

NEWSLETTER

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Methodist **Modern**
Art Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



New appointments to the Management Committee
A former President of the Methodist Conference in Focus
Our Secretary to the Friends visits New Norcia
A look at the Britten-Pears Art Collection in Aldeburgh

EDITORIAL

The difficulties of recent months have been a testing time for all of us. The interminable weeks of lockdown have seen Methodist Church House shuttered and 'virtual engagement' very much the order of the day for our Management Committee, the Administrator, and our friends at Cultureshock Media. Having been moved by a recent online address I enjoyed on the theme 'Courage in the Storm', our Eularia Clarke painting immediately came to mind. To the best of our knowledge there were no fatalities that day on the Sea of Galilee. Sadly, the on-going story for Covid-19 has been very different.

Having to call off the 'For All People' exhibition at Bewdley, very much at the last minute, was a real disappointment. One certainly feels for all the good folk in the locality who had invested so much time and effort into preparing for what would undoubtedly have been a fine show. We are all working hard to ensure that the chosen works will indeed be visiting Bewdley over the similar Lent and Easter period in 2021.

I am delighted to share the news with you of the appointment of two new Management Committee members as reported in the adjacent column. Both Katharine and Corinne will certainly bring valuable expertise from their respective professional fields.

We are pleased to welcome back Ann Sumner, Chair of the Management Committee, after an extended period of absence. Our thanks must be expressed to Sarah Middleton for serving as Interim Chair over part of this very difficult year.

Art Collection Management Committee Members

Prof Ann Sumner (Chair), the Revd Graham Kent, Ian Baker (Secretary, Friends Group), Sarah Middleton, the Revd Ruth Gee, Rebecca Gibbs, Lucy Newman Cleeve, Simon Sorokos, Katharine Farnham-Dear, Corinne Miller

Administrator – Liz Millard

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(The Supporters of the Methodist Modern Art Collection)
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NEW APPOINTMENTS TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee is delighted to confirm the names of Katharine Farnham-Dear and Corinne Miller as recent appointments to serve on the Committee.



Katharine Farnham-Dear (Newsletter Editor Elect) is already familiar with the Collection having prepared the commentary for the current online gallery.

After obtaining a Law degree from Cambridge University Katharine practised real estate law in the City of London for 17 years. She then followed her passion and gave up the Law to take a degree in Art History at the Open University

whilst raising her young family. For many years she edited the magazine at her local Methodist church where she is now Church Secretary.

Katharine is offering her skills and enthusiasm for creating publications about the Collection, together with her passion for making the artworks more widely known. As from Autumn 2021 she will take over the editorship of the Friends Newsletter, bringing her own diverse skills to the role.



Corinne Miller is an Associate of the Museums Association and a gallery professional with over thirty years of experience covering collections care, management and interpretation.

Corinne has a degree in Art History and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Museum and Art Gallery Studies from Manchester University, as well as a Certificate in Management from Leeds Metropolitan University. Her primary interest, British

twentieth century art, led to her appointment as Keeper of Art for Wakefield Metropolitan District Council. In 1986 she moved to Leeds City Art Gallery where, as Senior Assistant Keeper she was responsible for the Designated Print Room collection on which she built a specialist knowledge of English watercolours. As Senior Curator from 1996, Corinne coordinated the curatorial, exhibition and education programmes for Leeds City Art Gallery curating a number of major exhibitions. Then, as Head of Culture, Arts and Heritage for Wolverhampton City Council (2006-2015) Corinne was charged with overseeing the opening of the new £6.7 million extension and in 2010 the merger of Arts and Museums with the Archives and Tourism Development services. She currently combines her role as an Associate Tutor at Leicester University with active membership of a number of boards including Craftspace and the Leeds Art Fund.

Corinne is already well acquainted with the Methodist Modern Art Collection as she curated an exhibition of the Collection in Leeds in 1999 and she is keen to serve the Church which has played a significant role in shaping her beliefs and values.

Front Cover: Eularia Clarke (1914-1970), *Storm over the Lake*, 1963. Oil on canvas. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

A TRIBUTE TO FORMER TRUSTEE OF THE COLLECTION, THE REVEREND DR JOHN TAYLOR

Methodist Modern Art Collection: The commissioning of Christ writes in the Dust: The Woman Caught in Adultery

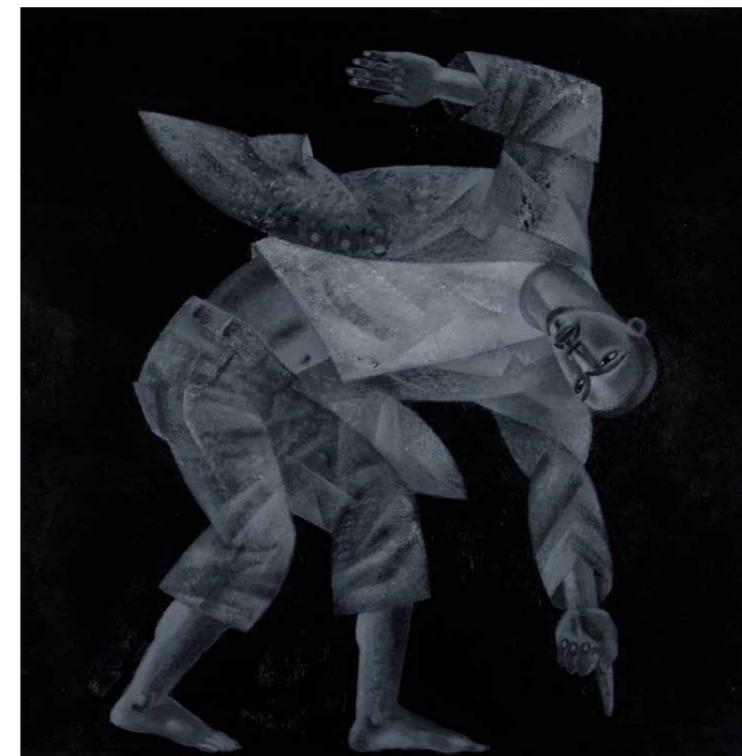
The recent death of the Revd Dr John Taylor has prompted John Gibbs to recall his involvement in the 2009 commissioning of one of the Collection's most admired pictures. The term 'Managing Trustees' for what are now the members of the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee is used here as that was the term then in use.

When the Managing Trustees were appointed in 1998, John Taylor was one of their number and he served for nearly ten years. A highly respected former President of the Methodist Conference he was much appreciated by his fellow Trustees for his theological insights and understanding. He stressed the importance for the Collection of the production of a lively Annual Report and, with the Revd Graham Kent, was involved in the 2004 commissioning of Ghislaine Howard's *The Washing of the Feet*. John also wrote the enlightening Foreword to the first published catalogue (2000) of the works that make up the Collection.

Not long after he had stood down, he made it known that he and his wife Margaret were interested in supporting the commissioning of a new work for the Collection as part of the celebrations of their Golden Wedding. One of his conditions was that this involvement was to be anonymous, and it was only relatively recently that he said that he and Margaret were happy for the anonymity to be waived. It is thus both a pleasure and a privilege to be writing this account in which John's role in the process can be made public.

