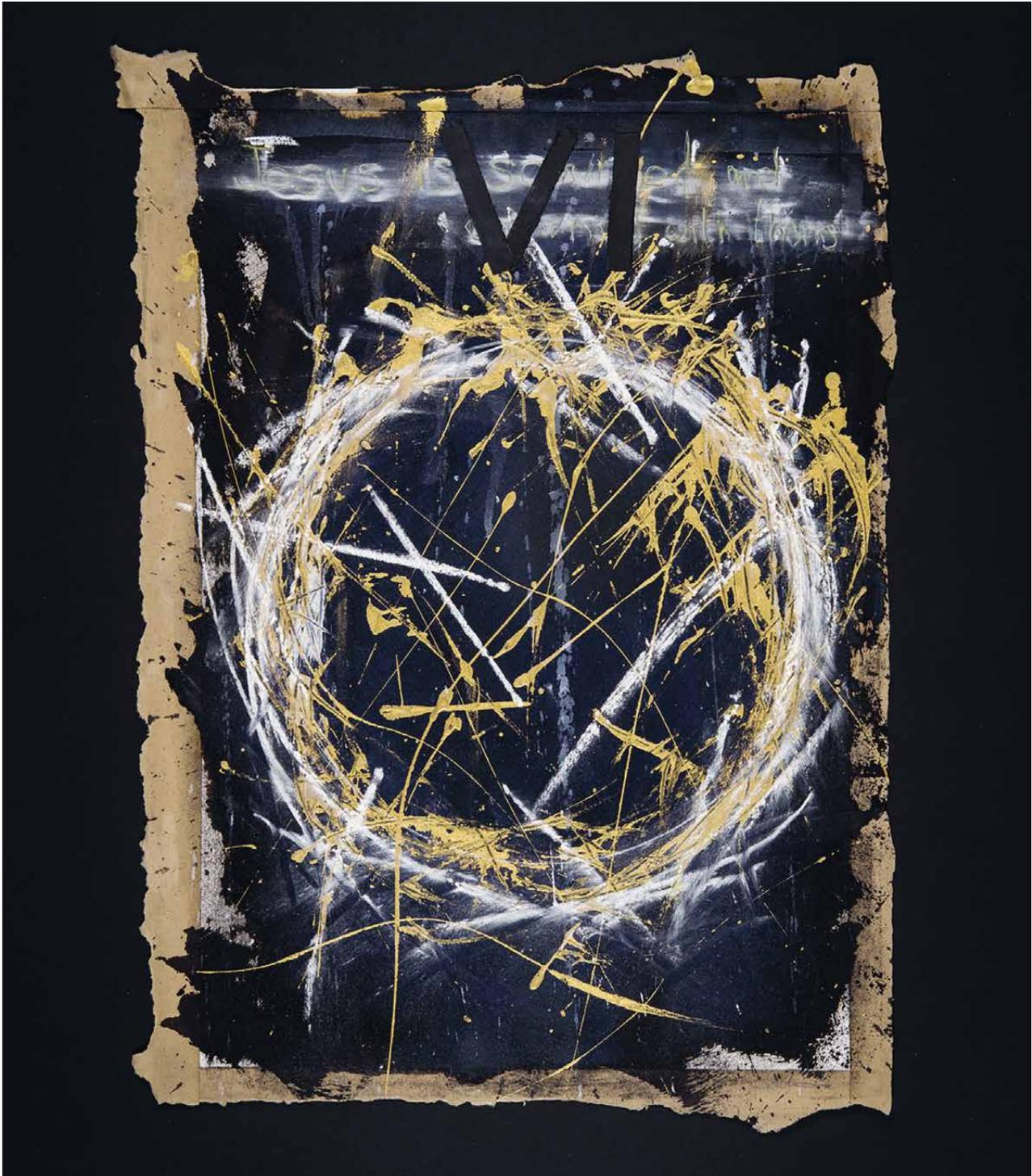


# NEWSLETTER

NO.25 — SPRING 2021  
£1.50 WHERE SOLD

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

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION



*Images for Holy Week: Caroline Waterlow*

*A tribute to Collection artist Peter Rogers*

*Salisbury: Celebrating 800 Years of Spirit and Endeavour*

*Editor's Farewell*

## EDITORIAL

As I find myself about to vacate the 'hot seat' as Editor of this publication, I simply have to begin by acknowledging Friends Patron, Phil Allison's quite extraordinary generosity in putting the publishing expertise of Cultureshock Media at our disposal back in the spring of 2013. This goes hand in hand with an enormous thank you for the dedicated professional input of Art Director, Alfonso Iacursi's team operating at the sharp end; currently in the safe hands of Luke Smith and, historically, a fine product delivered by Helen McFarland and Hannah Dossary.

