faith - visual expressions among them - has been associated with the so-called Quiet Revival which takes the form of a recent

upturn in church attendance among the generation of young adults that has grown up with digital technology. Should we tap into this phenomenon? After all, while the art in our Collection might be modern, some of the imagery that it uses derives from an iconographic tradition that is traceable to the Roman catacombs. Could it be that the very constancy of this ancient imagery might appeal to a generation that seeks some sort of counterbalance to the frenetic demands of our digital culture?

Curiosity in these time-honoured forms of imagery might become apparent as people view the works, but we should be wary about promoting that particular aspect of the Collection. While some of the imagery in our pictures has certainly stood the test of time, the artists who employed and reworked it were themselves fallible

human beings. The art is special, not least in terms of the skill and thought expended on an artform of doubtful commercial value but, in Methodist tradition at least, the works themselves are not venerated as they are in some other Christian traditions. Valued as they are, they are thought of as cultural products, objects of their time. This is why, I think, the title of St Mary's exhibition is so apposite. If we consider why it makes sense to exhibit these works given the effort and expense entailed, it is because they serve as signposts in our time, pointing the way from darkness...to light.

On a different note, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Katharine Farnham-Dear, Editor of this Newsletter, who steps down after six years in post after publication of this issue. In addition to her effective work as an exhibition link and adviser, she has brought wit and keen intellect to this publication and has done much to convey the ongoing story of the Collection and the spirit in which it is used. Her insight and influence will be greatly missed.

And lastly, I should add that if you are not already a member of the Friends and would like to support the ongoing care and development of the Collection as a member, please contact me at [friendsofmmac@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmmac@gmail.com)

*David Maddock*



David Maddock, Secretary to the Friends with the Editor and outgoing Chair Professor Ann Sumner in front of Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of the Holy Communion* at St. Mary's Church Guildford.

# Tribute to Corinne Miller

Corinne Miller began her career running the Maryport Maritime Museum then moved to be Keeper of Art at Wakefield Art Gallery. She went on to Leeds Art Gallery as Senior Assistant Keeper, then Senior Curator, responsible for the Print Room Collection for 20 years. It was there that I first encountered her as a colleague (I was Senior Curator at Harewood House Trust). She was always so knowledgeable and generous in sharing her expertise. Then our paths crossed again in the West Midlands, when she moved to be Head of Culture, Arts and Heritage in Wolverhampton (I was Director of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham). We were often at the same meetings. And finally, when I returned to Yorkshire, we were both Trustees of the Leeds Art Fund and worked together closely organising membership events.

Somewhere along the line we chatted about our mutual connections to Methodism and the Collection. I was delighted when she joined the Management Committee in February 2020, although I was not actually involved in her recruitment. She soon became a really valuable member of the team, joining the Steering Group that oversaw the administrative reforms of our exhibition procedures. We worked together on the priorities identified by that, and on conservation and

re-framing. Corinne took the lead on organising the new travelling cases. With new governance structures, Corinne became Convenor of the CCCD (Collections Care, Conservation and Development) Working Group where her work has been invaluable. She brought great professionalism to our operations and oversaw a number of key acquisitions. I cannot thank her enough for her organisation of CCCD meetings, providing leadership, practical advice, methodical approach and inspired guidance.

She first became involved in our exhibition programming shadowing Ian Baker at the 2022 Bewdley exhibition. She also worked on the Coventry City of Culture exhibitions, as we all emerged from lock downs. Then we worked together in 2023 on two exhibitions in Bristol - *Articles of Faith – Where our Paths Meet* at Victoria Methodist Church, and *Death to Life* at John Wesley's New Room. Corinne was ever practical and resourceful when hanging the Collection we enjoyed working together. She also led on the loan of our David Jones *Three Kings* woodblock to the 2023 exhibition at Y Gaer, and assisted Katharine and the Revd. Graham Kent by hanging the artworks at Focolare. It was also a pleasure to work with her and David Maddock on *Revelation!* at Kirkby Stephen – the first of our curated package exhibition. Finally, she played a key role in the recent City of Culture exhibitions for Bradford 2025, hanging works at Thornton and Bradford Cathedral and working with us at Ben Rhydding. This would be the last time we would work together and we both enjoyed celebrating at a weekend of openings in early September.