For several years the Trustees had been interested in the work of Clive Hicks-Jenkins and had been considering the option of adding a painting by him to the Collection. After some preliminary discussions on possible themes, it was on 29 October 2009 that Clive and I went by train to Four Oaks, on the outskirts of Birmingham, where we were entertained to lunch by John Taylor. There was a wide-ranging discussion. John started by saying that he had begun his ministry with very dogmatic views but that, as time had passed, he had become aware of how rarely one can see things simply in black and white. This was what appealed to him about the story of the woman taken in adultery. Questions discussed included: Where was the man who was taken in adultery? Should he be in the picture? What is Jesus writing in the sand? Is he doodling? Is it this detail that makes the story memorable?

I was able to say that a figure of £5,000 for the execution of the work had been agreed with Clive. John and Margaret



Christ writes in the Dust, 2011. One of Clive Hicks-Jenkins' two 'grisaille' sketches now in the Reserve Methodist Modern Art Collection

were happy to make £3,500 available as their contribution with friends being invited to contribute to a specific fund by way of marking their special anniversary. The Trustees, as a body, would arrange for any difference to be covered.

There was some delay in the painting of the picture, with Clive being heavily committed to completing a body of work for a show at the Martin Tinney Gallery in Cardiff. It was finally handed over on 22 February 2011 at an event in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at Birmingham University, where Professor Ann Sumner, now Chair of the Collection, was Director. This was an excellent location as a number of John and Margaret's friends from the Midlands could be present - including Pat Welch whose vehicles were used for transporting the Collection for some of the first exhibitions in the 1960s.

The artist had been working on the painting until the early hours of that very day and, with his partner, Dr Peter Wakelin, then set off from Aberystwyth to bring it to Birmingham!

Clive generously gave us two preliminary 'grisaille' acrylic sketches (one of Jesus and one of the woman), the one of Jesus being for the Taylors. After enjoying it for a number of years, John and Margaret graciously gave 'their' sketch back to the Trustees where it makes a valuable addition to the Reserve Collection.

Dr John Gibbs, former Chair of the Management Committee

Management Committee member, Reverend Ruth Gee, In Focus

I grew up in a small village in Wiltshire. My parents were both teachers and we lived in the school house which meant that I learned to ride my bike in the safety of the playground. I was able to play there with friends, and we had access to the climbing frame, hula hoops and skipping ropes when my father gave us permission. I learned to ride in the local riding stables where I spent most weekends working for the privilege of extra rides. I went to Sunday School in the parish church and then, as a teenager decided that I wanted to attend the Methodist chapel because I believed all should be welcome to share in communion.

As a sixth former I discovered my love of theology, helped by the young teacher who introduced us to St Paul's letter to the Romans, though it was not on our syllabus. He said that if we understood Romans it would be the key to understanding Pauline thought. How right he was. I went on to read theology at the University of Hull and it was there that I met Robert, a friendship that developed into love when we visited the Taizé Community with two friends. It was also in Taizé that I heard the call to ordained ministry although I did not respond until many years later after serving for 20 years as a local preacher and a career in teaching religious studies.

After graduating I was very undecided about my future career. Robert and I were to be married and I began to train as a nurse, following the nursing diploma course based in Salisbury. The course included one day each week in the local college and we had to attend a session of general studies in the afternoon. One series of lectures was on modern art and it was here that I first discovered a love for and fascination with, art which has never left me.



I didn't complete the training as a nurse because I finally acknowledged the call to teach which I had been trying to resist. After training at King Alfred's College, Winchester my teaching career began, and I loved it. Religious Studies is a wonderful subject. It is challenging, exciting and of vital importance as it helps us to listen to and understand people of many faiths and none. Those who study theology as an A level are embarking on a tough and demanding course. My fellow students at the time considered that those who read theology were often the best equipped to engage in critical thinking.

Having taught for a number of years I heard again the call to ordained ministry and embarked on the journey of testing, discernment and formation being stationed in 1995 and ordained at the Methodist Conference in London in 1997. As part of my training I completed the research for the further degree of M.Litt. As a Methodist presbyter I have served in circuits in West

Yorkshire, as Chair of the Darlington District, Connexional Ecumenical Officer and currently as Assistant Secretary of the Conference. From 2013-2014 I served as President of the Conference. I could write much more but end by saying how glad I am to work closely with this wonderful resource for worship and mission.

Opposite page: Francis Hoyland (b.1930), *Nativity polyptych*, 1961. Oil on canvas. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

Ruth Gee's Choice

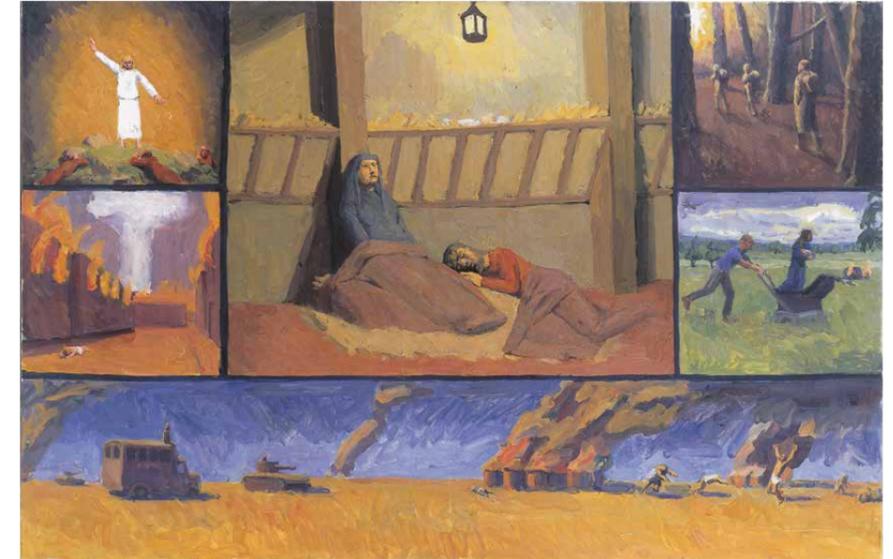
'To me, this painting is a reminder that incarnation is a present reality...'

Since my interest in art was stimulated in 1977 by a lecturer in Salisbury I have enjoyed and been challenged by a variety of artists and works of art in Britain and overseas. My first introduction to the Methodist Modern Art Collection was during an exhibition in Durham.

The exhibition was hung in Ushaw College at the same time as I was one of those leading a residential retreat for Methodist ordinands. In the evenings I was able to spend a lot of time with the pictures and realised how this resource could contribute to growth in faith and understanding, and to mission.

I have used images from the Collection in many acts of worship but one that I keep returning to is the *Nativity polyptych*. When he was 21 Francis Hoyland was greatly influenced by a scholarship to Italy where he was impressed by the cycles of frescoes in Italian churches. These frescoes were created, not simply for decoration, but to tell the story of the faith to those who came into the building. It is often the case that the figures in the frescoes are dressed in the style contemporary with the artist and the surroundings are based on local scenes.