It has been a real pleasure to sit at the Editor's desk for nearly 13 years, in the course of which I have signed off 25 six-monthly editions! A wonderful way to keep my ageing brain cells from atrophying. I am delighted to report that, as from now editorial responsibility will pass to Management Committee member Katharine Farnham-Dear.

Very sadly, it will come as no surprise that the pandemic has impacted on plans to show the Collection, both at Bewdley (already postponed once) and across the Coventry/ Nuneaton Methodist Circuit. The organising team at Bewdley now hope to press ahead with their 'For All People' exhibition with a full supporting programme over the Lent and Easter period in 2022. Similarly, the decision to re-schedule Coventry's appointed spell as UK City of Culture (to now run from May 2021-June 2022) has resulted in a re-think there.

I am particularly grateful to Caroline Waterlow, a Friend of the Collection and a previous contributor who has reaffirmed her support for the Collection in permitting me to use a number of her own, related Passion Week images in this Spring edition.

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### Art Collection Management Committee Members

Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Ian Baker (Secretary, Friends Group), Katharine Farnham-Dear, Revd Ruth Gee, Rebecca Gibbs, Revd Graham Kent, Sarah Middleton, Corinne Miller, Simon Sorokos, Jo Hibbard, Director of Engagement (in attendance)

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## NEW APPOINTMENT TO THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee is delighted to confirm the recent appointment of Verity Smith to serve on the Committee.



Verity grew up in a Methodist family so the church has always been a part of her life. She is the daughter of the late Revd Liz Smith, Chair of the Leeds Methodist District 2007-2016, herself an active advocate of the Collection. Verity is keen for the Collection to encourage people outside the church to consider the Christian message presented through the medium of art.

Self-employed as a freelance curator, consultant and writer since 2018, her expertise lies within the respective fields of collections research and interpretation, exhibition curation, community engagement, volunteer management and governance.

She has, over the past 12 years, worked for several national and local authority museums, predominantly across Yorkshire and the East Midlands. She has held posts at Leeds Museums and Galleries, National Media Museum (now National Science and Media Museum) and Barnsley Museums, combining her love of working with objects and communities. She also spent three years working as an Administrator for the NHS in the Clinical Research Network, employed through the University of Leeds.

Verity holds a BA (Hons) in Classical Studies from the University of Liverpool and is a postgraduate of the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Since gaining her MA in 2012 she has regularly returned to the School as a visiting lecturer.

In a voluntary capacity she has been a trustee of the Social History Curators Group since 2014 and is the current Chair. SHCG is a UK-wide network for museum and heritage professionals working to improve the status and provision of social history in museums and the standards of collections, research, display and interpretation. In 2020, she was appointed as a Heritage Advisor to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club at Trent Bridge, combining a passion for cricket and her professional expertise in the cultural sector.

Verity brings to our management team her considerable experience and will act as convenor for the Exhibitions and Planning Working Sub-Group and, in so doing, help to increase public awareness of the quality of the Collection. She will also assume responsibility for managing the Collection's database, bringing her professional skills to the role.

# *A view from the Chair, Professor Ann Sumner*

Our Rejuvenation Pause has been extended on account of Covid-19 restrictions, and, as the Editor has explained in his opening remarks, the further postponement of 'For All People', set to open in Bewdley this March, was a blow for all concerned.

This newsletter issue marks the departure of Bob Williams as Editor. Over the past 13 years Bob has developed this publication in so many directions, bringing new insights to the Collection itself and highlighting wider related art world events, while keeping us all connected with the Collection on tour. My thanks are extended to him for all his work and enthusiasm. While he will be very much missed, his legacy will be in safe hands as we welcome Katharine Farnham-Dear to the Editor's desk. We also extend a warm welcome to Verity Smith as a new Management Committee member. She will lead the Exhibitions and Planning Working Sub-Group, one of three such groups newly set up to help spread the workload. The Governance Sub-Group will be chaired by Rebecca Gibbs and the Collections Care, Conservation, and Development Sub-Group by Corinne Miller.

Meanwhile progress continues on the conservation programme (See Page 6). We look forward to sharing all our newly presented works with you again later this year. We are re-launching the Collection in Coventry this September, as part of the City of Culture celebrations and, at the same time, we are lending key works to an important exhibition at Chester Cathedral. So after our extended pause, there will be two opportunities over this autumn for you to view the Collection (See Page 16 for further details).

