

NEWSLETTER

NO.22 — AUTUMN 2019
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Methodist **Modern**
Art Collection

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



The Collection visits Leicester

Conserving the Collection: An update

Mark Cazalet in Bristol

A new Frank Roper Centre in Cardiff

EDITORIAL

Dear Friend

We are pleased to report on the Collection's visit to Leicester, the last touring exhibition ahead of the planned 'Rejuvenation Pause'. In this context, I would recommend to you the delightful little publication – 'Response Poems', put together by Glenda Gibson. Full details appear in the Secretary to the Friends enclosure that accompanies this Newsletter. As you will read, the extended break in the touring programme is being put to good use. The feature on Page 3 informs you of progress made. The next opportunity to view the conserved Collection will be at Bewdley Museum, Worcestershire, in late March 2020.

Again, there are a number of articles, in the 'Elsewhere in the Art World', that I very much hope subscribing Friends will find interesting. Also, perhaps, make a note in your diary of the forthcoming Friends event, advertised for Saturday, 12 October, across two venues, Victoria Methodist Church and the RWA, next door neighbours on Whiteladies Road, Bristol.

Enjoy the read.

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Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Dr John Gibbs, the Revd Graham Kent, Ian Baker (Secretary, Friends Group), Sarah Middleton, the Revd Ruth Gee, Rebecca Gibbs, Lucy Newman Cleeve, Simon Sorokos

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PROMOTING THE COLLECTION – A RECENT EXAMPLE

A reference to a Van Gogh picture to help make a point in a sermon reminded Rachel Norris, a member of Marlow Methodist Church, of the existence of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. This prompted her to contact our Administrator, Liz Millard, to ask if a talk could be arranged as part of 'Love Marlow' described as '..... a festival of community activity, created by the people of Marlow, for the people of Marlow.' This is organised by Churches Together in the town, involves local business sponsors and annually offers a wide variety of events over two weeks in June.

This invitation was taken up by Bob Williams, our Newsletter Editor, mindful that it presented an opportunity to promote the Collection and particularly as it came at the start of the rejuvenation pause in our touring programme. An added bonus was offered by Management Committee member, Sarah Middleton, who was prepared to show and talk about an original pencil and watercolour study of *Christ preaching at Cookham Regatta* by Stanley Spencer, now held in a private collection. Marlow is close to Cookham where he lived and, of course, the Stanley Spencer Gallery itself. The Clarendon Gallery also arranged for some pictures to be on display as part of their support for Love Marlow.

On the evening of Tuesday 11 June about 50 people gathered in Marlow Methodist Church to hear from Sarah, listen to Bob's illustrated talk and have their eyes and minds opened to the history and rich variety of works in the Collection. Conversations flowed afterwards with comments by a few that they had not known of its existence, others on the quality of the works and a number on the significant outreach resource it offered.

It is hoped that, in reading this story, Friends will think whether a similar event could be repeated in their local community, perhaps in conjunction with a local church or arts organisation, much as we will be doing in Bristol on 12 October, and to alert us to other church or community festivals where it might feature in their own programme planning. Please do make contact with us.

— Ian Baker, Secretary to the Friends



(Front cover) De Montfort University students, with their dance enactment, at the Opening of the 'Wondering Soul' exhibition. Photo: Kaltrina Morina

Reflection and renewal: conserving and caring for the Collection



Stéphanie Vuilleminot undertaking conservation work on Eularia Clarke's *Storm over the Lake*. Photo: Ruth Bubb

Our rejuvenation pause period has begun and the planned conservation programme outlined in the last newsletter is already underway, which some of you may have observed at the Leicester exhibition, 'Wondering Soul'. We were delighted and most grateful to the Gibbs Trust for funding the initial conservation of one work and the re-framing of two others, in order that they could travel to Leicester. John Reilly's *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*, was conserved and re-framed, while Ralph Beyer's *The son of man is come*, a pencil drawing, was also re-framed, as was the popular Francis Hoyland *Holy Communion Predella* of 1961.

Reilly's *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* also received extensive conservation treatment and technical analysis at Ruth Bubb's studio in Oxfordshire. It looked particularly fine hung in St Andrew's Church, Leicester and all who saw it agreed that it was transformed by the conservation process. This Reilly painting dating from 1958, had, after many years of touring, scattered lifting paint flakes, which were consolidated. Historic exposure to high relative humidity seems also to have been a factor needing to be addressed. The painting is now glazed and robustly re-framed to protect it and new environmental conditions are being set for the Collection loans going forward. This to ensure that works are not hung in places where the environment is, for instance, damp.

The main conservation programme is funded by the Methodist Church and began as soon as the Leicester exhibition was over. The next works on Ruth's priority list requiring attention were sent directly, from Leicester, to her studio. These included Eularia Clarke's *Storm over the Lake* and *The Five Thousand*. John Reilly's *Cain and Abel* was also in need of consolidating of the paint surface and restoring pictorial layers as well as removing the discoloured varnish. Such skilled attention should transform the painting. By the end of September, the work on these specific paintings, all to be fitted with new frames, will be complete and new condition reports will be produced for future borrowers. The process is ongoing and Ruth will engage with four more paintings this autumn. It is delicate, painstaking work, which needs great concentration as the images here illustrate.

Meanwhile the paper conservator, Louise Vaile, will continue her survey of works and we will be working on a priority list of drawings and watercolours requiring her urgent attention too. A sculpture conservator is also being consulted. In addition to this essential conservation work, new travelling cases that are fit for purpose are being commissioned - durable in the longer term but lighter and more environmentally controlled. The entire process is complex, ensuring that we also identify the most urgent needs.

We must care for the Collection to the highest possible standards, preserving it for future generations and ensuring it plays a key role in the missional life of the Methodist Church. It is an ambitious project but we are determined that the Collection meets all industry standards for collections care, so that we are also ready to negotiate with our new partner home feeling that we have invested in the Collection and works are in the best possible condition. Some of our best known paintings will be transformed by this process and you will be able to see a selection of them on display in Bewdley in late March 2020.

