

# NEWSLETTER

NO.15 — SPRING 2016

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



*Enhancing the Collection: Our New Acquisitions*

*The St. Edmund Hall Ceri Richards Altarpiece*

*Dr. Jonathan Koestlé-Cate on Contemporary Art and Sacred Places*

## DEAR FRIEND

Once again, it gives me great pleasure to bring you the first Newsletter of 2016. Our dedicated production team at Cultureshock Media continue to do a marvellous job for us, as I'm sure you will agree. They are currently working hard on the 2015 Annual Report which you should be receiving (electronically via MailChimp in the majority of cases) within a couple of months.

We have no Exhibition Reports to feature in this edition although, of course, the Collection can currently be viewed in the city of Lincoln. It then moves on to Ealing prior to a lengthy summer stay in the popular seaside resort of Llandudno. The plan is to complete the year with an exhibition in Bath, a World Heritage site, when Bath Abbey will be showing an extensive number of works.

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## THE COLLECTION ON FILM

Friends who have been with us for the past few years may recall that those responsible for hosting the Collection in Preston, in 2012, put together some delightful footage. This highlighted the part played by the Methodist Modern Art Collection in that year's City's Guild Celebrations. A substantial part of the Collection was on display, under the title 'Visible Faith', at St. Peter's Art Centre, Lancaster University.

Those of you who regularly visit our website will, no doubt, already have taken the opportunity to view a similar, recent initiative; an excellent short film that was produced ahead of the visit of the Collection to Lincoln where it is currently on exhibition at the Cathedral and 'The Collection'. Well worth five minutes of your time, if you have not already done so.

We are delighted to confirm that while the Collection is at Bath Abbey, over the month of October, we shall be engaging the services of an experienced team of documentary film makers. They will put together an enduring record of the impact that the Collection makes on its travels; a valuable archive that could, in the future, be a means of promoting the Collection to an even wider audience. It would also be made available to prospective exhibition curators and their organising committees. Our ever-helpful team from Cultureshock Media will mastermind the production and have secured the services of Tim Marlow to present this documentary. Tim is currently Director of Artistic Programmes at the Royal Academy of Arts and is a highly regarded writer and broadcaster who has worked extensively for the BBC, C4, C5 and, most recently, for Sky Arts.



Front cover: Ghislaine Howard,  
panel from the artist's *365 Series*  
Photo: Ghislaine Howard

Above: Richard Bavin (b. 1957),  
*The Empty Tomb*, 2012. Watercolour  
From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

# Enhancing the Collection

## OUR NEW ACQUISITIONS

Occasionally the Collection is offered works; the immediate response is to say that the Trustees do not accept donations. This is a necessary defence against the Collection losing the quality and focus for which it has become recognised. However, in recent months we have broken with this usual default position and been delighted to enhance the Collection with a number of gifts.

First, the generous donor of our Clive Hicks-Jenkins (b.1951) work *Christ writes in the Dust – Woman taken in Adultery* 2011, has expressed a wish that we should also now have the small, companion grisaille in oils; essentially a preliminary small work showing the male figure of Christ. A second new work, a watercolour painting by Richard Bavin, *The Empty Tomb*, 2012, has also been donated in memory of our late trustee, Geoff Cornell. Richard Bavin is a well-known Herefordshire artist with a reputation for capturing mood, light and atmosphere in his paintings of the landscape in and around his home county and the border country between Wales and England. He also makes occasional forays into portraying elements of the Gospel Stories and we are singularly fortunate in having acquired this particular work from the 'Art of the Crucifixion and Eastertide' exhibition held at the Monnow Valley Arts Centre in 2013.

We have also received the generous donation of a small watercolour painting – *Crucifixion*, dating from 1988 by

Collection artist, the late Michael Edmonds (1926–2014), given by the artist's family in recognition of his historic links with the Collection.

A further new work, identified as *People at the Stable*, 1962, a print from one of his Nativity Series, by Sadao Watanabe (1913–96) has also been acquired. This will, together with our other Watanabe work – the ever-popular *Christ enters Jerusalem*, make an interesting pair. The subject matter of Watanabe's prints is almost exclusively the gospel rendered in the mingei (folk art) approach. Influenced by Buddhist figure prints, Watanabe was dedicated to translating biblical narrative into traditional Japanese settings, with key characters often featured wearing kimonos.

Again, as regards potential gifts, we sometimes have to say – tell us more. This was the case some ten years ago when we were approached at the start of an exhibition by someone who had a quantity of Philip Haggren prints: his uncle had been Haggren's executor. We were then offered a choice, and the Trustees felt that these would, indeed, make a suitable adjunct to the Eric Gill's *Annunciation*, already an important component of the Collection. Haggren (1890–1988) was much influenced by Gill and actually moved to Ditchling, and later to Capel-y-ffin, to work with the master. At that stage the David Jones woodblock for the print of the *Three*



Philip Haggren, *Madonna and Child*  
From the Methodist Modern  
Art Collection

*Kings* had not been acquired – together they make a significant group to show the work of one of the influential strands in British art and culture in the early twentieth century, that simplicity and strength in line and figure which can be seen particularly in typefaces.