The *Nativity polyptych*, painted in 1961, tells the story of the birth of Jesus and here too the people are in contemporary dress and the surroundings are those local to the artist. The magi are back-packing through Lickey Woods (Birmingham) and Mary and Joseph push a pram through Richmond Park as they flee to Egypt. The massacre of the innocents is represented by a nuclear attack and the unstable political situation by scenes depicting warfare in the Congo.



To me, this painting is a reminder that incarnation is a present reality. The historical birth of Jesus has meaning for today and God is with us now, in time of pandemic, and at all times.

Francis Hoyland has said, *'Art is a means of communication by which mind reaches out to mind across great gaps of space and time, as well as across death.'*¹ By linking the events of Jesus' birth with those of the 1960s, Hoyland invites us to link them with our own lives and circumstances. The flight to Egypt might be in flimsy boats across the Mediterranean Sea. The cause of the death of infants might be malnutrition and disease. Homelessness, flight, searching, proclamation and disaster take many forms but at the centre is always the truth that God is with us, weeping with us, suffering alongside us, challenging injustice and proclaiming peace.

On his website Francis Hoyland writes, *'Painting has its own momentum; it is a journey towards an aspect of truth that cannot be apprehended in any other way. It is a journey that is never finished since what one has done in the past is never what one wants to do now. One changes and one's pictures change with one, but I do not know if I'm hurrying to catch up with my paintings or if my paintings are hurrying to catch up with me.'*²

By engaging with art, we are encouraged to make our own journey to recognise and embrace timeless truths.

¹ www.art-quotes.com
² www.francishoyland.co.uk

A REPORT ON IMPORTANT FURTHER WORK RECENTLY COMPLETED UNDER THE CURRENT CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

Having, since the imposition of lockdown, been reduced to a team of one, namely herself, Ruth Bubb has ploughed a lonely furrow but still managed to progress our conservation and restoration contract.

Conservation work, at the time of going to print, has been carried out on works prioritized for treatment during our Rejuvenation Pause. The requisite work on the following paintings has been duly completed thus ensuring that they are better protected for the demands of touring.

- *Christ Writes in the Dust: the Woman Caught in Adultery* (Clive Hicks-Jenkins): The painting itself was in very good condition but the existing frame and framing method required modification with glazing and backing to provide better protection.
- *Nativity polyptych* (Francis Hoyland): The painting had some small signs of wear and tear such as scratches and scuffs, and the varnish appeared to have deteriorated slightly. Such minor damage was repaired, and a very thin coat of conservation-grade varnish was applied to enhance the colour saturation. The work was then fitted with a new frame to improve its overall protection.
- *The Elements of the Holy Communion* (Jacques Iselin): The canvas was attached to a new, sturdier wooden stretcher with expandable joints. It was found to be splitting along the turnover edges, so these areas had to be repaired and reinforced to stabilise the structure. As the original strainer was badly distorted in all three dimensions, achieving a good fit on the new stretcher for a canvas of this size was challenging. Some areas of broken impasto were retouched to make the losses less conspicuous.
- *The Ascension* (Peter Rogers): The paint was seen to be very heavily applied in places. It had cracked and flaked away because the canvas was slack on the stretcher and had therefore become overly mobile. After introducing adhesive into the cracks in the paintwork, it was possible to tension the canvas on the existing stretcher so that it provides a more rigid support for the pictorial layers.
- *Dalit Madonna* (Jyoti Sahi): Always a favourite with our viewing public, this painting required substantial work. It was quickly apparent that the canvas was stretched over, and partially stuck to, a piece of hardboard, reinforced with a wooden moulding around the edges. Evidence from tack holes, creases and markings on the reverse of the canvas indicated that the painted area had been enlarged when it was attached to the hardboard and that



Sara Stoll, assisted by Helen Davis, seen measuring up Francis Hoyland's *Nativity polyptych* for its new frame. Photo: Ruth Bubb

the canvas had originally been folded around a smaller auxiliary support. We re-stretched the canvas onto a new expandable wooden stretcher so that the canvas tension can be maintained in future. The paint layers are sensitive to almost all solvents and the painting has no protective varnish coating. It is therefore important that it does not become soiled because cleaning could be problematic. The existing frame was adapted so that glazing could be fitted, to protect the delicate paint surface with minimal alteration of the overall appearance.

In similar vein Louise Vaile, our watercolour specialist has managed to complete important conservation work on both *Crucified tree form - the Agony* (Theyre Lee-Elliott) and Sadao Watanabe's *Christ enters Jerusalem*. Both works were re-framed in bespoke, stained oak frames with Museum-grade acrylic glazing by Tim Haysell of Kingswood Frames & Mirrors Ltd.

I am again indebted to Ruth Bubb for chapter and verse provided regarding the work completed on the above-mentioned paintings. She tells me that the next consignment of Collection works, deemed in need of her expert attention, arrived in her studio at the beginning of August. The plan is to have them conserved/restored and returned in time for the newly advertised date for the postponed Bewdley exhibition in the Spring of 2021.

Liz Millard, our Administrator, deserves our thanks for overseeing this progress and making all the necessary arrangements.

The Editor

PAINTINGS, PRAYERS AND POEMS (PP&P) FOR HOLY WEEK 2020

The Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee are very much focused on using the Collection as a tool for ministry and mission. When coronavirus forced church buildings to close before Holy Week and Easter we were still able to provide some images to help Christians in lockdown to mark the festival at home. 'Paintings, Poems and Prayers for Holy Week 2020' was based around nine pictures from the Collection and a new work by Friend of the Collection, Caroline Waterlow - one for each day from Palm Sunday to the Tuesday after Easter. PP&P, as we chose to name it, was circulated to the Friends and more widely. We were thrilled with the feedback we received and wanted to take the opportunity to share some of it with you.

Our hope was that PP&P would help personal devotion and feel that it managed to do so. An instant response: *'This is the best devotional aid for Holy Week and Easter that I have ever, in my long life, seen. I shall be using it and recommending it. How I'd love to have it in my hand to show everyone I meet (not much use these days, of course, when I don't meet anyone!)*'. Another said, *'On a daily basis this is the right amount to contemplate in analysis and faith. These are certainly very powerful images'*.

The art and poems clearly spoke to many people: *'I found the Good Friday picture and David Subacchi's poem, and the Sutherland painting particularly powerful among what is a striking set of images. I've also been struck by the line in David's poem: 'This haunting afterglow of forgotten humanity' from Ecce Homo ... - a powerful reminder that we must not allow such failing of memory of so many forms of human loss and sacrifice: Christ's, those lost in war, and indeed those lost in the current crisis' and 'There are some wonderful pictures here, illustrative of Christianity's centuries-old ability to inspire fine art - and with fine poems to match'*.