— Ann Sumner

Our conservation programme is on-going and we are seeking to create a Conservation Fund - if you feel that you might be able to support this important programme with a donation, then do please contact Liz Millard at 020 7467 5214; artcollection@methodistchurch.org.uk

Ian Baker, Our Secretary To The Friends, In Focus

The early years of the new millennium represented one of those watershed times in life as I put behind me a working career in the corporate sector, switched to a new role in the charitable field and found myself beginning to develop an interest in art and religion. This had been sparked by the excellent 'Seeing Salvation' exhibition at the National Gallery which highlighted to me the mission potential offered by all that was presented to the very significant number



(This page) Ian Baker.
(Opposite) Michael Edmonds
(1926-2014) *The Cross over the
City*, 1962. Polyester, brass and
mosaic, relief panel. From the
Methodist Modern Art Collection

of people who visited it. I soon afterwards found myself delving into books such as 'Painting the Word', by John Drury and 'The Passion in Art', by Richard Harries, as early learning resources for someone with no previous knowledge or understanding.

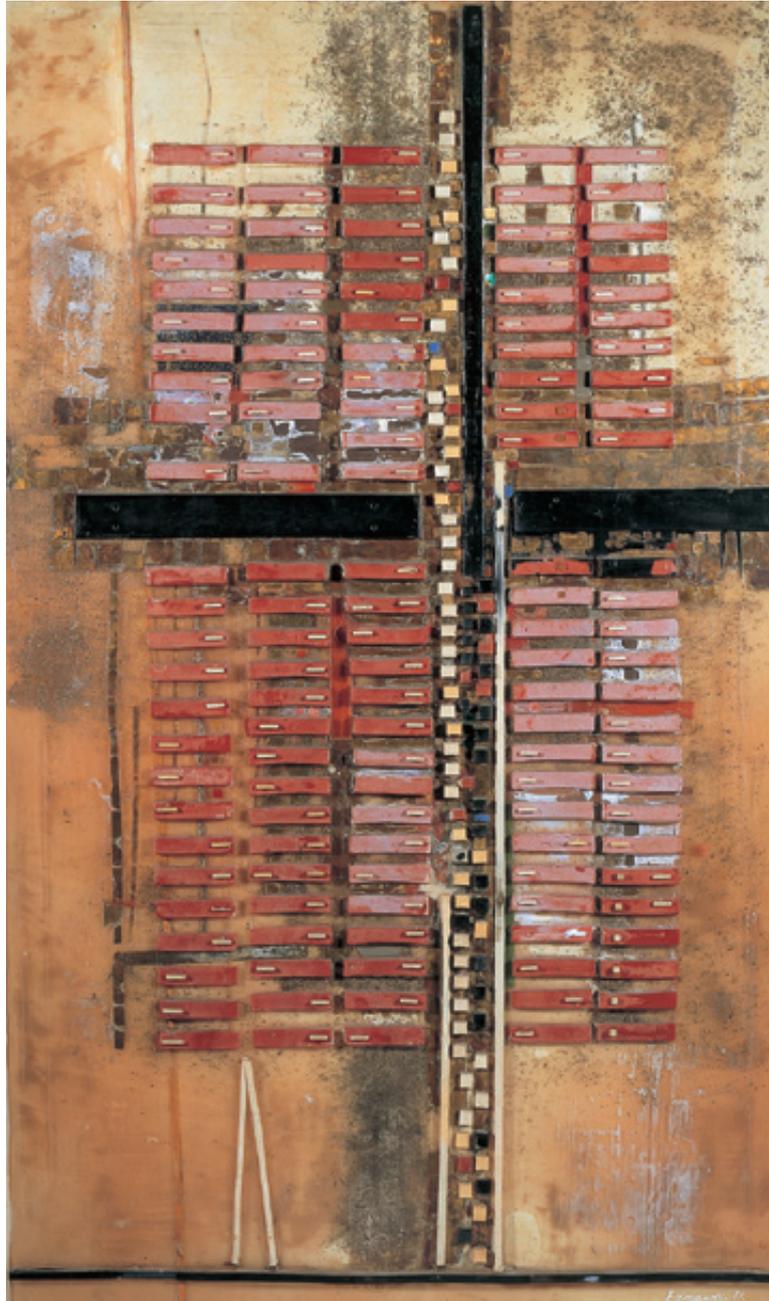
One lunch-time while working in London I happened to be passing Westminster Central Hall only to find that the Methodist Modern Art Collection was being exhibited there. I remember being taken aback to stumble across this fine collection of works and learning that its origins were down to two people. Once again I was reminded of the mission dimension and at a time when new ways of outreach were needed against a background of declining church memberships across most Christian denominations. A few years later I attended a lecture given by Sarah Middleton on the Collection as part of an annual summer school series of events on offer at Guildford Cathedral and this later prompted me to become a Friend.

In 2015 a move from where I had lived for 27 years enabled me to shed some accumulated local church involvement and, following retirement, I approached Bob Williams to see whether there was some small way I could assist the work of the Collection. We met and discussed this on a prearranged visit to Bath where I was also able to view the impressive 'Fully Alive' Bath Abbey exhibition of major works from the Collection. Cutting a long story short, a year later I found myself in front of a volunteer interview panel hosted by Sarah Middleton and, having thought I had put such hurdles behind me, I now find myself trying to follow in the dedicated footsteps of Bob Williams as Secretary to the Friends! I remain today very much a lay learner compared to some of my fellow committee members with their art expertise and experience. However, I hope I can perhaps offer some further perspectives to our work that may not previously have been explored.

Ian Baker's Choice

For much of my working life I was fortunate to avoid working in London and spared the daily commute but when I moved to the charitable sector this could not be avoided. My choice of *The Cross over the City* by Michael Edmonds, stems from this time and I was interested to read he also spent some of his life working for the Greater London Council.

This relief panel sparks for me a variety of thoughts. The black cross reminds me of my time working for an Anglican benevolent fund for the clergy and their families and requests for financial support by those involved in tough urban ministries. They were utterly dedicated to their work but it involved significant personal sacrifice, suffering in various forms and not without impacts on their families. My final working years were spent with a grant-making foundation involved in awarding grants to charities in the London boroughs, working in the areas of poverty, social justice and mental health. All too often those charities had been established by faith groups and, without them, life for many people would be much the poorer. The brown rectangular



blocks represent to me those beacons of hope and help provided by these charities. I am also reminded of the occasion that I found myself in New York, which included a visit to the World Trade Center, where a similar aerial view to *The Cross over the City* could be seen. After the twin towers bombing tragedy a construction worker found a cross made of two steel girders and this was later to become known as the Ground Zero Cross and offered a symbol of hope, faith and healing.