After some delay, the six prints acquired have now been framed to match that of the Gill. Peter Forsaith terms these the *Stations of the Nativity*. A further frame awaits a print by David Jones in the hope that the Collection acquires one.

*The Editor is indebted to our Custodian, Peter Forsaith, for providing much of the background information here.*

# The Ceri Richards Altarpiece

ST. EDMUND HALL, OXFORD

Following a Trustees' Meeting in Oxford last June I, together with fellow trustee Graham Kent, had occasion to visit the Chapel at St. Edmund Hall, to view their very fine Ceri Richards altarpiece; an opportunity not generally available to the public at large. It was, indeed, a wonderful opportunity to compare this painting with the Methodist Modern Art Collection's own little gouache on paper with its pencilled notation at the base. This would strongly suggest that it was intended as a study for the altarpiece.

The altarpiece was, in fact, a commission, the result of invitations to five very different artists to submit their proposals for a painting on this subject. Interestingly, the shortlist included two other artists well known to those acquainted with the Methodist Modern Art Collection, namely Roy de Maistre and Theyre Lee-Elliott.

Ceri Richards is, of course, offering us a modern interpretation of the famous portrayal of the *Supper at Emmaus* 1601–2, by Caravaggio; both artists taking their subject from the famous passage in Luke's gospel, 24, 13–33, where the risen Christ meets two disciples, as fellow travellers, on the road to Emmaus. They walk with him, but do not recognise him.

Arriving at Emmaus, they invite their mysterious companion on the journey to stay the night. At supper, as Christ breaks bread, he is suddenly revealed to the two astonished disciples, but then he vanishes.

Caravaggio invests his pictures with a sense of powerful drama by means of his handling of light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*). The Richards' painting however, dependent as it is upon contrasting blocks of colour, achieves the same feeling of fleeting tension and surprise, but in a very different way.

The painting is divided into segments by a yellow cross, comprising a vertical shaft of light and the horizontal supper table. Christ is positioned against the cross, and he seems to loom out from its light. The reaction of the disciples is two-fold. In the foreground, the disciple in blue sees Christ in a flash of inspiration or insight. His colleague seems slower to comprehend. His hands are clasped as if in prayer, and his apprehension of Christ's presence seems more considered and cautious.

Perhaps these are two allegories for the way we can perceive Christ's presence in our lives today: sometimes with dramatic and instant perception and sometimes after deep and prayerful consideration.

Against the background of both the Caravaggio and Richards images perhaps I can share with you a beautifully written piece that I recently came across –

'On the long walk home from Jerusalem you are simply overcome with grief. You lost a friend just a few days ago. Not only a friend, but also your leader, your beloved teacher. And he didn't simply die; he was executed in the most torturous, shameful way. You've seen a lot in your lifetime, but the memories of Jesus' ordeal are forever branded into your memory. At least your friend is with you – both of you followed the teacher, with equal conviction and enthusiasm. So you bear your grief together now. As you walk and walk through the long, rainy afternoon, you encourage better memories – of all that the teacher said, of the people you know whom Jesus healed. You can't seem to stop talking.

Then, quite suddenly, a stranger joins you while you are still several miles from home. Within moments, it's clear that this person has no idea what has been going on in Jerusalem. With great heaviness and some annoyance, you fill in the barest details for him. All you have to say is 'crucifixion' and anyone in Roman territories knows exactly what you're talking about.

*‘Suddenly, it is clear who this man is, eating at your table. You look into his face – and then he vanishes...’*



But the stranger engages in the conversation with great energy. He must be some kind of teacher, because he launches into an explanation of how Jesus' fate is actually a good thing and the proper fulfilment of what was predicted long ago. This is fascinating – you and your friend are all ears. Before you know it, you've arrived at your home and it's getting dark. You invite the stranger to have supper with you and also offer him a bed, rather than him risk injury or other misfortune alone on the road at night. Also you want to hear more of what he has to say. He graciously accepts your offer.

The first thing you do upon entering the house is prepare the evening meal. The three of you sit down to eat. Then the stranger takes the bread and blesses it. You feel a strange energy move through you and hover in the room. *Where have you heard this sort of blessing before?...* The stranger hands each of you a piece of the bread. You take it, and memory washes over you – of a hillside with thousands of hungry people. Of a few loaves and fishes being transformed in an instant to miraculous abundance.

Suddenly, it is clear who this man is, eating at your table. You look into his face – and then he vanishes...

The room still feels strangely warm, and there are waves of that energy, like lightning sparking all over the room. You finish your meal but then you look at each other and know what you must do. You head back to Jerusalem to share this astonishing news'.

Above left: Trustee Graham Kent interprets the detail in the Ceri Richards altarpiece in the Chapel of St. Edmund Hall

Above right: Ceri Richards (1903–71) *The Supper at Emmaus*, 1958

# Life Member In Focus

**BRIAN SHARP**



It must have been in the mid-1960s that I first came across 'The Church and the Artist' archive of paintings. The first recorded presentation of the Collection was to the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston in 1963. Prior to that hanging, however, I am fairly certain that the (then) Collection was shown at the annual meeting of the Methodist Pen and Camera Club at Willersley Castle, overlooking the Derwent Valley in the Derbyshire Peak District. The presentation at Willersley was my first contact with the initial core of the current Collection. Little was I to know that it was, in later years, to become part of my daily life.