Corinne's major contribution to our programming was her pioneering work at 3Gen, the annual gathering for young Methodists held at the National

Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. She led on our first loans in 2021 immediately after our Coventry exhibitions ended. The experience was inspirational for her and the innovative approach to curating the loans for young people appealed particularly. She worked with the Connexional Team to develop this into an annual commitment for us each year in partnership with Olivia Threlkeld and Peter Shears. A highlight of this work was undoubtedly the immersive interpretation of Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* in the autumn of 2023 which was hugely popular with the young people.

Corinne served as my Vice Chair from October 2021 kindly chairing meetings and taking forward projects so that nothing was delayed when I was unavoidably on extended leave. I'm truly grateful for all the support she gave me. We met regularly and talked through how we approached our work on the Collection, seeking to raise standards of collections care and to bring it to the widest possible audiences. Corinne has also been a keen ambassador for the Collection. Her lecture on Eularia Clarke was a great success last year and her articles for the Newsletter have made fascinating reading.

There are undoubtedly contributions that I have overlooked but I do want to acknowledge Corinne's deep commitment to the Collection and the hours of voluntary work she has contributed. I am deeply indebted to her for the compassion and support she gave me. We hope we have left a legacy for our successors to build on. I know all my former colleagues on the Committee will join me in thanking Corinne and wishing her all the very best for the future.

*Ann Sumner (outgoing Chair, Methodist Modern Art Collection)*

Corinne Miller hands on hanging the Collection at the Focolare Centre in Welwyn Garden City in 2024



# Katharine Farnham-Dear

## In Focus

As the Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us, there is a time for everything, and sadly my time as a member of the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee is coming to an end and, with it, my role as editor of this Newsletter. I hope the Friends will indulge me if I take the opportunity to share some of my personal encounters with the Collection.

I was introduced to the MMAC in around 2010 by the Revd. Geoff Cornell. Geoff was the minister of my church until his sudden, shocking death in 2014. I had been attending my local Methodist church for some years, but it was Geoff who persuaded me to join as a member. I confess my initial reluctance to do so was because my mother had told me Methodists don't drink, and I do like a glass of wine with supper or a Pimms

in the sunshine. Fortunately, Geoff was able to reassure me that the prohibition on alcohol only applied to church premises. Indeed, one of his predecessors argued that it didn't even extend to the church car park, though this might not be official doctrine!

Geoff was a Trustee of the Collection, the Trustees being the forerunners of the Management Committee. In my time on the Committee, I have had the privilege of working with the Revd. Ruth Gee, the Revd. Catherine Hutton and the Revd. Adam Stevenson as well as the amazing Revd. Graham Kent. Ordained ministers add a hugely valuable perspective to our discussions and planning.

Shortly after Geoff's death, I completed an Open University degree in Art History, and I hoped perhaps I could

use some of what I had learnt to help with the Collection. I approached Mary Roseweir, then MMAC Administrator and our Circuit administrator, and offered my services. In 2016 she put me in touch with the lovely Sarah Middleton who asked me to take on the project of producing text to accompany the artworks on the new web gallery. I very much enjoyed this task, getting to know the works themselves and our excellent catalogue, *Seeing the Spiritual*.

Then, at the start of 2020, I heard the Management Committee were recruiting new members and, in particular, needed someone to take over Bob William's excellent editorship of the Newsletter. I was delighted to be offered a place on the Committee and attended one meeting before the Covid lockdowns changed everything.



Katharine Farnham-Dear in Judy Chicago's immersive installation *Feather Room* on display at M+ in Hong Kong Autumn 2025

# Katharine's Choice of Work

Whilst churches were closed in Spring 2020 I worked with Sarah, Bob and Ian Baker producing the online resource *Paintings Poems and Prayers for Holy Week*. As lockdowns continued, we teamed up with *Singing the Faith* to produce *Paintings Prayers and Carols* for Christmas 2020. We were thrilled that these digital resources were well received.

However, nothing matched the thrill of seeing the original works on display at our Art Trail *Stories of Change: Hope, Faith, Love* round Coventry in Spring 2021 and writing about the opening event as the new editor of the Friends Newsletter.

Highlights since then have been working with Revd. Graham and the team at Focolare Centre for Christian Unity on their exhibition *Deepening the Mystery* in Lent 2024 and, most recently, working with my colleague Peter Shears and the team at St. Mary's Guildford planning their fabulous exhibition *From Darkness .... to Light* (see report on page 8).

I have learnt so much in the last six years from experts such as Professor Ann Sumner and Corinne Miller. Friends Secretaries Ian and David Maddock have both been a joy to work with. Thanks to all of them and the other Committee members. Jo, Liz and Olivia on the Connexional Team have been an unfailing support. So many people have supported and inspired me; I simply do not have room to thank them all here.