The picture is described in our 'Seeing the Spiritual' Guide to the Collection as the only work we hold that is directly concerned with the Church's mission rather than the biblical story of Jesus' life and the festivals of the Church. It reinforces my belief that we should not flinch from ensuring the Collection

appears in places where there are demanding challenges to life and living. My recent visits to our exhibitions at Cromer, Winsford and, in particular, Leicester have reinforced this conviction even if doing so does present challenges and involve some level of risk.

(This page, from top) Mark engages with his audience in the Q and A session; Sarah Middleton and Rachel Newton discuss one of the Stations.

(Opposite, from left) Station 1 - Christ sentenced; Station 6 - Veronica wipes Christ's Face; Station 12 - Christ is Crucified



ENCOUNTERS: WALKING THE FRACTURED CITY - MARK CAZALET

*Bristol Victoria Methodist Church
6 March -18 April, 2019*

On 14 March, as part of the programme arranged in connection with the Lent exhibition of Mark Cazalet's *West London Stations of the Cross*, the artist himself was with us to speak about the pictures.

He had promised an 'interactive' session and he kept his promise. After a brief introduction to 'the idea of Stations of the Cross', Cazalet ushered the thirty-five or so present around each of the fifteen paintings, prompting scrutiny, encouraging reactions, and inviting suggestions for improvement! He conducted a rewarding *impromptu* as he helped us to appreciate that each of the paintings gives up layers of meaning when, for example, colour, composition, point of view and setting are all considered.

Cazalet carried his knowledge - and the authority that came from being The Painter - lightly. He was relaxed and apparently spontaneous, making everyone present feel they were with him on a journey of discovery. However, on closer inspection, it was clear he apparently drew attention to much



'He was relaxed and apparently spontaneous, making everyone present feel they were with him on a journey of discovery...'

that had gone into the execution of the paintings themselves.

The company was fully engaged for the hour and a half during which Cazalet moved from picture to picture filling in background, explaining details, broadening discussions, and drawing attention to themes. From the guided tour, and the reflection prompted by the catalogues on sale, it was possible to pick up Cazalet's preoccupations and to guess his favoured roles. He

has, for example, revealingly described himself as a 'sacred flâneur' and, true to form, he had walked from Temple Meads to Victoria Methodist Church to lead the session. That is to say he had taken the opportunity to (re-)encounter our 'fractured' city of Bristol and had laid himself open to the possibility of epiphanies.

The responsive walker through West London and impressionist artist came across strongly as he drew

attention to the importance of 'the moment' in each painting and to the significance of colour in his work. He has said that '*Colour has always been (his) chief means of communication*' and, over the course of a fascinating evening, he repeatedly asked questions that drew attention to the way the colours were working in particular paintings.

The comments that he made, or elicited, sometimes established links between the *Stations* and other of his paintings. For example, some twenty years ago - at around the time he was working on the West London Stations, The Museum of London hosted his oddly-titled exhibition: 'Cathedrals of Industry'. The 'Cathedrals' alluded to and presented on the canvases turned out to be... Gas holders!

Armed with an awareness of this interest, it is illuminating to return to the 4th *Station of the Cross* - that has the Kensington Gas-holder as its back-cloth, and from there to move to other shapes that Cazalet has set against the sky in the sequence. These include, for example, 'the monsters' that loom above Meyer and Meyer Scrap metal recycling yard, off Old Oak Sidings in the 11th *Station*.

Cazalet mentioned that he had returned to the places he had selected for the narrative of the Via Dolorosa. At least one of these actor-less paintings, *Everyday Epiphany 3*, was painted

beneath the A40 and shows the 'horse-riding' that had an anomalous existence there despite the transformation to the area caused by the construction of the Westway in 1968.

The exchanges about the first *Station* were particularly intriguing because Cazalet was asked about 'the absence of the state' from the picture and responded by referring to the idea that the roads - the concrete, overarching, monumental, oppressive, sky-carving structures - might suggest the state. This thought prompts reflection that the state apparatus does not have to be represented by the heavy-booted detachments in camouflage outfits seen in other *Stations*.

In relation to the 1st *Station* - and several others, Cazalet drew attention to groupings and to figures that were so merged into the background as to be almost invisible.

Cazalet nudged members of the group towards seeing the loungers who witness the trial under the Westway as gang members ready to move into action - or at least allowed us to entertain the possibility that that is what they were. Looking at - scrutinizing - the painting, Cazalet prompted us to summon up memories of a 1960s musical. Yes, he suggested that the world of the 1st *Station* might have something in common with a 'West(way) Side Story!' I am not offering that as a real pun from

OBITUARY NOTICE

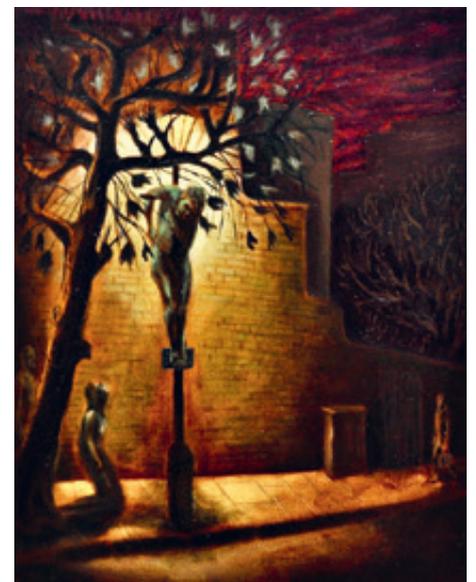
We are sad to record the recent death of the Revd Dr Liz Smith, latterly Chair of Leeds Methodist District. An inspiring woman who served Methodism well over the years. We recall her thought provoking sermon, at Ben Rhydding Methodist Church, in October 2017, on the theme of 'Hope and Reconciliation', delivered in the presence of, and certainly inspired by, nine works from the Collection.

word to painting, but Cazalet is, as he shows in the 'cross-roads' in *Station 2* and the Light (of the World?), in *Station 12*, alive to verbal dalliance. Many thoughts flow through the minds of artists while at their easels.