My association with the Collection moved on almost thirty years when the Reverend Christopher Hughes Smith, then General Secretary of the Methodist Division of Education and Youth, and I were invited to visit the late John and Sheila Gibbs in their home in Penarth, and it was whilst we were there that John suggested that the Collection should be lodged in Chester House, Muswell Hill, where the Division of Education and Youth was located. Following John's suggestion Chris and I agreed to the commission, after all who were we to deny the request? John was the Senior Treasurer of the Division and a Past Vice President of the Methodist Conference! It has to be said, however, that during our return to London both Chris and I wondered what we had let the Division into. Not only were we to be custodians of the Collection, but also responsible for enabling it to be displayed throughout the Connexion.

It was during this period that I was responsible for the Collection on a daily basis, and it became integral to my life. Frequently the paintings were being packed up and transported to a variety of venues in order to fulfil John Gibbs' request that they should be widely seen. It was during this period, also, that I liaised with Roger Wollen to produce the first catalogue of the Collection. Roger is the son of the late Reverend Douglas Wollen who was instrumental in obtaining the early paintings that formed the core of the Collection. When the Collection was not out on display elsewhere it was hung in the entrance hall and main corridor of Chester House. It is in this context that, inviting me to contribute this item, Bob Williams asked me to nominate a painting under the 'Trustees' Choice' banner.

So to my choice... I have indicated that when not out in the provinces the Collection was hung in Chester House. At one end of a long corridor there hung Edward Burra's watercolour painting, *The Pool of Bethesda* 1951–2. This for me is a powerful painting to be viewed from a distance: haunting, enigmatic, challenging, and oh, so telling of the biblical story. Not a painting I could live with in my home, but one in which I find spiritual depth.

*Brian Sharp deservedly enjoys the status of Honorary Life Member of our Friends' Group. As you have read, his interest in the Collection goes back many years and it was his key role at Muswell Hill that initially led to the now well-established pattern of showing at some four or five venues each year. Furthermore, Brian's generous support for the work of the Friends, since our 2008 launch, is very much appreciated by the Managing Trustees. Ed.*

Top left: Brian Sharp

Top right: Edward Burra's *The Pool of Bethesda*, seen at the 2010 'Wallspace' exhibition in London

# Contemporary Art and Sacred Places



Iain McKillop's Lady  
Chapel Altarpiece in  
Gloucester Cathedral

*With our recent focus on Chichester in mind, readers might find it interesting to read the full text, recently made available by Dr. Koestlé-Cate, of the lecture that he gave at Bath University back in 2012 (See Newsletter No. 9; March 2013). You may also recall that he made a telling contribution to the short film produced at Lincoln, to advertise the Art Collection's visit to the Cathedral and Usher Gallery earlier this year.*

The twentieth century story of modern art and the church is often thought to have begun with France and Germany, where the destruction of two world wars provided ample opportunities for a renewal of church building and reconstruction in a modern idiom. The rebuilding programme

made necessary by the massive destruction of German cities in particular meant that church reconstruction became an important part of national recovery. Along with the construction of new, modern buildings, like the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin, built alongside the ruins of its predecessor, the repair of bomb-damaged churches in France and Germany led, above all, to a renaissance in modern stained glass design. As recently as 2007, Cologne Cathedral unveiled a new window replacing one destroyed by allied bombing with a dramatic, though controversial design, by Gerhard Richter.

This development was also true of England of course but on a much more modest scale. Nevertheless, one of the great post-war reconstruction projects was that of Coventry

cathedral, a building that, for all its liturgical limitations, was conceived as an holistic vision combining modern architecture and modern art from the very beginning. Basil Spence's express desire to unify art and architecture into a single visual and spatial concept is almost unique in this respect. The plan to incorporate a great tapestry, for example, is evident from the earliest of Spence's sketches, acting as a constant aesthetic marker throughout the process and evolution of the cathedral's design, and resulting in the central showpiece of the cathedral.

The other well-known example of an ecclesiastical project that combined modern architecture with modern art is of course Liverpool's Catholic Cathedral, affectionately (or is it disparagingly?) called 'Paddy's Wigwam' in remembrance of the largely Irish labour that built it. This cathedral was conceived in the new liturgical style that emerged after Vatican II, the church council that attempted to modernise the Catholic Church in the mid-1960s, to bring it into alignment with modern culture. Hence its circular form with a central altar, and its impressive deployment of abstract imagery, notably John Piper's dramatic corona of stained glass that crowns the building. Along with Graham Sutherland's tapestry, Piper was another of the artists employed to such dramatic effect at Coventry. His baptistery window must be one of the great pieces of church art in this country.