I have immensely enjoyed my role as editor and occasional roving reporter for this Newsletter. Thanks to Fonz of Cultureshock Media for his patience with me and for making every issue look so good. And thank you, Friends, for reading it.



*Pink Crucifixion*  
by Craigie  
Aitchison © The  
Estate of Craigie  
Aitchison,  
courtesy  
of PIANO  
NOBILE London

I love most, if not all, of the works in the Collection, but I have chosen Craigie Aitchison's limited edition print *Pink Crucifixion* because it was this work that first introduced me to the MMAC.

The work was on display at the first MMAC exhibition I attended in the church of All Hallows on the Wall, London back in summer 2010. It was like no other depiction of the Crucifixion I had ever seen. The first thing that struck me, of course, was the colour, which I have seen described as "blancmange pink". I'm not generally a fan of pink. I don't have a single pink item in my wardrobe. But I love this pink. It shocks us. It makes us look, and it makes us think. The second thing I noticed was the pared back depiction of Christ, making Him, perhaps, an archetype rather than a historical individual, and then there was that enigmatic facial expression....

Whilst I was looking at the picture, the steward came over and showed me the "ghost dog". She told me Aitchison originally drew a Bedlington terrier at the foot of the cross. But he didn't give it

an eye. The printer, trying to be helpful, added one. The artist was so annoyed that his work had been tampered with that he erased the dog completely. However, its ghostly outline is still visible to the bottom left-hand side of the cross. Have a look when you next see the picture. And if you are ever stewarding a MMAC exhibition, show people the ghost dog. Because you never know where it will lead.

A couple of days later, I was visiting the Royal Academy of Art with a friend. There, there was a small exhibition honouring Academicians who had died in the previous 12 months, including Craigie Aitchison, and on display was another print of *Pink Crucifixion*. I was very excited to be able to tell the story of the ghost dog to my friend and we had an interesting discussion about the picture. This was my first experience of sharing one of the artworks with another person and I guess that is what I have been trying to do ever since.

# Exhibition Report

## From Darkness... to Light in Guildford



Dr. John Newton Gibbs and Professor Ann Sumner (Photo: Mary-Rose Shears)

Over the last couple of years I have been privileged, with my colleague Peter Shears, to work with the team at St. Mary's Church Guildford as they planned their exhibition *From Darkness .... to Light*, which is still on as we go to press.

The exhibition opened on Sunday 8 March with a successful launch event attended by local civic and ecclesiastical dignitaries. The Management Committee were honoured to be joined by Dr. John Newton Gibbs, son of the founder of the Collection, with his wife Elizabeth, and by former Chair Professor Ann Sumner.

There is always something special about being in a building where God has been worshipped for over 1,000 years, and seeing modern art in such a place is particularly powerful. St Mary's chose 25 works illustrating the events of Holy Week contextualised by images of Jesus's ministry. Because St. Mary's is a Grade I Listed Building dating back to Anglo Saxon times, these could not be attached to the church walls, but were displayed

on free standing temporary walls. The ancient sloping floor was another challenge for the team to overcome.

More than 60 local volunteers have been recruited to steward the exhibition, welcoming visitors, serving refreshments and ensuring the safety of the artworks, including *The Cross over the City*. This is a mosaic and, unlike most of our works, it's not glazed and you would be amazed how many people feel they want to touch the little pieces of wood and metal!

Every detail has been thoughtfully planned by the St. Mary's team. Where original artworks are displayed up steps that might cause problems for some visitors, reproductions of those works are being shown in a rolling display on a screen at the lower level. Clergy from the joint Methodist/Anglican team at St. Mary's are on hand to help with any pastoral needs or 'difficult theological questions' visitors might have.

Every visitor is being given a short guide to the exhibition with QR codes that link to further interpretation and to Alwyn Marriage's poems (see page 10). These guides are obviously the result of a lot of thought, hard work and research from those involved.

The team have made a video centred around the exhibition which will shortly be available on the MMAC pages of

the Methodist Church's website. This includes the first drone footage of the Collection.

The team have also organised a rich and varied program of supporting events including lectures on particular works, an evening of poetry and music featuring a specially composed cello piece, and a Palm Sunday Reflection with choral music. I am sure my editorial successor will bring you reports of some of these in the next issue.

The pictures are finding a new audience every Friday night when St. Mary's open for their regular Vigil for Peace and invite anyone passing by to come in and say a prayer or light a candle for peace. This has been running since the day Russia invaded Ukraine and is particularly popular with young people. I found it a very moving event, although I was pleased to see that electric 'candles' were replacing naked flames during the exhibition.