As well as its use for personal devotion, we were delighted that clergy and others shared PP&P more widely, telling us: *'This is a great resource. It's so good to have paintings and poetry, reaching parts and people our preaching/reflecting doesn't always manage to do' and 'This excellent production can be used for personal reflection or more widely with other groups perhaps for virtual meetings supported by software such as Zoom,' and 'We have shared these with our church family. We're only too glad to have these resources to use this year - how can we possibly cancel Easter?!', and 'This resource you have created is great! I would certainly want to use the images and some of the text in my blog that I have started by way of holding the local churches together during the pandemic', and 'Thank you so much for the wonderful art and poetry suggestions for Holy Week. I have sent it to the Ministers and a couple of House Groups and the feedback is very good'*.

As an electronic resource, PP&P could 'go global'; reaching people outside the UK who might never see one of

our exhibitions. A chaplain at Hong Kong cathedral called it *'a beautiful and thought-provoking collection of art and poetry'*, and a Vice Dean at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco said *'Thank you so much for this! I'm going to share it with a number of my clergy colleagues. We are working hard at how to be church in the midst of all this - and how to do Holy Week in particular'*. Another Californian respondent said *'Thank you for sending these exceptional works of art on the Easter story. I have never experienced anything quite like them'*. Elsewhere, PP&P was appreciated by the New Norcia Benedictine Community in Western Australia, and the Musical Director of the Central United Church, Brandon, Manitoba, Canada who called it *'a remarkable set of paintings, poems and commentaries'*, adding, *'I found the paintings very thought provoking and, in some cases disturbing, and very much appreciated the marriage of the images with a poetic response and a commentary bringing context and further illumination'*.

Our favourite piece of feedback probably has to be *'the use of some Methodist Modern Art Collection pictures just makes me appreciate what an asset it is in terms of mission, outreach and touching spiritual chords. It is certainly not just an art collection'*.

We are blessed that our images have been a blessing to others.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

This Reflection remains available on our website and can be found in the books, posters, postcards and downloads section at www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/resources

OUR SECRETARY TO THE FRIENDS, IAN BAKER, MAKES THE LENGTHY JOURNEY TO NEW NORCIA TO VIEW A COMPANION WORK BY ROY DE MAISTRE

Readers may recall the interesting article (see Newsletter Issue 18 / Spring 2017) describing the email interchanges Bob Williams had as Editor with the New Norcia Benedictine Community near Perth in Western Australia. This was about the Roy de Maistre *Noli me Tangere* work in the Methodist Modern Art Collection and the provenance of a version held in their own contemporary religious art collection.

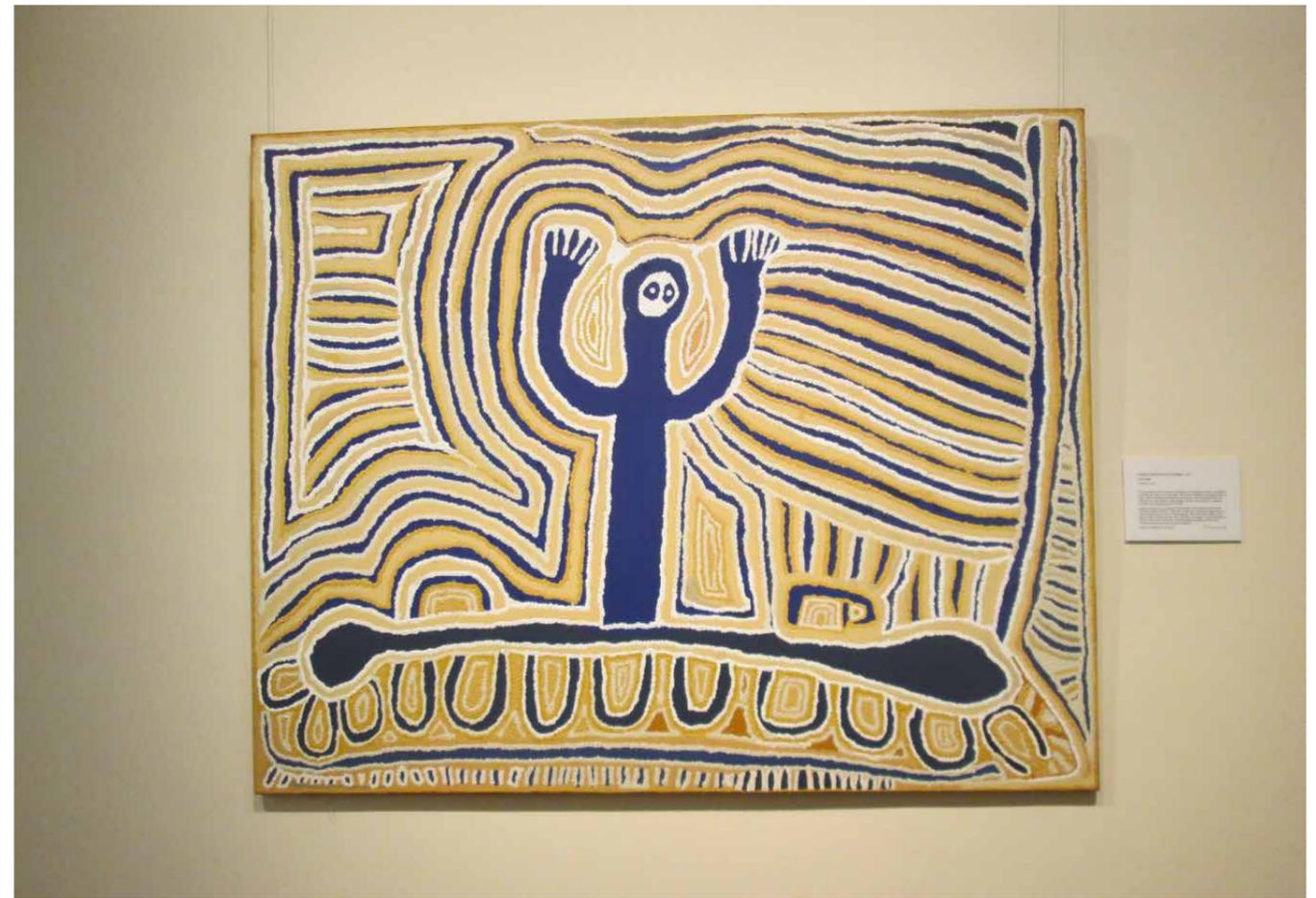
Last year my wife and I fulfilled a long-held desire to visit New Zealand in our retirement and enjoyed five memorable weeks there. We decided as part of our return itinerary to spend three days in Perth before the long flight back to London. I was reminded by chance of this article about two months before our departure and this triggered a thought as to whether we could visit New Norcia to view their collection in the very limited time available.

Email exchanges between England and Western Australia began again but this time with Peter Hocking, the Director of Archives, Collections and Libraries, at New Norcia. He offered to drive us from his Perth home to New Norcia and back on a Saturday which was more than generous given it involved a total of four hours driving across the hinterland landscapes north of Perth. Once there he showed us around the cruciform layout of this small town founded in 1847 by Spanish Benedictine monks. Over the years it has served many purposes; as an Aboriginal mission; a provider of secondary education; a centre for pastoral enterprise; and now as a place of spiritual retreat with its continuing Benedictine monastery and community. Its heritage status is such that it features in the tourist programmes of Perth and Western Australia.