The exhibition was simply and effectively curated by Dr Louise Franklin with three of her students and their work was singled out for praise, by Mark, when speaking about his paintings.

— James Gibbs

It is always a pleasure to attend an event where one of our extant Collection artists is speaking and, in this respect, Mark Cazalet never disappoints. He is a well-established figure in today's ecclesiastical art world. — Ed



WONDERING SOUL

Leicester Cathedral; Bishop St. Methodist Church; St. Andrews Church; St. Nicholas' Church and Launde Abbey
2 May – 9 June 2019

Across Leicester during May and early June 2019, highlights from the Art Collection were displayed as part of the 'Wondering Soul' exhibition. The title chosen for this exhibition, selected by visitors to the Cathedral, was inspired by the great hymn by Charles Wesley – 'Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin? Some 11,500 people took the opportunity to view the works throughout the period of display.

There was an energising opening event at Leicester Cathedral, on Friday 3 May with an excellent attendance of over 100 people. We experienced an innovative dance response to the Collection, by students from De Montfort University and this was followed by an explanatory tour of the key paintings by one of our Collection artists, Mark Cazalet. The opening speeches were by the Very Revd David Monteith, Dean of Leicester, the Revd Helen Cameron, Chair of the Northampton Methodist District and Professor Ann Sumner, Chair of our Collection Management Committee. The display of MMAC works in the Cathedral had a real 'wow' factor, with Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of the Holy Communion* dramatically hung over the Communion table, Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* displayed nearby, Maggi Hambling's *Walking on Water, 2006* symbolically displayed near the Font and Norman Adam's *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* sited where the flags in the work reflected those flags in the St George's Chapel beyond. Other places of worship exhibiting nearby were Bishop Street Methodist Church, where works such as Patrick Heron's *Crucifix and Candles: Night 1950*, Elisabeth Frink's *Pieta* and the newly re-framed Ralph Beyer's *The son of man is come* were well hung on dedicated screens. Further works were on view at



Anglican priest, the Revd Hilary Lomax, awaiting visitors at the Reception Point at Bishop Street Methodist Church, Leicester.
Photo: Sarah Middleton

St Nicholas Church and St Andrew's Church - where the newly conserved and re-framed John Reilly *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* was displayed. The necessary conservation work on this particular painting has been generously funded by the Gibbs Trust. Graham Sutherland's *The Deposition* of 1947 was displayed, by itself, in the small chapel at Launde Abbey, some 45 miles distant, on show for two weeks as part of their 900 years celebrations. After 18 May, the Sutherland joined the greater part of the Collection at the Cathedral.

A well-produced 'What's On' leaflet included a range of innovative and thought-provoking events throughout May and early June. These ranged from contemplative photography and reflective drawing workshops to lively discussions and lectures on 'Artists and Early Methodism' and 'Methodism

and Modern Art', as well as a special Quiet Day retreat on 4 May, inspired by the Sutherland, at Launde Abbey and led by art historian Miriam Gill.

One notable event took place on Bank Holiday Monday 6 May, entitled 'Picnic in the Gardens'. This was a community event, inspired by Eularia Clarke's *The Five Thousand* painting, with local people encouraged to participate in craft activities, in Leicester Cathedral Gardens. With the help of visitors a group picture, re-interpreting and inspired by the original work, was created and 1,000 knitted fish were given away to those who engaged in this activity with some displayed later near the work itself within the Cathedral.

The event was rounded off with a performance by the 'Sound Café, a community choir made up of vulnerable adults living in Leicester.

The workshop which resulted in the creation of *Wondering Soul* spray paint murals was also well attended. Each Sunday at the Cathedral, the main preacher was invited to focus on one of the paintings from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, which fitted into the liturgical requirements, in their personal addresses. There was also an engaging Dean's Discussion focusing on the Methodist Collection displayed in Leicester, in which Committee member Sarah Middleton participated. Overall, 513 people attended these special events and services throughout the duration of the exhibition.

The closing celebration on Sunday 9 June at Bishop Street Methodist Church

provided an opportunity to thank some 40 volunteers who supported the exhibition and recitals of some of the poems from the 'Wondering Soul' poetry zine, appropriately read by the poets themselves.

It was a pleasure to work with The Revd Canon Karen Rooms and Bethany Piggott and their team at the Cathedral, and the Revd Fran Rhys and her colleagues at Bishop Street Methodist Church. Sarah Middleton, Peter Forsaith and myself would like to thank all who supported the exhibition in the planning stages and congratulate everyone on a well received show.

— Ann Sumner

This poem, one of the 'Response Poems' appearing in the Leicester Zine, was read, by Ann Sumner, at the Opening of the 'Wondering Soul' exhibition. *Wondering Soul* contributed by (and copyright of) Rob

Where are we wondering to?
 A life full of self/me – look at me...
 Or one of giving your Wondering Soul to others?
 Wondering how they may be...
 Wondering can, or how I may help...
 We live in a wonderful place when your eyes are open,
 And can see what God has made.
 I didn't start life wondering what would happen along the way,
 Only wondering how can a wondering soul like me be of any use
 To God, my Father in Heaven?

QUIET DAY AT LAUNDE ABBEY

Having often been in the company of Sutherland's *The Deposition*, sometimes handling it during an exhibition hang, sometimes as part of a lecture or act of worship, I still came away from the Quiet Day at Launde Abbey with a treasure of new knowledge and fresh insights. Dr Miriam Gill, art historian and Methodist Local Preacher, led a day of sustained contemplation of this powerful image. She began by inviting those of us present to "immerse ourselves in its visual world and allow it to accompany us as we ponder Christ placed in the tomb". A rich and haunting recording of Paul Robeson singing 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' was followed by a fascinating art history presentation, starting with the Middle Ages, showing how Sutherland's work inhabited a tradition. We looked at Piero della Francesca's *Deposition* (1445-62) and at Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* c.1480. The journey continued through to Picasso's *Guernica* and branched out into film, novels and ballet being produced in the middle of World War II, shortly before Sutherland embarked upon his own work of 1947.