I would like to thank the St. Mary's team for engaging with and showcasing the MMAC artworks so well. I am pleased, but unsurprised, that visitor numbers are already very encouraging, and sure that their hard work will have a lasting impact both locally and beyond.

*Katharine Farnham-Dear*



Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of the Holy Communion* and John Brokenshire's *Untitled - Pentecost* on display at St. Mary's



A banner over Guildford High Street advertises the exhibition



Theyre Lee-Elliott's *Crucified Tree Form - The Agony* with Alwyn Marriage's poem and electric candles ready for the Vigil



Jyoti Sahi's *The Dalit Madonna* with young people attending the Vigil for Peace



Jyoti Sahi's *The Dalit Madonna* is hung by specialist art technicians



Members of the team at St. Mary's examine *Crucifixion Polyptych* by Francis Hoyland

# Poems from an Exhibition

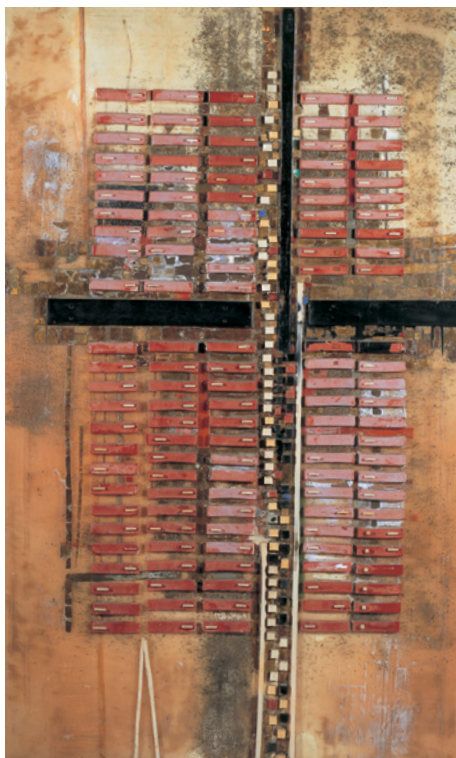
One thing that is always very exciting for the Management Committee is when MMAC pictures inspire fresh creative responses in others, be it children's drawings, dance, cello compositions, or even flower arrangements. So we are really delighted that accomplished poet Dr. Alwyn Marriage has written 25 poems in response to the 25 artworks on loan to St. Mary's Church in Guildford. These quite extraordinary poems form an integral part of the exhibition, with the option for visitors to access them through QR codes on their mobile phones - an interesting new development for us. The poems have been published in

a book *From Darkness to Light - Poems from an exhibition* along with images of most of the works that inspired them. Copies are available from Alwyn's website <https://www.marriages.me.uk/alwyn/for-sale/>

Furthermore, Alwyn has prepared a 'Curation' on the ArtUK website which includes images of the twelve of the artworks, her poems and short reflections. Her aim is "to illustrate how poetry can lead us into an even deeper experience of art." This can be accessed here <https://artuk.org/discover/curations/from-paint-to-poetry-twelve-works-from-the-methodist-modern-art-collection>

As a taster, we are delighted to share Alwyn's poem about Michael Edmond's monumental semi-abstract mosaic *The Cross over the City*

*Katharine Farnham-Dear*



*The Cross over the City* © The Estate of Michael Edmonds

## THE IMPRINT OF THE CROSS

If you're fortunate, you may encounter God beside a lake or on top of a high mountain - a sort of holiday romance with the Almighty

but for most of us, any drawing closer to the One we worship, is most likely to occur in the thick of humdrum life.



Dr. Alwyn Marriage in front of Jyoti Sahi's *Dalit Madonna* on display at St. Mary's Guildford

God does not 'look down' on earth,  
but is involved in the nitty gritty of the city street,  
our weekday work as much as Sunday leisure.

Come, Holy One, continue to dance with us  
to the music of wind sighing through the trees,  
the song of birds, waves crashing on the shore;

but help us also to appreciate the beauty found  
near home, the counterpoint of grinding gears,  
percussion of banging doors and wail of sirens.

Christ's Cross is imprinted on the messiness  
of life, criss-crossing intersections snarled  
with traffic and laced with diesel fumes.

Pain, betrayal, love and joy all happen here.  
It's where Christ is crucified today, and where  
we're most likely to experience Resurrection.