It was in the 1940s however that the birth of modern art for the church really began in the UK, in a small parish church in Northampton, under the guiding eye of one of the most significant patrons of modern art and music for the church: Walter Hussey. Hussey managed to persuade Henry Moore and later Graham Sutherland to produce works for this small parochial church. Perhaps even more significantly, he managed to convince his parishioners to accept them, many of whom, though initially voicing their antipathy to the works, ended up defending them in no uncertain terms against hostile criticism from the press and the wider church. Hussey, of course, went



on to develop further his artistic patronage at Chichester Cathedral, where again pieces by Piper, Sutherland, Chagall and others were invited into the church, in this case an eleventh century rather than a Victorian building.

Though there are earlier exceptions, the church's serious engagement with contemporary art can be dated to the beginning of the 1990s, when a number of significant commissions coincided with a general sea change in attitudes towards, and the visibility of, contemporary art.

The decade of the 1990s began with a major exhibition in Lincoln Cathedral, called 'The Journey', one of the first occasions in which various works of art were arranged throughout a cathedral, utilising its various spaces to generate a dynamic dialogue between the works and their context, something that has since become a commonplace practice. But it was two commissions in the mid 1990s that became benchmarks for the way art could be employed in the church. Many of you are no doubt familiar with Antony Gormley's sculpted figure in the crypt of Winchester Cathedral. Originally intended as a temporary visitor to the crypt it became a permanent element of the cathedral when it was felt to be such a good fit for the space. Here was an artwork that, though unfamiliar in its unconventionality at first, soon became a valued element of the cathedral. Art could be set in a contemporary idiom yet find a place within an ancient and sacred environment. *Sound II*, as it is called, is a contemplative piece in keeping with the stillness and solitude of the space, but also dramatically resonant with the peculiarities of the crypt as a space that periodically floods, since the figure holds water in its cupped hands.

But it was at Durham cathedral that the parameters for church-based art really began to be challenged, when in 1996 Bill Viola produced a specially commissioned video work called *The Messenger* for the cathedral. *The Messenger* is very simple in its narrative. On a large dark screen a small luminous, abstract form shimmers and undulates against a blue-black void. As it grows larger it begins to coalesce into a definable human shape, illuminated and rising towards us from beneath the surface of a body of water.

This notion of the sacred as an element of the human condition rather than simply the province of a religious frame of mind has come to play a highly significant role in the story of contemporary art for the church. Many have argued that an ambivalence of sacred experience becomes acute when art interacts with the fabric and life of these buildings, especially an art that does not necessarily subscribe to the particular faith tradition represented by that building.



Antony Gormley, *Close V*. Cast Iron.  
Seen in Gloucester Cathedral's  
'Crucible' exhibition in 2010

Opposite: Graham Sutherland, *Noli  
me Tangere*, 1960, with Geoffrey  
Clarke's *Candlesticks*, 1960-62, on  
either side of the altar in the South  
Aisle Chapel of Chichester Cathedral

Because of the various potential difficulties associated with bringing contemporary art into the church, we might expect it to be subject to certain restrictions and defined criteria. To this end, several of Britain's cathedral chapters have, in fact, introduced arts policies in recent years in order to ratify what has until now been a rather piecemeal affair. However, although arts policies are designed to facilitate the use of art, they can also impede it.

Typical of the kind of limitations placed upon artists is the following set of criteria recently demanded by a senior clergyman and advocate for art in churches, criteria reflected in many of these policies. He outlined three essential qualities that he felt had to be taken into account or, to use his term, negotiated, in any commission for the church: aesthetic quality, clear Christian symbolism and accessibility.

The first condition may be subsumed into subjective criteria of taste, however much voices within the arts, media or the church call for certain objective standards to be upheld.

The second condition barely seems to apply at all based on many of the successful precedents of ecclesiastical art of the past two decades. Christian symbolism is often absent, and when it is present, implicitly or explicitly, is often far from clear. This lack of clarity is compounded by a frequently lamented lack of visual and symbolic literacy among the lay public (where a common complaint concerning the first condition is that it is compromised by a lack of visual sensitivity or education on the part of the clergy).

Let's move on to the third condition of accessibility, which is an extension of the second. What is required of a work of art for it to be accessible, and to whom must it be accessible? Does

this imply easy, perhaps universal, access to a work? Does it infer that at some level everyone should be able to appreciate it? Isn't there a sense in which at times accessibility takes second place to mystery, uncertainty or complexity? A work of art may be initially accessible on one level but guarded on another, requiring effort, patience or determination on the part of the viewer.

If we take the last four winning entries of the Art and Christianity Enquiry (ACE) Award for Art in a Religious Context, a recognised award for works that are judged to be not only significant works of art in their own right but specifically so within their ecclesiastical setting, then we will discover that these criteria, although undoubtedly widely supported, hardly apply at all.

2011's winners, two windows by James Hugonin and Anne Vibeke Mou for the parish church of St John's in Healey, certainly work with a familiar ecclesiastical aesthetic, but in unfamiliar ways. The commemorative purpose for which they were commissioned is also manifestly clear, each window accompanied by a plaque bearing the names of the churchwarden's parents. In each case, however, no clear Christian symbolism is evident nor do they necessarily invite accessibility. One is motivated by diagrammatic abstraction, the other informed by minimalism.