Peter also took us behind the scenes of their archives and collections and to visit their museum and art gallery building. We were able to see their Roy de Maistre painting, *Noli me Tangere* which is brighter in its overall colour composition than the one held in our Collection. As an expression of our mutual partnership in promoting modern religious art, I passed over a number of our publications including a copy of *Seeing the Spiritual: A Guide to the Methodist Modern Art Collection*. We took time to view the works on display by other Australian artists including some striking Aboriginal art interpretations, of which the rather lovely work, *Last Supper* is illustrated here. The artist, Linda Syddick Napaltjarri has used the symbolism inherent in her upbringing. Look carefully and you will find that she has featured the twelve disciples all seated facing Jesus with Judas, the odd man out, facing the other way. The bread for sharing is shown as a 'bush damper' and the wine contained in a pannikin, more usually used for drinking tea when out in the bush. A number of the New Norcia acquisitions have arisen from a national award for promoting Christian religious art based in Perth. This is called the Mandorla Art Award and its competition takes place every two years with a themed nature. It struck me as an innovative idea.

I would urge any Friends, or anyone known to them interested in contemporary religious art visiting Perth, to include a trip to the New Norcia Benedictine Community. For further details see: www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au.

Ian Baker



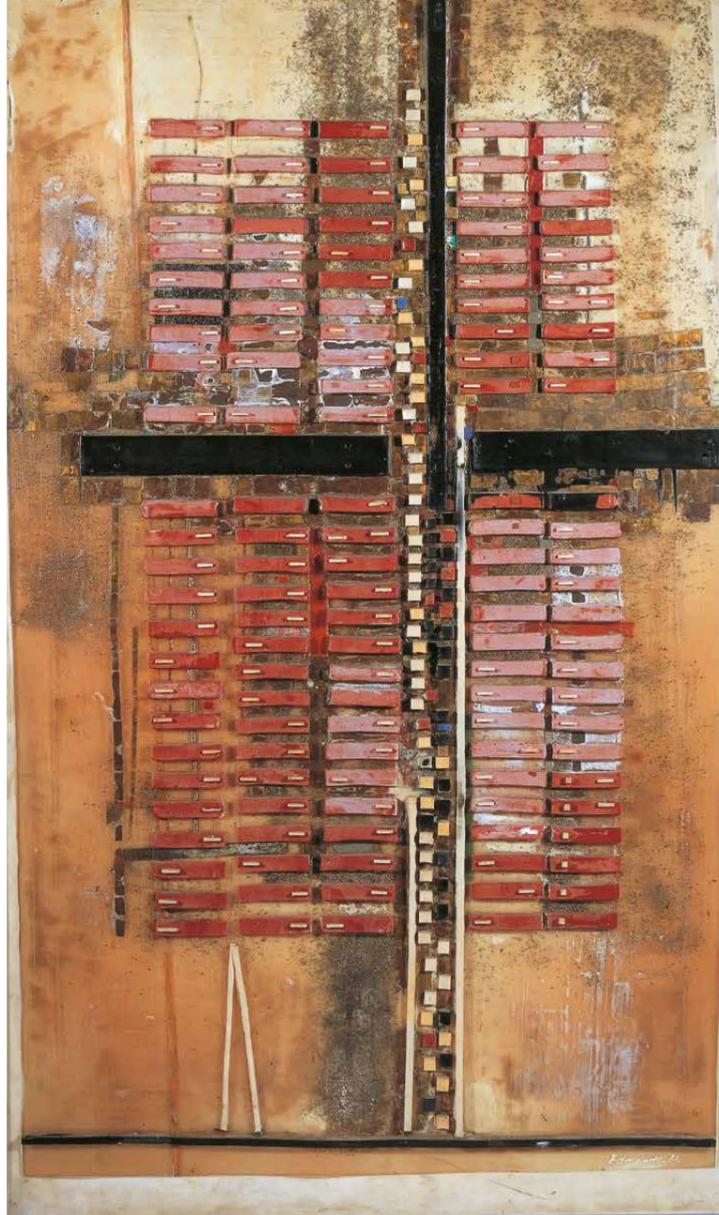
Clockwise from left: Photo of the New Norcia Roy de Maistre, *Noli me tangere*, 1949 with Ian Baker and Peter Hocking exchanging greetings and Ian presenting Peter with a copy of *Seeing the Spiritual* on behalf of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Photo: Ann Baker; Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b.1937.), *Last Supper*, 1997, Photo: Ann Baker; The New Norcia Gallery. Photo: Ann Baker



As again acknowledged in our recent Annual Report, we continue to cherish our links, very much to our mutual benefit, with ArtServe, Art+Christianity, Visual Commentary on Scripture (King's College, London) and, of course, with the ever-supportive Gibbs Trust whose financial and often timely assistance for the Collection, is very much appreciated. A similar link with Wesley House, Cambridge, reflecting on the Collection through a recent online study course, makes for interesting reading in the contributed feature below...

During seven weeks of the lockdown in the UK, Wesley House, Cambridge offered an 'art appreciation' course featuring work from the Methodist Modern Art Collection alongside other contemporary paintings and wood sculptures. 'This course has been a wonderful sanctuary' wrote one of the participants, a Lay Reader logging in from Australia. Others who took part in 'Drawing Closer to God: exploring art in worship and theology' included Methodist presbyters, those training for ministry and some who simply wanted to develop their interest in modern art from their standpoint of Christian faith.

Michael Edmonds' *The Cross over the City* spoke powerfully to several in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: 'This mosaic has not particularly struck me before when I have seen it in the Collection. In our current situation, we are reflecting on what it is to be 'Church' without being able to gather. Edmonds' work comments directly on that for me now: putting the cross at the very heart of a community which



will probably not even be aware of its presence as we see it from a perspective not usually used. This is how we are needing to witness now; in a new perspective. As I am pretty much in lockdown this is very real to me as I struggle with how to be a good neighbour, friend and minister to my church under these constraints'. (Heather Walker)

'...the first thing I saw in this image were the rows of coffins on New York's Hart Island, a place where the people who died of coronavirus were buried while waiting to be claimed by loved ones, and where people with no next of kin, or whose family can't arrange a funeral, have been buried since the 19th century. Seeing the sad news footage, it felt those poor people were isolated even in death. Yet the cross reminds us that this is not so'. (Jacky Radbone)

This work, which always attracts such interest, is currently in need of fairly urgent conservation work and will not be touring until it receives the requisite professional attention.