The Coventry art trail will begin appropriately in the Cathedral and feature works displayed in other well placed city locations including Coventry Central Hall. Visitors will then be encouraged to follow the trail beyond the city centre out into some of the village churches of the Coventry and Nuneaton Circuit, including Balsall Common. The trail will explore the origins of the Collection and artworks directly linked to artists represented in the Cathedral. One of our drawings by Ralph Beyer, *The Son of Man is Come*, is a study for one of the *Tablets for the Word* commissioned by Sir Basil

Spence. The trail will explore post-war rebuilding through 'Faith, Hope and Love' and contextualise contemporary experiences in the light of communities recovering and rebuilding after the damaging pandemic with opportunities for contemplation, prayer and healing. The trail will run to coincide with the planned 24 hour 'Faith' commission being directed by the Royal Shakespeare Company for the Coventry City of Culture, Heritage Open Days and the Turner Prize.

In the autumn of 2020 consultant registrars, Matassa Toffolo, were appointed to oversee the recommended improvements from our Practice Review, to our loans procedures, administration and documentation for borrowers. This has involved writing a new Loan Agreement, reviewing the Guidance for Borrowers and commissioning new travelling cases to protect the works when touring. Our aim is to ensure that the whole process of borrowing the Collection runs as smoothly as possible for all borrowers. We have also been prioritising the recommendations from our Governance Review by writing clear policy documents for all areas of our activity in line with Methodist Heritage. Our aim is ultimately to apply for the industry standard Museum Accreditation administered by Arts Council England.

I am grateful to the Committee members who have given of their time to write these policies, not least Lucy Newman Cleeve, who stepped down in November as a Member of the Committee after three fruitful years with us.

My thanks again to Bob, who I have enjoyed working with on the newsletters, with happy memories of meeting in the idyllic setting of Portscatho on the Roseland in Cornwall to discuss the format of the Autumn 2018 edition - cherished, dim and distant pre-pandemic days! Take care dear Bob, we will all miss you. Keep safe everyone.

*Ann Sumner*

# The retiring editor In Focus

Reflecting on a life that has taken me comfortably beyond my allotted biblical three score years and ten, I suppose that I could best be described as a sort of ecumenical mongrel. Christened by the then Archdruid of Wales whose day job, I hasten to add, was serving as a Welsh Congregational Minister, then, when not much more than a toddler, dragged along to a Christian Scientist Sunday School by my lovely maternal grandmother. From the age of eight, enjoying the benefits of ten years of a Methodist schooling which then, rather neatly carried through to tertiary education still under the 'Methodist umbrella' - at Westminster College, Oxford, where, in my final year, I served as President of the Students' Union Society. The greater part of my teaching life was spent in a C of E school in East Anglia. Three years in London, when starting out in adult life had given me the invaluable opportunity of regularly hearing a Sunday Address from one or other of those great theologians Donald Soper or Leslie Weatherhead.

With a contrasting working career span that kept me closely aligned with the art world, initially in the employ of a commercial art studio in London, servicing the needs of many of our foremost advertising agencies. Then jumping ship to embrace, for some 34 years, the educational sector. For the greater part of this latter period I was running an Art Department while concurrently serving as a Deputy Head. Coaching the young over a spectrum of sports also

(Left) The evolution of our Friends' Newsletters, from No.1 (Autumn 2008) to No.24 (Autumn 2020)

(Right) Bob, with wife Madeleine - a loyal Newsletter proof-reader for over 12 years!



provided enormous satisfaction and fond memories of leading school parties on educational cruises (on the much-loved SS Uganda), including three visits to the Holy Land - and back in 2001 to a then untroubled Syria - still loom large in the memory. In rare spare moments I managed to indulge my own particular interest in ceramics and when opportunity permits I enjoy nothing more than to fit in a visit to an interesting art exhibition, be it in one of our long established national galleries, or stumbling upon some new, local initiative. They all need our support.

Retirement years have involved treading an equitable path between the needs of the elderly and a clutch of six fine grand-children, allied of course to the demands of the Methodist Modern Art Collection - and preparing scripts for an occasional airing of a 'Thought for The Day' on local radio!

Hopefully, those Friends who have been with us on the journey thus far can reflect on the evolution of our Newsletter, from a home generated, double sided sheet of A4, to the twice yearly 16pp 'glossy' that we are proud to mail out today.