In 2012 David Mach, a self-confessed atheist, exhibited one of his signature wire coat-hanger sculptures of the crucifixion in London's Southwark Cathedral during Lent. Whatever you might think of this as a piece of devotional art, the argument has been made that such works 'challenge the assumption that only artists of faith

# *'It may be that we have entered a new phase for ecclesiastical art... What language, form or direction will it take?'*

can produce religious art.' Indeed, it is said that it can sometimes be the artist without faith who does the better job, unencumbered by expectations of conforming to the standard interpretations of either the church or the history of art. However deeply held this view may be, based on earlier exemplars like Moore or Sutherland, it is not difficult to raise objections to its premises.

Personally, I suspect that Mach's religious images are unlikely to have the kind of long-term religious significance of a Henry Moore, John Piper or Graham Sutherland.

Contrary to those who continue to bemoan the strained relationship of art and the church, and complain that ours is a culture in which 'aesthetic veneration has replaced religious devotion,' many might justifiably take the view that a thriving relationship of art and church is clearly discernible, and a place for contemporary art within the church now more or less assured. Ironically, I would argue that one of the challenges facing the church today is, if anything, to resist the temptation to take every opportunity to fill our cathedrals and churches with art. We should take heed of those who advise a kind of cautious optimism regarding the current climate for ecclesiastically-sited art, lest our churches and cathedrals become simply another cultural venue for the display of exhibitions rather than using art to enhance the life of the church.

This is particularly tempting for the Church of England, which has had to confront the legacy of an iconoclastic tradition that still scars its facades. In a comparable fashion to the war damage that has initiated so many ecclesiastical projects in France and Germany, empty niches and defaced statues all bear the imprint of an iconoclastic past that is our aesthetic present, the template within which we operate. Although I believe the church should not be unduly hasty in refilling these spaces, since for every effective work of art, experience has shown that others detract rather than add to the quality of the space. Two singularly successful examples are by David Holgate and Iain McKillop. Holgate's *Mother Julian and Saint Benedict*, on the front façade of Norwich Cathedral has sensitively and evocatively filled niches that have remained empty for some 500 years with two prominent local figures. At Gloucester, McKillop's triad of paintings, *Crucifixion, Pieta and Resurrection*, 2004, inserted into a

reredos vandalised by Cromwell's troops during the English Civil War are equally remarkable. The paintings manage to blend almost seamlessly into their background, and at the same time reflect the mutilated aesthetic quality of the reredos in their expressionistic style.

In the past a progressive role for art within the church relied upon the patronage, and indeed belligerent determination, of particular individuals. This in an age when modern art did not enjoy the kind of popular appreciation it has today but rather was subject to intense scepticism and considerable hostility. Each successful installation was seen as an important achievement, therefore, and another step along the path towards a more radical, prominent and enlightened role for art within the life of the modern church. Today's ecclesiastical arts programme exists within a very different cultural climate, one that reflects a massive cultural shift in the visibility and acceptability of contemporary art within the wider culture.

If the 1990s was a period of testing the waters, of experiment, uncertainty and risk-taking, building on the legacy of Coventry, St. Matthew's and Chichester, the 2000s was a period of marked expansion and perhaps consolidation, as cathedrals increasingly became viable sites for contemporary art. My suspicion is that we have arrived at a delicate juncture in the development of the church's relationship with contemporary art. Indeed, it may be that we have in fact entered a new phase for ecclesiastical art. In which case we should be asking, what language, form or direction will it take?

— Jonathan Koestlé-Cate, *Address at Bath University*

# A NEW LOCATION FOR MICHAEL EDMONDS' CERAMIC MURAL AT LLANDOUGH



The Penarth Times

Enthusiasm remained undampened at the unveiling of an historic outdoor mural on a wet day last December. The site was Llandough University Hospital in the Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales. The artist was Michael Edmonds, another of whose works, *The Cross over the city*, is a treasured piece in the Methodist Collection.

The Llandough ceramic was originally created by Edmonds in 1956. It was his tribute to the work carried out by medical staff at the University Hospital in eliminating pneumoconiosis, a lung disease which affected many miners.

I was especially pleased to be present at the event, having been involved with the hospital's pulmonary ward in recent months but unable to see the mural during my visits as it was away for restoration.

New lighting, part of the painstaking restoration, showed to advantage in the dull weather the story told by the coloured tiles – miners becoming injured at work, doctors conducting examinations, a miner showering to indicate the use of water to prevent lung disease, and patients being x-rayed at the Pneumoconiosis Research Unit. Edmonds had worked as a Bevin Boy himself in the mines at Bedwas during the Second World War.

First donated by the South Wales branch of the National Union of Mine-workers, the mural was chosen from many entries to commemorate the Miners' Treatment Centre, an initiative of Aneurin Bevan who was Minister of Health at the time.

The nine-metre long work was originally built onto the medical research unit, founded in 1945, with 4000 steel girders donated by the National Coal Board. Now the Health Board has moved the tiled mural to a prime location at the new entrance area to Llandough Hospital.

The unveiling of the newly restored mural was undertaken by Michael's daughter, Jane Edmonds, along with Mike Jones, Head of Unison. She thanked the Health Board and the University Hospital, saying: 'Dad would have been absolutely thrilled that so many people coming to the hospital will be able to enjoy his mural, both now and in generations to come.'