Amongst the supporting artefacts, displayed by Dr Gill for us to browse,

was a book of photographs coming out of Bergen Belsen concentration camp, known to have been an influence on Sutherland. We were encouraged to note the contrast between, on the one hand, the medieval and renaissance depictions where Christ's body seems to be lowered lovingly into the tomb, surrounded by mourners, and on the other, the lonely Christ of the Sutherland image. Looking at the photos of the mass graves in the camps, those lowering the body would not be friends but the guards responsible for the emaciated bodies.

The hopefulness hinted at in the painting was perceived in the tones of the sky which Dr Gill described as 'ochre-like', beaten gold leaf in the style of a medieval icon'. Our meditations on this were aided by the simple, wooden cross draped in a gold cloth presented alongside the masterpiece in the quietness of the Launde Abbey Chapel.

— Sarah Middleton



Contemplating the Sutherland in Launde Abbey Chapel
 Photo: Sarah Middleton

ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD

SCULPT – AN EXTRAORDINARY ART TRAIL

*An 'Art in the Churches event' in North Yorkshire
25 May – 28 September, 2019*

SCULPT– A Trail of dramatic art in seven historic churches in the Yorkshire Dales

This summer, Yorkshire Sculpture International Festival dominated much of the cultural activity across the county. Away from the cities, in the Yorkshire Dales, an entirely different rural sculptural experience was on offer. Organised by 'Art in the Churches', SCULPT was a trail aimed to bring major contemporary art to the countryside, and to help address the under-utilisation of many of England's beautiful parish churches. There was an excellent route map, with post codes and tea shop recommendations, and a good illustrated catalogue.

At North Stainley in St Mary's Church, Sarah Williams' *Every Small Difference*, transformed the 1840s church with a series of white panels, with twelve bubbles depicting the apostles and mirrored spheres attached to the canvas. This reflected the vulnerability of the planet to climate change and our responsibility to protect it. While at nearby St Nicholas' Church in West Tanfield, Eduardo Niebla's sound palette, *The Seven Colours* filled the church with the noises of village life over the centuries. Beginning with the distinctive sound of a steam train acknowledging, that as with so many rural villages, the train no longer runs here.

The ancient Church of St Michael the Archangel at Well, hosted one of the most spectacular installations, Harriet Hill's *Rock of Ages*. On approaching the space dramatically lit up revealing



(Clockwise from Left) *Le Bon Temps Viendra*, Ana Rosa Hopkins, Healey Church. Photo: Ann Sumner; *Neons from Heaven*, Silvia Lerin, Masham Church. Photo: Millie Harford; *Rock of Ages*, Harriet Hill, Well Church. Photo: Ann Sumner. (And on Page 11) *Wonder and War in Heaven*, Jon Gabb, Snape Castle Chapel. Photo: Millie Harford; *Cloud of Unknowing*, Alex Carr, Mickley Church. Photo: Millie Harford



the work whose title was taken from the hymn by Augustus Toplady of 1768. This tactile piece was constructed from woven willow, felt and the wool of the local sheep. It brought to mind the historic, local textile industry. The surface was mesmerizing, threaded with straw, blue baler twine and pink plastic threads too, referencing modern day rural activities.

The tiny pre-Reformation domestic Chapel at Snape Castle was an interesting location on the trail, dominated by John Gabb's *Wonder and War in Heaven*, (Revelation: 12, v.7), this title deriving from the shadowy remains of Antonio Verrio's original ceiling fresco. Gabb's knotted cords created a crazy web-like canopy, of brightly coloured threads, visually enacting the casting out of heaven

of Satan. In contrast, in St Mary's, Masham, Silvia Lerin's reflective contained work, *Neons from Heaven*, made of 100 large, blue painted neon tubes, were suspended above the aisle in the middle of the church. The artist selected a deep blue as a heavenly colour, referencing both sky and sea. As you passed beneath and looked up to see your image reflected back by the mirrors in the base of the tubes, the artist hoped to encourage that moment of encounter with ourselves, when we seek guidance from God.

One of the most thought provoking pieces on the trail was *Le Bon Temps Viendra (The Good Times Will Come)*, by Ana Rosa Hopkins, at the Church of St Paul's at Healey. The title translated *The Good Times will Come* is the motto of the Harcourt family. The church was



built by Admiral Vernon Harcourt of Swinton and legend has it that it was built on the winnings of a racehorse. Hopkins has hung her six silk and metal mesh cocoons suspended in the tall lantern tower of the church. Their colours perfectly complement the stonework. The artist encourages us to consider the potential for all humans to change, to undergo a transformation or metamorphosis. Resting on the walls of the tower and nave are butterflies representing enlightenment, hope and our own fragility.

Finally the remarkable instillation, at St. John the Evangelist, in the pretty village of Mickley, Alex Carr's *Cloud of Unknowing*, was breathtaking - literally a cube of fog hanging in the middle of the church. Intended to help us consider our place in the cosmos, and referencing a spiritual guide on contemplative prayer from the Middle Ages, this proved a fitting finale to the whole experience.

Throughout my tour I met numerous visitors on the same pilgrimage, and entered into some fascinating discussions on faith, art, architecture, parish churches and the provision of culture in rural areas. Truly inspirational.

— Ann Sumner

Professor Ann Sumner's full review of the Sculpt trail appears in Art and Christianity Journal (No.99 - Autumn 2019).

A NEW FRANK ROPER CENTRE IN CARDIFF

Recent travels into South Wales have taken me to the newly opened Frank Roper Centre, located at the Church of the Resurrection (Church in Wales), in the Ely District of Cardiff.

This new Centre is a welcome addition to the Frank Roper trail, which admirers of his work can make across South Wales. It is open every Sunday, until 4.00 p.m., with well-informed volunteers on hand to provide a guided tour.