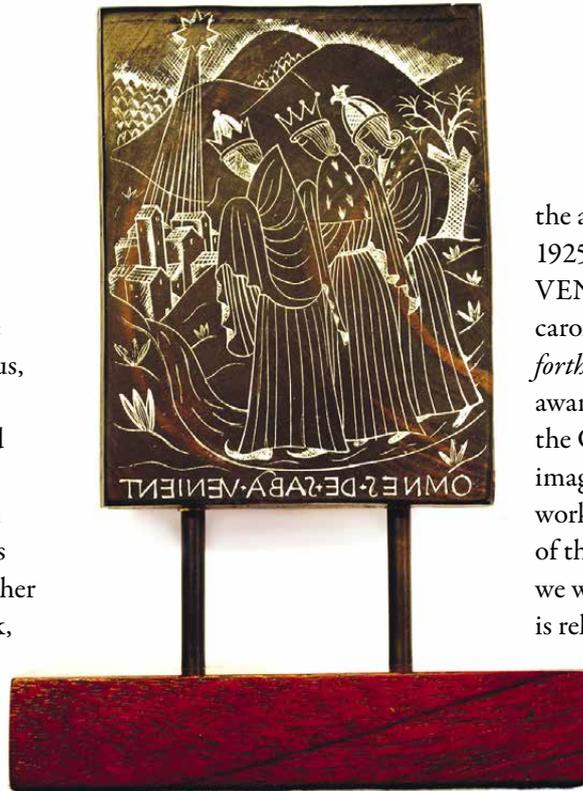
# Editor's Choice

Having grown familiar with so many works within the Collection over the past twelve years I find it almost impossible to nominate a particular favourite. Thus, perhaps I can pull rank and bend the rules in nominating two closely related works from the same 'school'. After much thought, I have opted to go with the framed display of Phillip Hagreen's woodcuts *Natus Est (He is born)*, together with David Jones' engraved woodblock, *Three Kings*. The simplicity of line, of the former gives the whole a universal appeal while the latter, as the only 3D artifact (by definition, neither painting nor sculpture)

currently held within the Collection, has always caught my eye when on tour, displayed in its own well designed, clear Perspex display box. These works form a wonderful little group where the emphasis is on a really close connection between the key players in the nativity narrative. The illustration, seen at lower/centre of the Hagreen group, is the definitive composition of the Holy Family, shepherds and supporting angels. I find all these images particularly pertinent over these past twelve months where enforced Covid-19 distancing has become the prescribed norm and touch, outside of our closely regulated 'bubbles', has become such a precious commodity so badly missed, particularly by those who have had to isolate alone.

Hagreen was a founder member of the Society of Wood Engravers and a member of the Guild of St. Joseph and St. Dominic at Ditchling. For a while, in 1924, he joined David Jones at the newly founded artists' colony at Capel-y-ffin and later, back in Ditchling, actually shared a workshop with Jones. Another contemporary, Edgar Holloway, regarded Hagreen as 'Probably the most unappreciated engraver of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.'

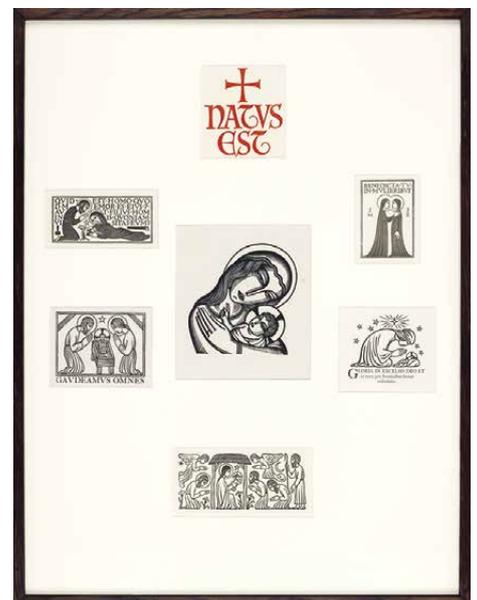
The Hagreen works, only relatively recently framed for composite display, are a little gem. Some ten years ago we arranged for a print run from the David Jones woodblock to be made available to Friends as Christmas cards, echoing



the artist's initial intended use back in 1925. The words 'OMNES DE SABA VENIENT' come from early Epiphany carols 'all shall come from Sheba showing forth praise to the Lord'. We are all too aware that the relative imbalance within the Collection, between the wealth of images relating to Christ's Passion - fine works as they are - and a visual telling of the Christmas Story, is something we would wish to address. Mr Google is reluctant to divulge the relevant,

comparative numbers held in the National Gallery, but I would hazard a guess that, numerically, there is little to choose between the two. The acquisition of a small

Henry Moore *Madonna and Child* print remains very much on our wish list; something we are always hopeful of addressing when both opportunity and finance permit. So, if any reader happens to have such a work that they might see fit to donate, please do get in touch!