Of the two clothed figures in F N Souza's *The Crucifixion*, a fresh observation: 'They seem to be standing behind the cross and suggest to me the imagery of the Trinity. The figure in grey

suggests the Father. Tears are streaming down as he presents the Son to us: 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'. An offering to humanity of the Father's heart, which is not shown, unlike that of the other clothed figure where the heart is seen aflame. This figure speaks to me about the all-seeing Spirit who interprets the meaning of the cross to us. Looking to Jesus and to us at the same time. The Spirit who has the heart of God and can kindle a flame in our hearts'. (David Ely)

And of Ceri Richards' *The Supper at Emmaus*: 'For me it's as if someone has been at the supper and captured the moment with a camera, at the right shutter speed; the moment between Jesus being there and disappearing from one realm to the other. In slow motion, so to speak. I love the size of the feet: large and prominent. They remind me that the feet that trudged to Emmaus will now 'run the race' to Jerusalem to spread the good news; after all, they were, and we are, Christ's feet and hands'. (Angela Simon)

Professional contemporary artists whose work was selected for particular study included Petrina Kent (one of the curators of the 2018 'Awakening' exhibition of the Collection in the Isle of Man) and Angela Dewar, textile embroiderer who is also a Friend of the Collection.

Summing up the course, participants willingly shared their learning points: 'Staying with an artwork and treating it like a gifted message to absorb'.... 'Taking more care in looking and accepting that a work of art has a life of its own'.... 'I really liked that the copyright of artists' work was adhered to'.... 'I found this course very life-giving. It has given me a confidence to share art that is not really well known, and to share art full stop. It will definitely help in my on-going ministry which was my reason for engaging with it'.

For further details of this and other online courses offered by Wesley House, contact www.wesley.cam.ac.uk/study/onlinelearning/

Sarah Middleton

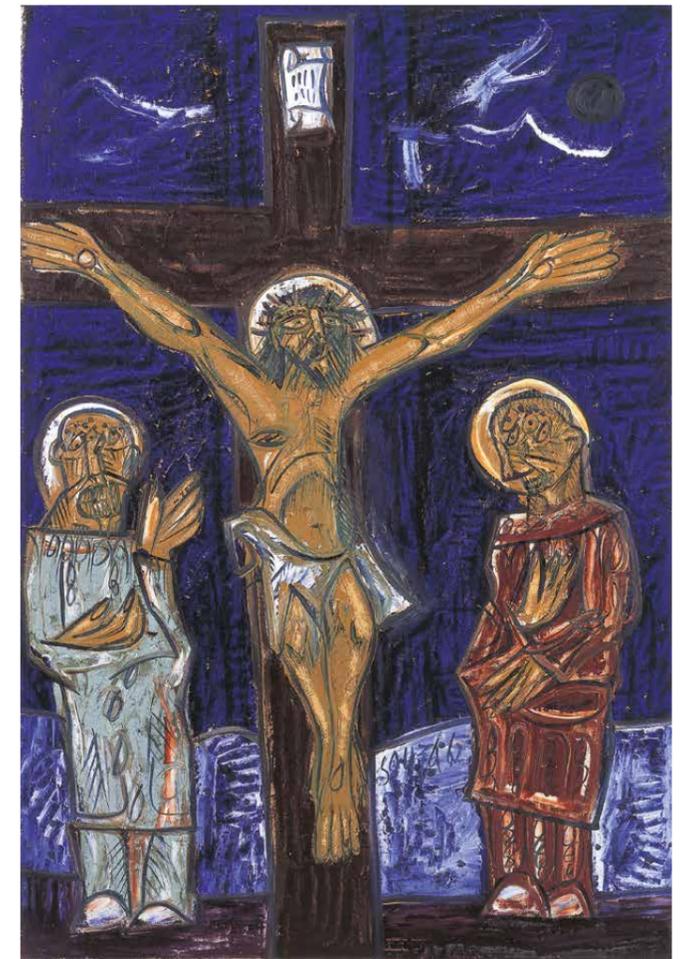
I was delighted to find that Sarah's excellent Wesley House online course continued to run when the coronavirus crisis ended face to face teaching. F N Souza's expressionist painting *The Crucifixion* made a particularly strong impact and pointed students, who included both clergy and laity, to other works in the Collection. Feedback showed that all we participants found the whole experience interesting and enlightening.

One pro-active student on the course was inspired to buy a set of posters of favourite works from the Collection for his church and plans to lead a 'pilgrimage' around them when the

Opposite page: From left to right: Ceri Richards, *The Supper at Emmaus*, 1958. Pen and ink, watercolour and gouache on paper;

Michael Edmonds, *The Cross over the City*, 1962. Polyester, brass and mosaic.

Below: F N Souza, *The Crucifixion*, 1962. Oil on board



building reopens. The Management Committee is thrilled that this course has given more people the opportunity to encounter and be challenged by our works and hopes they will now feel well-equipped to share modern Christian art with others (A2 posters: 8 images: £7.99 each). Available at - www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/reflecting-on-faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/resources/books-posters-postcards-and-downloads

Katharine Farnham-Dear

ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD

PETER PEARS AS COLLECTOR: SEEKING THE SPIRITUAL?

The Red House, Aldeburgh, Suffolk

Describing Peter Pears as the Evangelist in Bach's 'St John Passion' on Good Friday 1972, Alan Blyth extolled the timbres he found to convey the drama of the music, finding his performance 'as arresting and unexaggerated as ever'. Pears was born to devout parents, whose decision to send him to Lancing College, at the age of thirteen, was influenced by hopes that he might become a priest. Lancing's ethos focused upon worship and the chapel, which Pears described as 'a beautiful copy of Beauvais Cathedral'. Before long, it was clear that music, rather than the Church, would be Pears' vocation.

Yet art, too, became an irresistible passion. From his friends Mary and John Behrend, patrons of Stanley Spencer, Pears learnt the joy of living with art. A first painting (*A portrait of Benjamin Britten* by Kenneth Green), bought in 1944, seeded a desire to collect, and soon Pears was a regular visitor to galleries, amassing also a number of artist friends, whom he encouraged and supported. His collection was shared with Britten – in the sense that each house they shared was filled and 'inspired' by art – but it was predominantly Pears who chose and bought individual pieces. His eye went from strength to strength: from Constable to Blake, Gainsborough, Rodin and Sickert, but settled most consistently on the contemporary – John Piper, Mary Potter, John Craxton,

Cecil Collins, Elisabeth Frink, Philip Sutton, Georg Ehrlich, Sidney Nolan, Ceri Richards, F N Souza. It was a highly individual choice, but was it in any sense spiritually guided?

The answer, taking the collection as a whole, would have to be 'no'. Yet there is much to be learnt from examples that defy the rule. An early acquisition by William Blake depicted St Paul moments after he had shaken the viper from his wrist into the fire. A luminous watercolour, its composition later resonated with Pears' portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar, robed and imperious, as he condemned the Israelites in Britten's second church parable, *The Burning Fiery Furnace*. This echo between music, the dramatic and the biblical was perhaps the key to Pears' interest in religious art. When he enquired, in 1963, about buying Ehrlich's *Christ the Healer*, he described it as 'the prodigal son', an image which again foreshadowed a musical work: in this case, Britten's third church parable.