Referring to the tiled mural, in his joint memoirs with Peter Wakelin, Michael Edmonds wrote, 'Across its nine-metre span, depictions of work underground merge into scenes of the medical battle with pneumoconiosis in an expression of both courage and hope.'

Peter Wakelin, also present at the unveiling, added: 'It is hard to imagine that any artist, certainly not one without personal experience of coal mining and intimate knowledge of its consequences, could have produced a more heartfelt and resonant interpretation of the subject.'

— Sarah Middleton, Collection Trustee

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND ART

**BBC RADIO 4 – SUNDAY**  
*Sunday 27 December, 2015*

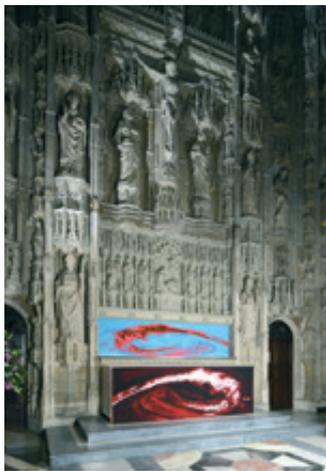


Photo supplied

Maggi Hambling, *Wave*. The Altarpiece Tapestry in Winchester Cathedral

On the final Sunday of 2015, BBC Radio 4 served up something of a treat when the early morning episode of ‘Sunday’ took an in-depth look at the consanguinity between religion and art.

Of the significant artists profiled in the programme, two given special focus are established favourites within the Methodist Modern Art Collection: Ghislaine Howard and Maggi Hambling.

The programme was presented by writer and journalist Cole Moreton. We were thrilled to hear Collection Trustee Meryl Doney taking part in a discussion about the place of art in cathedrals. She was joined by the Very Reverend Peter Bradley, Dean of Sheffield Cathedral, currently hosting artworks as part of ‘Going Public’, a city-wide exhibition of works from private collections.

Ghislaine Howard has recently been working with Blackburn Cathedral – her *365 Series*, previously shown in Chester Cathedral, a project initially inspired by her presence in London on 7 July 2005 and being caught up in the chaos and anxiety of that dreadful day. Initially conceived as a small painting (every one on a 6×8 inch panel) for each day of the year; all, in turn, capturing some element of the terrible things human beings do to each other and our ability, in some measure, to give form to the sheer fragility of human experience. Her painting reproduced on our front cover is currently on exhibition within the Manchester Lenten PassionArt Trail and, as with all the companion works, is untitled. This image conveys strong feelings of grief and compassion. Is the woman perhaps one of those gathered at the foot of the cross? The *365 Series* Catalogue text reads – ‘Perhaps in their abundance, these paintings do something similar, bear witness to horror but recognise our ability to picture that horror and in doing so, perhaps, move towards some kind of possible resolution’.

Ghislaine is currently working on seven very large paintings on the theme *Seven Works of Mercy*, very much a follow-up to the *365 Series*. These paintings will form the crux of a future exhibition.

Recalling that the Maggi Hambling painting held within the Collection carries the title: *Good Friday: Walking on Water*, 2006, it was of particular interest to hear her elaborate on the origin of this, to some, mildly confusing title, perhaps best summarised in the text used in our Collection Guide –

‘The reference in the title to Good Friday is explained by the fact that for nearly 25 years, each Good Friday, the artist has taken it upon herself to produce a painting in memory of her late mother where she is striving to capture the perfect image of life and death at one and the same moment. This particular painting was her 2006 contribution to the series. The Good Friday paintings were shown at Canterbury Cathedral in 2010 as part of an ‘Easter Images Exhibition’. Faced with a choice of two works from the series, the Managing Trustees chose this one – perhaps influenced by the decision being made in the week following the 2011 Tsunami in Japan’.

It was also fascinating to hear Maggi talking about her design for a two part altarpiece for Winchester Cathedral, tapestries entitled *Wave* installed in 2013. Commissioned in France, these were woven by Ateliers Pinton, a specialist workshop in France, with historic links to Picasso and Sutherland, among others. Meticulous attention was given to matching the striking colours of her original motif.

This Radio 4 programme also reported on the recently held Brighton Conference on Art, Spirituality and Ritual where the prevailing theme set out to explore the question – ‘Does the recent surge in public interest in art address a need in us, previously met by the Church?’ One suspects that a lively debate ensued!

All in all, a really fascinating 45 minutes’ listening. We could do with more of the same.

# ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD...

## THE PAINTED PARISH

*The Mall Galleries, London*  
15 – 20 December, 2015

This was, visually, a delightful exhibition of work, by members of the Federation of British Artists, which set out to explore the rich variety of Britain's churches, chapels and cathedrals. In a mix of styles and assorted media, the work aimed to examine notions of time and place, life and loss, as well as faith and worship.