Roper was blessed with the opportunity to hone his skills under the tutelage of Henry Moore, O.M. and his reputation was cemented locally with his appointment, in 1947, as Vice-Principal of Cardiff School of Art. Then, there was his legendary relationship with George Pace, the architect responsible for the extensive post-war restoration of Llandaff Cathedral where, with the likes of Jacob Epstein and John Piper, he



was pivotal in providing the rich interior of what we can enjoy in the Cathedral today. There are scores of churches so much the richer for being adorned with the statues, stained glass, etched glass, lettering in metal and stone, and ecclesiastical furnishings of Frank Roper M.B.E. Friends will be aware that we ourselves hold four Roper aluminium reliefs, from a set of *Stations of the Cross*, 1963. Deemed too fragile for regular touring, they are now held in the Reserve Collection.

It was largely through the generosity of both the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Simon Gibson Trust that the Church of the Resurrection (affectionately known, to the local population, as 'the Res') was able to engage in a substantial programme of restoration and establish this new Frank Roper Centre within its walls. Further financial support for this ambitious project was forthcoming from the National Churches Trust, the Representative Body of the Church in Wales, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Welsh Church Act Funds and the Allchurches Trust.

It is worth noting that the building also features a striking series of *Stations of the Cross*. Ecclesiastical works can be found in:

- a. 45 places of worship within the Diocese of Llandaff.
- b. Examples within the City of Cardiff itself can be seen at the Church of the Resurrection, Ely; Christ Church, Roath Park; City Parish Church of John the Baptist; St. German's, Adamstown; St Paul's, Grangetown; St. Saviour's, Splott; St. Martin's, Albany Rd; St. Peter's, Fairwater; St. Denys, Lisvane and, of course, a rich vein of his work at the mother church, Llandaff Cathedral.
- c. 12 Welsh locations beyond the Diocese of Llandaff, including the Cathedral at St. Davids.
- d. 19 locations outside of Wales including the Cathedrals of Durham, Sheffield, Peterborough, Chester and Southwark.

— *The Editor*



(This page, from top) Life and Works of Frank Roper display; The Revd Jan Gould, Priest-in-Charge at the Church of the Resurrection, seen with what Frank Roper considered his favourite work – a cast of *An Unknown Bishop*, a gift from Frank's daughter, Rachel Michaelides, who travelled over from Cyprus for the Service of Re-dedication. (Opposite) Front cover of 'A Life in Drawing'

A LIFE IN DRAWING: DRAWINGS BY LEONARDO DA VINCI, FROM THE ROYAL COLLECTION

1 February – 6 May 2019
Various UK venues

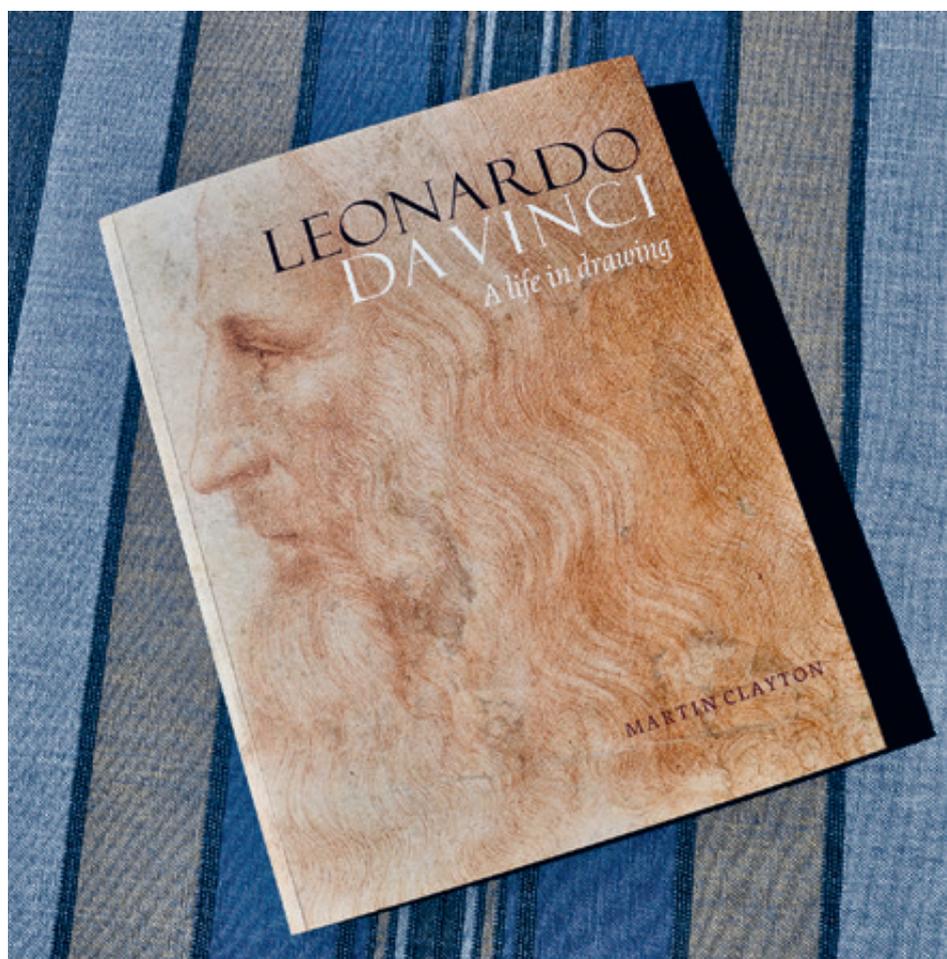
Marking the 500th Anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death in 1519, this series of loans were exhibited concurrently, at twelve different venues across the U.K. Following the closure date in early May, over two hundred of these drawings (from the six hundred within the original Melzi Collection, acquired by Charles II) were then assembled at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace to form the largest exhibition of the Renaissance Master's work in over sixty-five years. The majority were then set to move on to Holyroodhouse, in Edinburgh, for the winter months.

As HRH the Prince of Wales, remarks in his Foreword to the impressive catalogue – *'These drawings, in a series of exhibitions, provide an unprecedented opportunity for people throughout the nation to engage, at first hand, with the genius of Leonardo.'*

I, myself, was fortunate to be able to view the works on show in both Bristol and Cardiff and John Lansley, a supportive Friend who occasionally reports for us from the North of England, took in the exhibitions in Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield.