Biblical imagery is seen again in Frink's *Christ Bound at the Pillar*, 1952, which twists, agonisingly, to press against the limits of the paper. In the year of its purchase, 1953, Pears not only considered commissioning a painting from Robert

Colquhoun based on Bach's St Matthew Passion (a project precluded by the artist's procrastination) but buying Stanley Spencer's extraordinary *Christ in the Wilderness* series, later acquired by the Art Gallery of Western Australia. He did, however, succeed in commissioning a pencil drawing by Cecil Collins, *The Agony in the Garden*, 1956, as a beautiful counterpart to *The Resurrection*, 1952. And in 1958, Pears saw the Redfern Gallery's show, 'The Christian Vision', from which he purchased two woodblocks by Eric Gill for the Golden Cockerel Press edition of *The Four Gospels*, 1931.

Gill's carvings, based around the letters 'A' and 'T', depict the crucifixion and deposition, pivotal moments of the



Georg Ehrlich (1897-1966), *Christ the Healer*, c 1951. Bronze Relief panel (55 cm high). © The Estate of Georg Ehrlich. Reproduced courtesy of the Britten-Pears Archive

Passion. Their acquisition coincided with an intense correspondence between Pears and F N Souza, a controversial artist originally from Goa, concerning a portrait commission. The resulting painting, eight feet high, is one of the most striking in the collection. More remarkable still, however, is Souza's *The Agony of Christ*, 1958, which shows only Christ's braced upper arms and head. Eyes stare point-blank from a face scored with pain, jaws clenched, and a head surmounted with bristling thorns. It is an image both shocking and compelling.

Paintings such as these by Frink and Souza are evidence of Pears' fearlessness as a collector. Unlike Ehrlich's tender *Christ the Healer*, they are not beautiful, yet they remain important registers of their time. The Britten-Pears Collection, preserved and displayed in its original surroundings at The Red House in Aldeburgh, remains an outstanding example of an individual's taste, at the core of which resides a set of beliefs, principles and hopes. To see it is to glimpse another, quite possibly more enlightened, world.

Judith LeGrove

I am enormously grateful to Dr Judith LeGrove for contributing this enlightening article. As a musically trained Art Historian, Judith was uniquely qualified to hold the position for eleven years, as she did, of curator at the Britten-Pears archive in Aldeburgh. Sadly, we are unable to feature images of the Souza works to which Judith refers as the reproduction rights charged by the artist's estate are beyond our means for the purposes of this publication. We are indeed fortunate that the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes had the foresight to secure the copyright on our own Crucifixion painting by this artist - Ed



Albrecht Dürer, *Madonna and Child*, c.1503-1505

IS IT, OR IS IT NOT, A DÜRER DRAWING...?

Back in May 2019 a couple in Massachusetts, U.S.A. who might best be described as 'acquisitive squirrels' dedicated to seeking out seeming bargains at artwork sales stumbled across an absolute gem. As semi-professional 'pickers', checking out an estate sale in Boston, their eye had alighted upon what seemed to be an etching bearing the recognisable 'AD' Albrecht Dürer monogram - or, ridiculous to contemplate, could it even be a drawing by the master? Considering it worth a punt, in went a bid and it was theirs for just \$30!

At this point in time, through a series of fortuitous connections, Clifford Storer, himself a knowledgeable collector and senior partner at Agnew's, the London dealer enters the scene... The necessary tests for authenticity were undertaken and quickly raised a frisson of excitement. Clear evidence of individually 'bespoke Dürer' watermarked paper, plus the seal of approval given by a leading Dürer expert at Vienna's Albertini Museum all but confirmed that this had to be regarded as an original Albrecht Dürer drawing, dating from c.1503-1505.

A closer look at the work reveals a particularly motherly scene where the Christ-child appears to be on the point of wriggling out of Mary's arms while

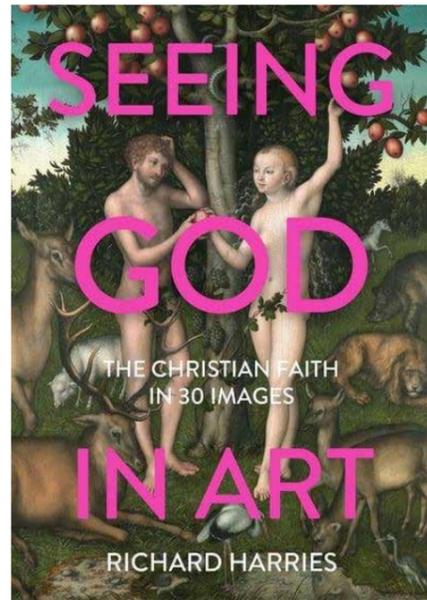
she is poised, with a nappy cloth in hand, to attend to the infant's toileting needs. All serve to give the drawing a rare, domestic feel.

Further provenance research revealed that the drawing has, over the past 500 years, passed through the hands of Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II, thence into the possession of the Louvre, following the looting of art treasures in the wake of Napoleon's conquests, then passing between various well-known Parisian collectors before finding its way to the U.S.A., and apparent obscurity for the past 150 years.

This important re-discovered work was due to be unveiled at this year's prestigious Maastricht Art Fair, back in March but plans had to be rapidly shelved on account of the Covid-19 crisis. An eventual sale at Agnew's looks set to realise a figure well in excess of £1.5 million, although it is anybody's guess as to exactly when the latest chapter in the fascinating history of this remarkable Dürer work might be written. However, we can say that the punt taken by the Massachusetts couple is set to provide them with a much-needed windfall.

The Editor

'Paintings such as these by Frink and Souza are evidence of Pears' fearlessness as a collector...'



BOOK REVIEW

Seeing God in Art: The Christian Faith in 30 Images by Lord Richard Harries of Pentregarth SPCK, 2020 ISBN 978-0-281-08382-4

Over the centuries some of the world's greatest painters have explored and expressed their faith in God through their art. It would be a challenge for anyone to select a finite list of images that best define the Christian faith. Here, the author invites you to reflect with him on 30 such artists. The end result most certainly adds to the sum of our knowledge as to how art has served to illustrate the Christian story over two millennia and it was no surprise to find him, once again, using a favourite saying - 'Art is not just an optional extra but essential to Christian understanding'.

Retiring after 19 years as Bishop of Oxford Richard Harries was made a Life Peer and he remains active in the House of Lords on human rights issues. His voice is well known to many through his regular contributions to the Thought For The Day slot in the Radio 4 'Today' programme.

One might say that Lord Harries' personal selection is in part predictable, and in part, surprising, and thus manages to be both awe-inspiring and refreshing. Added to which his accompanying views, anecdotes and analysis makes for compelling reading. There always seems to be something new to add to one's fund of knowledge. We learn that Rembrandt's famous etching *Christ Healing and Preaching* c.1648 (Image 13) - described here as the most iconic of all Christian images - was, in his home country, often simply referred to as the '100 Guilder print', such was its popularity. In similar vein, we are informed that in one of this artist's great religious works, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (c.1668) in the Hermitage Collection, the father is clasping his son with one hand that could well be seen to be male and the other female, symbolic of a forgiving parent, regardless of gender. It was also useful to learn that a mandorla (Images 15 and 19) means an aureole of light, indicating the divinity of Christ, invariably shown as the three rings of the Trinity.