The exhibition catalogue contained an excellent foreword, written by author and scholar Dr. Timothy Brittain-Catlin. With his kind permission I use a portion of his text below –

'The first thing to note about the parish church and art – and, indeed, the art of the parish church – is the sheer range of it... The fabric of a building conveys its age; the style of it conveys the interests of those that built it. The disposition of its iconography within tells you the stories that its parsons and its churchwardens wanted us to learn; and the execution of it is a lesson in the arts of the day. The monuments tell us about the people who lived in the parish, the epitaphs their preoccupations... And, of course, the despoliations of reformers of any generation tell a further story. So when artists come to represent these things, they are telling a complex story of layer upon layer upon layer. It comes as no surprise that modernist artists and writers alike have found in the parish church a sense of scale-less luminance that evades other buildings'.

Alastair Redgrift, Exhibitions Manager at the Mall Galleries, comments – 'This exhibition picks up the theme 'post-Piper' by showcasing works that portray Britain's churches, chapels and cathedrals (plus monasteries, priories and abbeys). It is proof, indeed, that sacred spaces continue to inspire artists aplenty'.

Works that particularly caught my eye included Matthew Draper's pastel drawing, *Nocturne with Rain, West from the Shard*. This evoked images of Monet's and Whistler's innumerable paintings of river and bridge scenes along the River Thames, although this painting is surely a 'first' from this elevation with its undertones of 'to the glory of both God & mammon'. The inferred comparison of the respective achievements of two of the finest architects the world has seen – Christopher Wren and Renzo Piano, is there for all to see.

I was also very much taken with Alice Hall's *Morning Light across the Nave, Westminster* (oil), 2015, Peter Vincent's *Peepshow St. Pancras, Arlington* (pastel), 2015 and Richard Plincke's semi-abstract wash drawing *A Walk around Salisbury Cathedral* 2010.

## VIA CRUCIS

*Exeter Cathedral*  
10 February – 27 March, 2016  
*Walcot Chapel Gallery, Bath*  
14 – 27 March, 2016

I am delighted to report that Caroline Waterlow, one of our Friends, who is a successful practising artist, will be showing her new work, *Via Crucis*, in Exeter Cathedral throughout Lent 2016.

The fourteen new images feature elements of the Scriptorial Stations, first introduced by Pope John Paul II in 1995. These follow the gospel accounts of the Passion. Whereas the traditional Stations emphasise the suffering path of Jesus, the medieval Arma Christi imagery focus on the objects and tools associated with the story of the Passion. The works are all mixed media images on paper, featuring charcoal, metal leaf, ink and pastel.

Caroline works out of Bath, where there will be a concurrent show of prints of her *Via Crucis* series showing at the Walcot Chapel Gallery.



Caroline Waterlow,  
*Crowing Cockerel –*  
*Stations of the Cross IV*

Photo supplied

## DIVINE BEAUTY

*Palazzo Strozzi, Florence*

*24 September 2015 – 24 January 2016*

I know of one Friend who was weighing up the logistics of taking a winter trip to Florence specifically to see this particular exhibition in the rather wonderful Palazzo Strozzi! There may have been others?

The exhibition featured over 100 works in another show that set about exploring the relationship between art and religion over the period 1850–c.1950. Thus a fair number of the post-1900 works, by the best known Italian and international artists alike, would resonate with admirers of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. The Palazzo Strozzi, which incorporates the Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozziina (CCCS) specialises in showing thematic exhibitions which reflect trends in contemporary culture. The challenge posed by its Renaissance architecture is taken as a stimulus to create a dialogue between past, present – and, indeed, the future.

The exhibition embraced a number of ‘schools’ of work, from the Post-Impressionism of Vincent Van Gogh to Edvard Munch’s Expressionism and the Symbolism of Odilon Redon at the turn of the century. The Fauvist style of Georges Rouault and even the Surrealism of Graham Sutherland were also on view.

Among the many fine works on show was an early Picasso, an oil on paper entitled *Christ on the Cross*, 1896–7, from the Museu Picasso in Barcelona; extraordinarily mature work for a 15 year old and a portent of a new talent arriving on the scene. Other significant works included Van Gogh’s *Pieta*, 1889, Munch’s somewhat disturbing lithograph *Madonna II*, 1902, Redon’s *Flight into Egypt*, 1903, and a brutal *Crucifixion* of 1914 by Max Ernst, heavy with portent of what was to overtake Europe that same year. A distinctly English flavour was introduced by way of two works by Stanley Spencer – *The Last Supper*, 1920 and *Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem*, 1921. Marc Chagall’s *White Crucifixion* of

1938 was, to many, the highlight of the show, not least because it represented a brave denunciation by a Jewish artist of yet another looming threat, to Europe and beyond, from the Nazi jackboot. Apparently this work is a favourite with Pope Francis. The 1940s were represented by Otto Dix’s *Christ and Veronica: Station VI*, 1943 and Sutherland’s *Study for the Crucifixion*, 1947. While a number of works were on loan from galleries and museums worldwide, by far the majority had made the relatively short journey from the Vatican Museum. Among these was an oil painting, *Ecce Homo*, 1952, by Georges Rouault, utilising a strong palette and executed with his trademark broad brush strokes.