Bristol Art Gallery and Museum featured mainly anatomical and animal studies although the stand-out drawing for me was a magnificent little study for either Leonardo's *Madonna and Child with St. Anne and a lamb* (now in the Louvre) or for the cartoon, held in the National Gallery, of *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne and St. John the Baptist*. Scholars remain divided over the date of the latter, which would leave a question mark over this particular link.

The selection of drawings on show at Amgueddfa Cymru/ National Museum of Wales, Cardiff were rather



less exciting, with *The Head of St. Bartholomew*, in red chalk, c.1495, the outstanding exhibit.

In Manchester, *The Arm of St. Peter*, black chalk, c.1495, was another lovely small study. Interestingly, this is the only surviving drapery study for Leonardo's fresco of *The Last Supper*, in Milan, handled with a softness and sense of cloth moving over living flesh. Liverpool provided another exquisite little observation drawing, *The drapery of the Madonna's thigh*, charcoal black chalk and wash, c.1515-17. Sheffield, in turn, provided another portrait drawing in the artist's series of preparatory works for *The Last Supper* – a *Head of St. Philip*, black chalk, c.1495.

John Lansley considers Leonardo's skill as an artist breath-taking. In particular the way in which he can use shading to create 3-D effects and thereby turn scientific anatomical drawings into more than diagrams, but as living works of art in which the colouring becomes a part of the experience as well as a means of instruction.

By way of conclusion, he poses the question: *'So why was I mildly disappointed? One element was the size of the drawings. They were smaller than I had expected and to look at them fully I had to get very close to them, which felt selfish to any other viewers. I found it quite hard to make out the detail of some of the storm and flood scenes. The lighting, too, for very good reasons, was sometimes subdued, which didn't help. The exhibition layout and surrounding information was, in all cases, exemplary, but I would have found it easier to appreciate the drawings sitting down, and with time to focus on a few drawings - on my own. Lucky Queen, I suppose.'*

'I was left contemplating that Leonardo's response to what he so keenly observed was not simply to record it, as one might do with a camera, but to enter into a deeper experience of the object, almost becoming a second creator. If so, then do Leonardo's drawings offer a possible approach to theology...?'

— The Revd John Lansley together with the Editor

ST. IVES PARISH CHURCH: BARBARA HEPWORTH – MADONNA & CHILD

'It is a primitive world; but a world of infinite, subtle meaning...'

I have, after an interval of some years, managed to re-visit St. Ives and view, for the first time, Barbara Hepworth's *Madonna and Child* in the town's Parish Church.

This wonderful sculpture, carved from bianco del mare limestone, with a highly polished finish, is one of her rare, religiously inspired works. One can readily appreciate her personal need to engage with such a piece when at her most vulnerable, as it serves as a permanent memorial to her son, Paul Skeaping, who was killed while on active service with the RAF in 1953. This work points the way to her strong interest in developing the sculptural abstraction of the human form and its relationship to the landscape.

The sculpture, gifted to the Parish Church, sits in the Lady Chapel of St. La. It is of further interest to note that it keeps close company with a painting by another renowned artist of the St. Ives School, Bryan Pearce: his *Three Angels* (1985).

In Newsletter No.14 (Autumn 2015) we featured a lovely working drawing – graphite on board, now in the Ahmanson Collection, Los Angeles, which Hepworth created ahead of embarking on her 'in memoriam' sculpture. This preparatory study is very much in the tradition of Byzantine religious icons that clearly identify with maternal sorrow.



Hepworth always regarded sculpture as the fundamental art form, a medium which allowed her to seek out the external structure of being, and exploit the basic senses of our existence – touch, texture, size and scale. In pursuit of this goal Hepworth produced both carved and cast pieces of immense power. Throughout her enormous body of work runs the theme of the human form and spirit inhabiting the landscape. To quote the artist herself: *'It is a primitive world; but a world of infinite, subtle meaning. Nothing we ever touch or feel, or see and love, is ever lost to us; from birth to old age it is retained like the warmth of rocks, the coolness of grass and the everflow of the sea.'* Barbara Hepworth and the dramatic landscape of Cornwall were certainly made for each other.

On a more frustrating note, it does seem mildly bizarre that, while visitors are at liberty to photograph her works both at the newly extended Tate St. Ives and the Hepworth Museum and

Sculpture Garden, those viewing the *Madonna and Child* in St. La are denied a similar opportunity. I must, therefore, express my personal appreciation both to Matt Brown and the trustees of the Hepworth Estate for permission to use the image below.

Should you find yourself in South West Cornwall, do take the opportunity to view this wonderful work.

— *The Editor*

Barbara Hepworth (1903-75)
Madonna and Child, 1953.
Bianco del mare limestone.
Photo: Matt Brown. Barbara
Hepworth © Bowness

‘THE MODERN PORTRAIT AS ICON’

The Revd Stephen Girling’s Talk to the Bath Society of Artists BRLSI, Queen Square, Bath 28 May 2019

This particular talk, very well attended as it was, featured in the 2019 Season of Talks promoted by the prestigious Bath Society of Artists.

Stephen Girling took as his image of choice, Vincent Van Gogh’s 1889 portrait of Augustine Roulin - *La Berceuse*, and set out to pose the question as to what extent this image stands comparison with, and equates to, the powerful effect that religious icons had on the early Christians. Van Gogh painted five versions of this portrait, his sitter identified as the wife of his good friend, the postmaster at Arles.

Stephen reminded us that Van Gogh was, for the greater part of his short life, a struggling artist and a troubled soul. Prolific in his output: - 1,300 sketches and drawings and 900 oil paintings, selling but one within his own lifetime. Van Gogh, of course, spent some three years in London from 1873, dividing his time between working for Goupil, art dealers in

‘I would like to paint men and women with that certain something of the eternal, of which the halo used to be the symbol...’

Covent Garden, occasionally recording his own views of the City and, indeed, delivering sermons from Methodist pulpits, his first so recorded being at Isleworth Wesleyan Methodist Church. In fact he moved easily between at least six different denominations..... *‘In every church I see God; it is not really a matter of dogma, but of the spirit of the Gospel’*. However, his archive of paintings featuring Gospel stories was actually very sparse; just three works - *The Raising of Lazarus (after Reubens)*, 1890, a *Pieta (after Delacroix)*, 1889, and *The Good Samaritan (after Delacroix)*, 1890, although it is easy to see where his much repeated images of sowers and reapers found their initial inspiration.