*Alwyn Marriage*  
[www.marriages.me.uk/alwyn](http://www.marriages.me.uk/alwyn)

# In Conversation

## F. N. Souza in Focus at Bradford

On Friday 3 October, as Storm Amy unleashed its worst, a dedicated audience gathered in Bradford Cathedral's de Lacy Centre to hear Professor Ann Sumner in conversation with Dr. Alice Correia, an art historian and authority on modern art of South Asian heritage.

The discussion traced the complex and often contradictory life of Francis Newton Souza whose painting, *Crucifixion* (1962) was then on show in the Cathedral with Jyoti Sahi's *Dalit Madonna* (c.2002). Souza was expelled from both St Xavier's College - where he had been expected to enter the priesthood - and later, in 1945, from the Sir J. J. School of Art in Bombay. His political engagement, including participation in the Quit India Movement, membership in the Communist Party of India, and his role in founding the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group in 1947, made him an unlikely choice for the Royal Academy's *Exhibition of Art from India and Pakistan* (1947-48). However, confronted by growing opposition from his domestic audience, who objected to the provocative themes in his work, Souza left for London with his wife, Maria, and family in 1949 seeking a place within post-War Europe's international art world.

The early years in London proved difficult. While Maria worked long hours to support the household, Souza struggled to regain the recognition he had enjoyed in India. A turning point came in 1954 when Stephen Spender published Souza's autobiographical essay, "Nirvana of a Maggott," in *Encounter*. The resulting connections led Peter Watson of the Institute of Contemporary Arts to include three of Souza's works in an exhibition alongside such noted artists as Francis Bacon, Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore. This exposure led to a solo exhibition at Victor Musgrave's Gallery One in 1955, coinciding with the publication of his biography in *Encounter*. During this period, Souza began to explore new approaches to the human form and Christian subjects, shaped in part by the post-War revival of religious art and architecture.

Professor Sumner and Dr. Correia examined this cultural setting, highlighting how Souza assimilated elements of the contemporary religious idiom into his own visual repertoire. Critics noted an austere, Byzantine quality in his paintings comparing them with the luminescent colour and linearity of stained glass. One such work, *Supper at Emmaus with the Sceptic*

*and the Believer*, was shown at the Tate Gallery in the Contemporary Art Society's *The Religious Theme* exhibition (1958). It later toured regional galleries and became, in 1962, the first Souza to enter a public collection when the Contemporary Art Society donated it to the Wakefield Art Gallery.

The year 1962 marked several milestones: a further solo show at Gallery One, the publication of Edwin Mullins's illustrated monograph on Souza, and the purchase of *Crucifixion* by the Revd. Douglas Wollen - the first acquisition for what would become the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

The conversation also explored the broader influences shaping Souza's work: his rejection of idealised 'flax-haired' depictions of Christ, his fraught relationship with the art establishment, domestic upheaval and a struggle with alcohol addiction. His 1967 exhibition *Black Art and Other Paintings* at the Grosvenor Gallery, widely regarded as a critical and commercial setback, marked another turning point. The abrupt move to New York soon afterwards is not of immediate relevance to the *Crucifixion* in our Collection although the story of Souza's rise to international standing as an artist and his fervent support for spiritual-cum-theoretical ideals tells us something about his vision and search for transcendent meaning.

Towards the end of the conversation, Professor Sumner observed, 'this is an artist who goes back to religious images over and over again throughout his career' and asked Dr. Correia, 'Is he really not a believer?' The reply was hesitant: '...he is searching for answers I think...'

For that reason alone, perhaps, Souza's *Crucifixion* warrants a prominent place in the Collection.

*David Maddock*

Dr. Alice Correia and Professor Ann Sumner in Conversation



# New acquisition

We are delighted to report another acquisition for the Collection. This stunning painting was given to us by the Focolare Movement, and we are immensely grateful for their generosity. The artwork is, thanks to the hard work of Corinne Miller, currently being conserved and reframed so that it is robust enough to tour and it will be on display next year as part of the exhibition at St. Mary's Church in Marlborough. I believe it will become one of our most popular works as it is both accessible and emotionally impactful. Here Paul Gateshill of the Focolare Movement shares his thoughts on the picture.

*Katharine Farnham-Dear*

## JOHN CARES FOR MARY

The Focolare Movement was given this wonderful painting *John cares for Mary* a couple of years before it hosted the MMAC exhibition during Lent/Easter 2024 in Welwyn Garden City. During those two years it was kept in storage as it wasn't really the kind of art that you'd have hanging in your living room! Then when we set up the exhibition *Deepening the Mystery* we decided to include it with the other 25 exhibits chosen from the MMAC. It was a big hit and promoted some profound discussion. It's certainly not a painting to gloss over! Following the exhibition, we decided to donate the work to the MMAC as we felt it belonged with this excellent collection.