The Palazzo Strozzi, completed in 1504

**DAVID JONES:  
VISION AND MEMORY**

*Pallant House, Chichester*

*24 October 2015 – 21 February 2016*

David Jones (1895–1974), one of the most original, imaginative artists of the twentieth century, described himself as a Londoner of Welsh and English parentage and Protestant upbringing, but of Catholic adherence. Few artists have excelled in so many different art forms; his painted inscriptions and poetry were a further extension of his artistic talents. This exhibition, showing over 80 of his works, provided a timely opportunity to re-evaluate his work.

Age 26, David Jones joined Eric Gill and his community of craftsmen at Ditchling. It was here that he revealed a great talent for engraving, initially working with wood and then, latterly, with copper.

Kenneth Clark is on record as describing David Jones as the greatest British watercolourist of the twentieth century. Personally, I do find it difficult to share this enthusiasm, although not for want of trying! His thinly applied washes in watercolour and gouache, typical of his style through the late 1920s and early 1930s, when he turned out a substantial body of work, are reminiscent of Cezanne. However, for me, he came right back on track in the 1950s when, having recovered from a series of serious and debilitating breakdowns, he went on to produce some undoubtedly great paintings – with *Flora in Calix Light*, 1950, from Kettle’s Yard, perhaps the finest of his ‘Chalice’ watercolours.

As with other artists of his generation, the impact of the Great War shows through in much of his work. Maimed trees and tangles of barbed wire are a recurring theme etched deep into his memory. Coming across his 1920–21 graphite and wash drawing, *Soldiers playing Dice at the Foot of the Cross*, in a contemporary setting with English Tommies in shorts and tin helmets, certainly brings one up short. Among other works on view were a couple of delightful drypoint prints of nativity scenes – *Beasts and Shepherds* c.1925 and *Nativity with Beasts and Shepherds rejoicing* 1929–30; certainly nature with a difference. More often than not his work would feature his signature Welsh pony! And, during his time at Ditchling he would invariably mark the significance of the Christmas season by producing celebratory cards, for his friends, in his favoured drypoint. For me, the highlights of this excellent exhibition were a small but wonderfully vibrant watercolour/pencil and ink image entitled *Sanctus Christus de Capel-y-ffin*, together with an exquisite little 1929 boxwood carving of a Crucifixion scene.

*(The woodblock illustrated here did not feature in the Pallant House exhibition)*



David Jones, *Three Kings*, 1925. Woodblock  
From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

# FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

**2016**

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9 April – 22 May

## **Ealing**

Ealing Green Methodist Church (in  
Ealing Trinity Circuit, W. London)  
Contact: Revd Dr Jennifer Smith,  
020 8579 8114  
jennifer.smith@methodist.org.uk

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24 June – 3 September

## **Llandudno**

St John's Methodist Church,  
53-55 Mostyn Street,  
Llandudno LL30 2NN  
Mostyn Gallery, 12 Vaughan Street,  
Llandudno LL30 1AB  
Contact: Revd Beverley Ramsden,  
01492 877799  
bev\_ramsden@hotmail.com

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3 – 31 October

## **Bath**

Bath Abbey, Bath BA1 1LT  
Contact: Revd Stephen Girling,  
01225 422462  
missioner@bathabbey.org

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**2017**

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14 January – 23 April

## **Canterbury**

Beaney Art Gallery and Museum,  
18 High Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2RA  
(in conjunction with Kent College)  
Contact: Revd Dr Paul Glass,  
01227 785204  
pglass@kentcollege.co.uk

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8 May – 8 June

## **Bury St Edmunds**

St Edmundsbury Cathedral,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1LS  
Trinity Methodist Church, Brentgovel  
Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1EB  
Revd Mark Howarth, 01284 755375  
rectornorthburyteam@btinternet.com

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June – July (tbc)

## **Haywards Heath**

Haywards Heath Methodist Church,  
Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath,  
RH16 3DN  
Contact: Nicola Sheldon, 01444 412927  
Nicola.sheldon@yahoo.co.uk

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September – Early October (tbc)

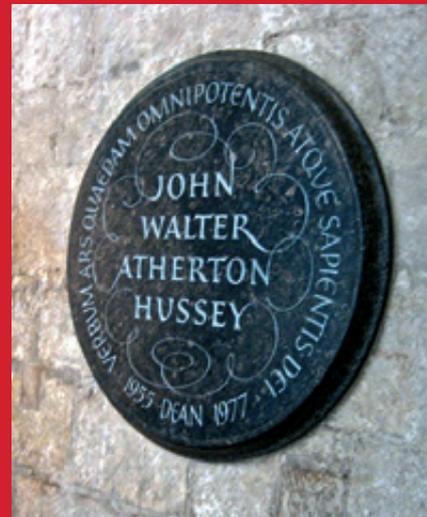
## **Farnham, Surrey**

Farnham Methodist Church  
& University for the Creative Arts  
Revd Conrad Hicks, 01252 690940  
Hicks5ireland@hotmail.com

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Late autumn or winter (tbc)

## **Hull**



The Dean Hussey Memorial Plaque,  
Chichester Cathedral

## **A THOUGHT TO LEAVE WITH YOU...**

‘The notion of the sacred as an element of the human condition rather than simply the province of a religious frame of mind has come to play a highly significant role in the story of contemporary art for the church.’

— *Jonathan Koestlé-Cate*