Nevertheless this artist’s simple faith, established in his early years and

tested somewhat subsequently, seems to show through in the strength of the portrait image in such works as *La Berceuse*. In Van Gogh’s own words - ‘I would like to paint men and women with that certain something of the eternal, of which the halo (common to all those early icons) used to be the symbol.’

— *The Editor*

The Revd Stephen Girling, as the Abbey Missioner, curated the 2016 ‘Fully Alive’ exhibition of the Methodist Modern Art Collection at Bath Abbey. Stephen has an M.A. in Theology, Imagination and Culture and is a supportive Friend of the Collection.

FOOTNOTE

An opportunity to visit the ‘Van Gogh in Britain’ exhibition, at Tate Britain, a matter of days after Stephen’s enlightening talk, was something of a personal bonus. Highlights included another version of Van Gogh’s *La Berceuse*, his well-known *Starry Night*, *Arles* oil painting of 1888, with its extraordinarily intense blues, and a room devoted to interpretations of sunflowers by British (and ‘adopted’ British) artists who clearly felt

influenced by Van Gogh’s fascination for this still life form. Two such works, by William Nicholson and Frank Brangwyn, certainly caught my eye. Vincent had, at one point, written to his brother Theo, that he had felt the need to ‘frame’ his series of paintings of *La Berceuse*, his secular Madonna, with radiant bouquets of sunflowers, the flower of Provence.

For me, it was a particular delight to view, once again, numerous charcoal

drawings of assorted characters from the fine archive held at the Kroller-Muller Gallery, Otterlo, in Van Gogh’s native Holland. Also, from the Kroller-Muller was one of Van Gogh’s more unusual works - *In Church*, Graphite, ink and watercolour, 1882. It raises a wry smile in that six of the twelve assorted characters featured appear to have fallen asleep during a lengthy sermon!

FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2020

21 March-19 April

'For All The People'

Bewdley
Wyre Forest Gallery, Bewdley Museum,
Load St, Bewdley, DY12 2AE
Contact: Jim Ineson: 01299 405645
Email: jim.ineson@gmail.com

FORTHCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST...

'DRAWING CLOSER TO GOD' Exploring art in worship and theology

This online course (six weeks from 20 January 2020), devised by Sarah Middleton, under the auspices of Wesley House, Cambridge, is for all who are interested in exploring mainly contemporary art from a variety of sources including the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

We will look at:

- what is meant by so-called 'Christian art'.
- using images effectively, respecting good practice in reproducing them.
- Cubist, Expressionist and Indian influences, through the work of F.N.Souza, together with a drawing by renowned English artist Sir Stanley Spencer.
- carved wood and mixed media work inspired by the passion and resurrection of Jesus.

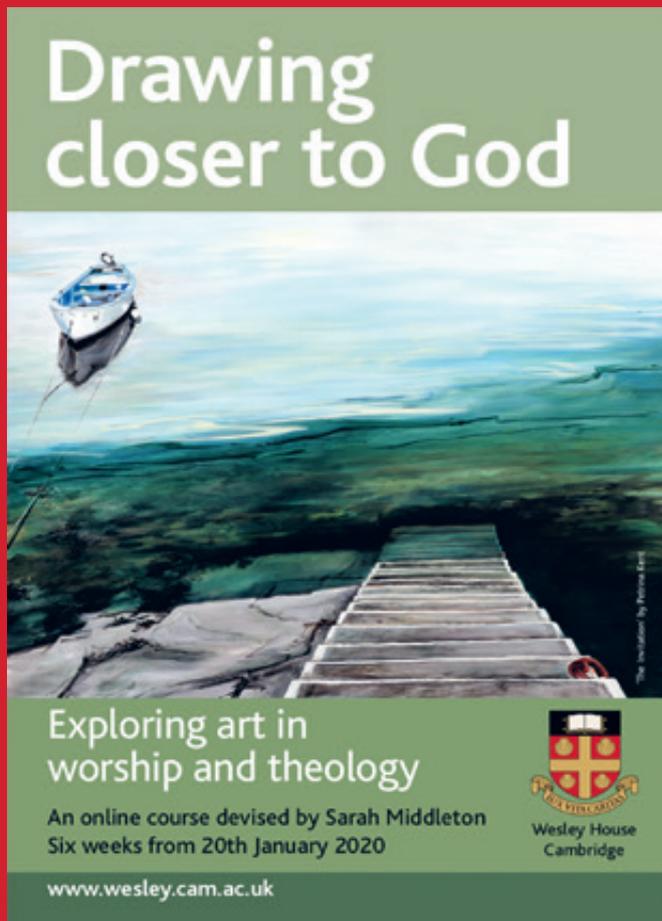
Further details, including how to book (by 7 January) at www.wesley.cam.ac.uk/study/onlinelearning/exploringart

Saturday 12 October, 2019, 15:00-19:00

AUTUMN TALK & TOUR

Professor Ann Sumner will talk on "Hope and Reconciliation represented in the Methodist Modern Art Collection" at Victoria Methodist Church, Whiteladies Rd, Bristol, followed by a Guided Tour of the 167th Annual Open Exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy. Among various works that Ann will be referencing is our iconic William Roberts painting *The Crucifixion*, dating from the 1920s.

Booking information available online via Eventbrite.co.uk
Full details appear on the Secretary to the Friends enclosure that accompanies this Newsletter.



Drawing closer to God

Exploring art in worship and theology

An online course devised by Sarah Middleton
Six weeks from 20th January 2020

www.wesley.cam.ac.uk

Wesley House
Cambridge



Our William Roberts painting, *The Crucifixion*, a work that will feature prominently in Ann Sumner's talk on 12 October and seen here being prepared for exhibition in Bath Abbey in 2016.

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

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A THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

"I have a terrible need of – dare I say the word? – religion. Then I go out at night to paint the stars."
— Vincent Van Gogh