It's a gallery piece which deserves to be seen by as many people as possible.

*John cares for Mary* was painted by Dinah Roe Kendall in 1996 (acrylic on canvas). It is based on the Gospel of John Chapter 19 verses 25 -27:

"But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time, this disciple took her to his own home."

It depicts the crucifixion, focusing solely on the scene of those gathered at the foot of the cross. The only evidence of Jesus is his feet, nailed savagely to the upright timber of the cross. I found this more powerful than having the full figure of the crucified Christ, as it ensures the viewer has to focus on the raw emotion of those beneath the cross. There are two soldiers standing impassively in their military attire, guarding the execution site. Their expressions are in stark contrast to the naked grief of Jesus's followers. St. John, in yellow, supports Mary, the mother of Jesus, as she is sinking to the ground. She is dressed in red, covering her traditional blue, to emphasise the sheer humanity of a mother watching the death of her child. In the notes she wrote to accompany this painting Roe Kendall wrote: "This was also part of my study of Mary's life. Some years back I had lost a son, which helped me to empathise with



*John cares for Mary* by Dinah Roe Kendall (1923-2022) © Dinah Roe Kendall. All rights reserved 2026 / Bridgeman Images

# ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD

Mary....” I was deeply moved to read this, and it confirmed why the painting expressed such deep rooted emotions.

The colours are vivid, reflecting the five years the artist lived in Cyprus. There is nothing ‘pious’ in Roe Kendall’s style - the figures are contemporary which certainly challenges the viewer. In her book *Allegories of Heaven*, a collection of work depicting scenes from the life of Christ, she shares: “I sometimes use actual local scenes and at other times entirely imaginary ones, thus creating compositions which treat the biblical stories in a contemporary and narrative manner. I try to remove them from ‘religious unreality’ and endeavour to convey the sense that it could happen at any moment amongst us today!”

Dinah Roe Kendall was born in Bakewell in Derbyshire in 1923 into a family of professional artists. After her war service in the Red Cross, she gained a place at the Slade School of Fine Art, where she was a student for three years. Her influences include Sir Stanley Spencer and Jacob Epstein, but over the years she has developed her own unique recognisable style.

I hope that many will come to enjoy this painting and that over the years the MMAC will acquire more of Dinah Roe Kendall’s remarkable art.

*Paul Gateshill*

## THREADS THROUGH THE BIBLE

In our Spring Newsletters of 2017 and 2023 we drew attention to the beautiful embroideries of Jacqui Parkinson.

Readers may be interested to know about *Threads through the Bible*, a display of Parkinson’s three huge sequences, *Threads through Creation*, *Threads through the Cross* and *Threads through Revelation* as one exhibition. These 44 panels comprise more than 25 million stitches, so this is probably not only the largest textile project by a single artist ever, but also the largest textile project for 600 years. The premiere was at Liverpool Cathedral in January 2025 and until the end of 2027 all or some of the panels will be touring venues across the country including Chester, Southwark, Truro, Hexham and Lincoln. For full details see the website [Jacqui-textile.com](http://Jacqui-textile.com)

## CHRISTIAN ART

Readers may be aware of *Christian Art*, a website that emails out daily images, gospel readings and art reflections prepared by Fr. Patrick van der Vorst.

Former senior director of Sotheby’s, Fr. Patrick is now a Roman Catholic priest and his reflections show his deep knowledge of all kinds of art, and his familiarity with the Bible and his own church’s traditions. Over 70,000 subscribers receive these emails. They are a wonderful way to start the day!

Now *Christian Art* have organised a conference to take place on Saturday, 14 November 2026 at the QEII Centre in Central London, “a day devoted to exploring the sacred dialogue between beauty and faith, bringing together theologians, cultural leaders and art lovers from all around the world”. Further details are available here <https://christian.art/conference2026/>

## PICASSO: BIBLICAL ROOTS

Readers heading to Spain this summer may like to know about *Picasso: Biblical Roots*. This exhibition at the Catedral de Santa Maria in Burgos, Castile brings together 44 works from across the artist’s career to explore the influence of the Bible on this colossus of Modern Art. It runs until 29 June 2026.