There is a neatly arranged balance of classical works and contemporary images - with just one sculpture making the list, David Wynne's 1963 work *Noli me tangere* (Image 21). Roger Wagner

is a predictable favourite among the modern works - *And the Lord Lifted Up Job's Face*, 1995 (Image 9). Icons also have a special place for the author, of which Andrei Rublev's wonderfully serene *The Trinity*, 1425-1427, (Image 30) is the stand-out choice.

For me, particular highlights were the illuminating discourse on the 1958 Ceri Richards *Supper at Emmaus* altarpiece for St Edmund Hall (Image 23) together with the text that accompanied the very fine Caravaggio painting *Conversion on the Way to Damascus*, 1600-1602 (Image 24). With the Richards' altarpiece the author concludes with a quote from what he describes as Oscar Wilde's deeply moving treatise 'De Profundis' - 'Once in his life every man walks with Christ to Emmaus'. With the Caravaggio we are offered the cogent analysis of what Paul's life was all about, both before and subsequent to his Damascene conversion, referencing the artist's brilliant use of dramatic effect.

Lord Harries has always admired the range and quality of the Methodist Modern Art Collection and, although unable to find a place for a specific Collection work in his 'Top 30', he does include work by four of our Collection artists: Albert Herbert, *Elijah Being Fed by a Raven*, 1992 (Image 7); Norman Adams, *The Golden Crucifixion*, 1993 (Image 18); the Ceri Richards watercolour sketch for the altarpiece mentioned above (Image 23) and Nicholas Mynheer *The Spirit descends to live with us*, 2003 (Image 25) in Worcester College Chapel Choir, Oxford. Herbert's painting, where the scene is overshadowed by a large, black cloud, reflects a world seemingly in dire straits, which seems to fit rather aptly with what we ourselves have been experiencing in recent times.

Overall, a compact little volume that I would heartily recommend.

The Editor

THE ART OF FAITH

BBC Radio 4 'Sunday Worship': 16 February 2020

It seems a brave undertaking to attempt to analyse three very diverse works of art on a radio programme, perhaps even more challenging when undertaking to do so as the theme of an 'on air' Sunday morning church service! Here Ben Quash, Professor of Christianity and the Arts at King's College, London - and a name familiar to many within the world of contemporary religious art - presented a reflection embracing three contrasting, creative works by Tracey Emin, Jake Lever and Stephen Owen. Tracey Emin is a name known to most observers of contemporary art, Lever and Owen less so, yet all three were presenting here with installations that made a real impact. And it seemed to work, although in fairness, probably only really fully appreciated once listeners had taken the further opportunity to access the BBC website to view the three works in focus for themselves.

Professor Quash reflected upon the impact made by Tracey Emin's signature work commissioned by Liverpool Cathedral as part of the significant effort to mark that city's year in focus as the European Capital of Culture 2008. *For You* is displayed just below the West Window; a pink neon sign in the artist's own 'handwriting'. This work was, in fact, the winner of the 2009 Art+Christianity Award for Art in a Religious Context. A visit to Guildford Baptist Church explored the church's new Communion Table and Lectern, designed for use in the Prayer Chapel. Designed and crafted by Stephen Owen, it deservedly won the 2019 Art+Christianity Award. Ben Quash's third choice was the stunning *Soul Boats* by Jake Lever (also shortlisted for the aforementioned 2019 Art+Christianity Award). This is a large-scale installation for Birmingham Cathedral that sweeps across the nave at some height. This was commissioned to celebrate the



From top to bottom: Stephen Owen, Communion Table and Lectern, 2016. Wood. Guildford Baptist Church; Jake Lever, *Soul Boats*, 2015-16. Birmingham Cathedral. Card and mixed media. Photo: Jake Lever; Tracey Emin, *For You*, 2008. Pink neon



cathedral's tercentenary in 2015, the artist inviting some 2,000 participants, of all ages, each to create a 'soul boat', using drawing, painting, collage and writing, to reflect upon their own personal journey through life.

The Sunday Service experience was certainly enhanced by the inclusion

of the auditory experience of using supporting musical pieces by the likes of Edward Elgar ('Sospiri'), 'Benedictus' from the 'Armed Man' by Karl Jenkins, and Stormzy's 'Blinded By Your Grace', sung by The Kingdom Choir.

The Editor

FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2021

13 March -11 April (tbc)

'For All People'

Bewdley, Worcestershire

Wyre Forest Gallery, Bewdley Museum, Load Street, Bewdley, DY12 2AE
Contact: Jim Ineson: 01299 405645

June-July (Provisional)

Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit

An Artwork Trail, embracing a number of local churches, linked with celebrating Coventry as the UK City of Culture 2021

Rejuvenation Pause Update: Ann Sumner, Chair of the Collection reports on the appointment of consultants, Matassa Toffolo

Following the report on the conservation programme, we have acted upon a further recommendation of the Procedural Review and appointed Freda Matassa and Julia Toffolo of Matassa Toffolo Ltd as consultant collection registrars for a seven-month period.

They will be carrying out an audit of our transport cases, arranging new ones as necessary, and reviewing our loans administration procedures and hanging arrangements, as well as ensuring that the Collection is entered onto the Collections Management System MODES. They will be supporting the upcoming Bewdley exhibition and helping us plan for the exciting opportunities with exhibitions in Coventry in 2021.

Freda Matassa was a former Head of Collections Management at Tate London and Julia Toffolo was formerly Deputy Director at the UK Government Art Collection. We are really pleased to have made this exciting appointment following a full interview process and look forward to working with Freda and Julia.

For more information see www.Matassa-Toffolo.com

We are delighted to enjoy the support of our Honorary Patrons: Revd the Lord Leslie Griffiths of Burry Port; the Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Conference; the Very Revd Nick Bury and Mr Phil Allison.

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Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of the Holy Communion*, 1963, seen in Leicester Cathedral in the summer of 2019, hanging adjacent to the ambulatory where the newly constructed tomb of Richard III is situated.

This, our largest painting within the Collection, has recently undergone some necessary conservation work by Ruth Bubb. While, by definition, this is neither a representational nor abstract piece, it can be described as a symbolic, figurative exploration of the central mysteries of the Church and Christianity. Photo: Ann Sumner

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

*'Art is a continuum,
not a revolution...'*

ANTHONY GORMLEY - talking about the painstaking restoration of Notre Dame to its former glory, following the devastating fire of April 2019.

(By a quirk of fate, an iconic work of Gormley's - his famed *Spire* sculpture, situated in San Francisco's Presidio National Park, also suffered significant fire damage in June of this year. Gormley's response: '*Spire* is still standing and is still very beautiful. It now seems more rooted to its place, in its natural setting of Presidio, than ever before'.)