## COLLECTION MANAGEMENT - CONTINUITY AND INNOVATION

It became apparent in 2024 that the Management Committee faced the impending departure of several of its longest serving members over the following two years. To mitigate the loss of knowledge, expertise and connection, it was decided under Ann Sumner’s leadership, to approach former Trustees and their successors, the Management Committee, and request their service in a consultative capacity. The Advisory Group subsequently came into being,

its members making their abilities and Collection-specific knowledge available to serving Committee members over a three-year term that is renewable for a further three years. The group is still new, and its modus operandi has yet to be established. We are grateful to its members and, indeed, to others who continue to support the Collection in an informal way.

*David Maddock*

# Opinion Piece

## Enduring witness in Ditchling

I would like to offer a personal reflection in support of the display at *It takes a Village*, and the recent partnership between the Methodist Church and Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft.

First, I would like to pay tribute to all who planned and participated in this project, especially the Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group who co-curated the display. Their courage and witness has helped me bring some new understanding to a difficult journey, with both a professional and a personal element.

In August 2017 I attended a conference at Ditchling Museum. The aim of the conference was to discuss how Eric Gill's work had been curated in various venues that summer with acknowledgement of his paedophilia, including the sexual abuse of his daughters.

I was attending principally on behalf of the Management Committee of the Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC), having been the link with two local churches very near to Ditchling who had staged an exhibition of the MMAC earlier that year. We had been planning to show Gill's tiny watercolour, *Annunciation*, at the churches' exhibition.

Nathaniel Hepburn, the then Director of Ditchling Museum, said, as host of the conference, and with regard to the Museum's own exhibition that summer, *Eric Gill: The Body*, "We felt it was important for visitors to trust the body that was interpreting the works."

It was important for me to hear that, having experienced a serious abuse of trust from a Church institution over a decade earlier.

Ditchling Museum had consulted widely in putting together their 2017 exhibition. One of those consulted, from the National Association of Persons

Abused in Childhood, indicated at the conference that he would rather people talked about the issue (of child abuse) than pretend it didn't happen. Conversations had also taken place with members of Gill's family, one of whom had expressed relief in handing over a file of Gill's work which she had never wanted to look at. I learnt that, during the exhibition, some visitors disclosed to museum staff their own experience of being sexually abused.

Nathaniel Hepburn had been invited to open the churches' MMAC exhibition because of the common ground: several artists with work in the MMAC were members of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic, well represented in the Ditchling Museum's collection. Gill's *Annunciation* had been on the curator's list from the start of planning the MMAC exhibition. However, after much consultation, the advice from the Connexional Communications team and Methodist safeguarding personnel was that Gill's picture should be withdrawn from the display. Other 'Guild works', by Philip Haggren and David Jones, were shown, and Nathaniel Hepburn was warmly welcomed to open what proved to be a very successful exhibition.

I was impressed by the honesty and carefulness of Ditchling Museum's curatorial team, and their relationship with the two churches proved fruitful. I reported back to the Management Committee that the conference had considered some alternative approaches to curating work by Eric Gill, influenced partly by the National Trust and its 'contested heritage' work.

Eight years later, I believe that the Methodist Church has, with this very challenging and controversial issue, built bravely on some of those considerations of 2017. Members of the Methodist

Survivors Advisory Group were crucial in choosing and interpreting the exhibits for *It takes a Village*. The display of Gill's *Annunciation* on the MMAC website is now accompanied by a biography of the artist which includes a curatorial reinterpretation of his work.

What struck me afresh, wandering round *It takes a Village* in its opening week last July, were some words I'd read several times before whilst preparing a lecture on the Ditchling Guild. The Guild's Memorandum & Articles, dated 1921, ended with three aims, the final one of which reads: "Making the good of the work and the freedom of the workman the test of its workshop methods, tools and appliances".

Elsewhere the Guild statement makes reference to the love of God and neighbour influencing the standard of work made, and "the goodness of the thing to be made". However, this time the aim read uncomfortably to me, focusing as it does on "the thing to be made" and the "freedom of the workman". Eric Gill, a co-founder of The Guild (and writer of its aims), grossly abused his authority as a leading member of this Roman Catholic arts community. Albeit with hindsight, I'm left with a sense that any liberties can be taken in pursuit of art. It somewhat legitimises the Guild - with its Christian banner and inspiration - taking advantage of, or riding roughshod over, the dignity and vulnerability of, for instance, a young woman 'used' as a model, not just for a nude but as an object of Catholic devotion.

Two years before the Ditchling conference, I had made a personal submission to the 2015 Methodist 'Past Cases Review': Courage, Cost and Hope. In it I described my experience of making a formal complaint about an abuse of pastoral authority. The

# Art for sale

Interested in acquiring a work by John Reilly?

complaint, which was upheld, had been brought to the Methodist Conference in 2007 where a potential code of conduct for Methodist leaders was discussed. The ensuing ten years were ones of frequent painful dilemma for me as to how much to articulate. It has been reassuring to learn recently about current terms of reference for certain Connexional groups, promoting ways of working which prioritise safety, collaboration, empowerment, cultural humility and trustworthiness.

Institutional wheels often turn slowly but I was encouraged when I observed the efforts in Ditchling to honour the lives of Eric Gill's daughters, as in the exhibition panels about Petra and Betty. My aim in writing here is to lend a voice to contemporary daughters of the Church whose work or wellbeing has been damaged by leaders using others for their own ends.

*Sarah Middleton*

## NEW FILM

A powerful new documentary, *Sans Gill: Surviving an Artist*, is now available on the Methodist Church's website. It captures the landmark collaboration between the Methodist Survivors' Advisory Group, and Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft and features Prof Ann Sumner working with the Survivors.

The Methodist Church remains committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry – promoting welfare, preventing abuse and responding well to those who have been harmed.



*Joan of Arc Before her Judges*, c. 1960 by John Reilly (1928-2010), oil on board, 2ft x 3ft, 61 x 91.5 cm © the artist's estate, photo: Lawson Wright Studios

Friends may recall that *Triumphant Love* by Reilly was recently donated to the Collection by the executors of the Revd. Stuart and Susan Brand. They generously agreed that we might sell a second work, *Joan of Arc Before Her Judges*, which does not meet the objectives set out in our Collections Development Policy, in order to recoup some of the costs of preparing the first painting for touring.

*Triumphant Love* has now been cleaned, reframed and crated at a cost of over £500, and has already had its first showing at Ben Rhydding as part of *Everything is Connected*.

We are now able to offer *St Joan Before Her Judges* to interested members of the Friends. The painting is in good condition and is framed, although the frame is a simple one and purchasers may wish to replace it. The work was owned by the Brands, who acquired

it directly from the artist in Ventnor between 1960 and 1963. Copies of the relevant documentation, including the executors' permission for sale, will be provided to the purchaser.

If you are interested, please send your bid to the Secretary to the Friends, David Maddock, at [friendsofmmac@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmmac@gmail.com), who will also be happy to answer any further questions. Please include your name, address and telephone number. The deadline for bids is **Friday 8 May 2026**. In the event that more than one bid of the same amount is received, the earlier bid will take priority. Please note that bids below £500 will not be considered.

All monies received will support the development of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

# FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

## 2026

### Scotland

Roseangle Gallery  
17 Roseangle  
Dundee

The Cathedral Church of St Andrew  
Andross Street  
Inverness

WASPS Inverness Creative Academy  
Stephens Street  
Inverness

Corinne Miller writes: In Scotland we are promised interesting partnerships and remarkable venues. The exhibition opens in Dundee on 11 September at the Roseangle Gallery, a special eighteenth century building, home to the Dundee Society of Artists. In Inverness the venues are the Gothic Revival Anglican Cathedral and WASPS, an artist-studio space and creative hub, housed in the award-winning, refurbished former Grammar School.

Further Details to follow.

### 3Gen 2026

The MMAC will once again have a presence at 3Generate, the Methodist Church's annual youth assembly in Birmingham.

## 2027

### Banbury

The Management Committee is supporting the **Heseltine Gallery at Chenderit School in Banbury** as they plan for an exhibition of works from the Collection at the start of 2027. Further details will follow.

### Wallingford

The committee is also supporting the team at **Wallingford Methodist Church** as they plan for an exhibition of works from the Collection during spring 2027. This is intended to coincide with the Oxfordshire Artweeks Festival. Further details will follow.

### Marlborough

Finally, the committee is also supporting a team at **Saint Mary's church in Marlborough** as they plan an exhibition during autumn 2027 entitled *Picturing the Word*. This is intended to coincide with the Marlborough Literary Festival. Again, further details will follow.

## A THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

Dame Tracey Emin's *The Crucifixion* was highly praised during its display at last year's *Summer Exhibition* at the Royal Academy. Commenting on the piece, journalist Jonathan Jones said: "Emin shows why religious art, whatever your beliefs or lack of them, has a power to portray our common human fragility. People are always being crucified."