(Above) David Jones (1895-1974), *Three Kings*, 1925. Engraved woodblock. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

(Right) Phillip Hagreen (1890-1988), *Natus Est (He is Born)*, 1923-55. Six small prints on paper, mounted together. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

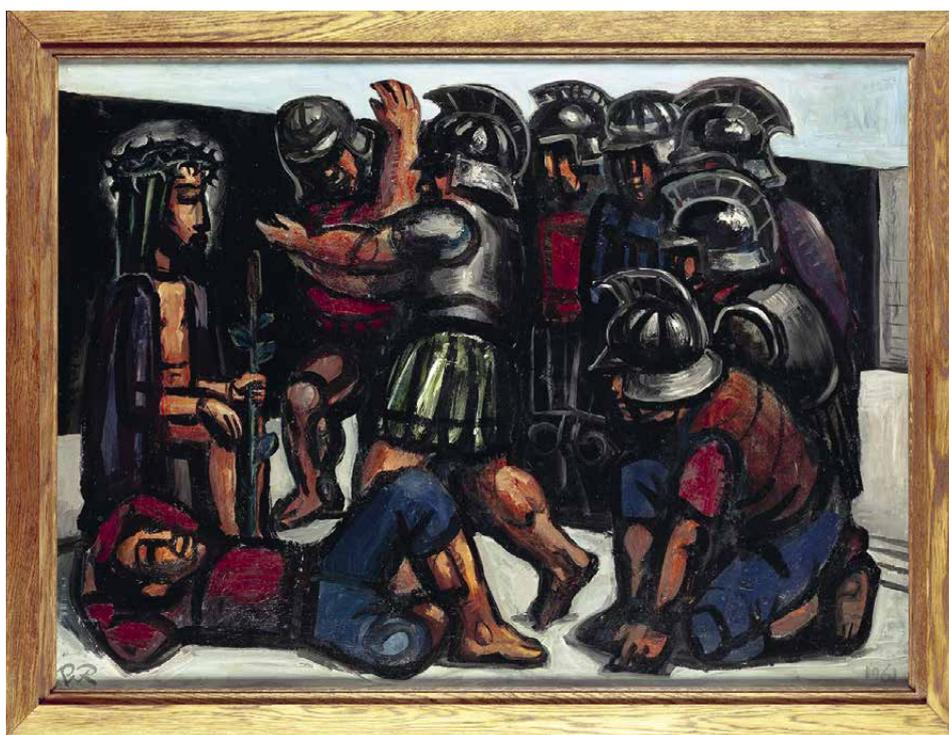
## A FURTHER UPDATE ON THE RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMME...

Our excellent conservators, Ruth Bubb and Louise Vaile have continued to busy themselves, on our behalf, over these particularly trying past 12 months.

By way of reflecting on this lengthy programme of conservation and restoration, that is well on the way to completion, Ruth Bubb writes...

‘The purpose of the on-going conservation project was twofold: to repair wear and tear on the paintings resulting from an active loans programme, and to protect them so that they can continue to be shared and appreciated by more people in the future without further damage. In many cases, this has involved replacing the existing frames with a physically more robust moulding, to withstand the cycle of loan exhibitions, entailing frequent packing, transportation, unpacking, handling - often with the involvement of volunteers, and display in venues that are not necessarily designed as museums. The new frames now incorporate features, such as increased depth and recessed backboards, specifically aimed at reducing the most common types of damage noted in a preliminary condition survey of the Collection.

Whilst frames are aesthetically significant, framing also has a part to play in preventive conservation. The



frames are fitted with rigid, twin wall polycarbonate backboards and glazed with museum quality low reflect acrylic glazing, which in diffuse lighting can be almost invisible. The sealed structure of the frame provides physical protection during handling and on display. It also protects the painting from the effects of variable environmental conditions at exhibition venues far and wide’.

Five works recently signed off by Ruth, as being fully restored, are – *The Mocking of Christ* by Peter Rogers, *Crucifix and Candle: Night 1950* by Patrick Heron, *Untitled - Pentecost* by John Brokenshire, and Mark Cazalet’s *Nathaniel (asleep under the fig tree)* and *Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)*.

Work undertaken on *The Mocking of Christ* is typical of the meticulous approach required. Careful analysis under UV light allows for greater clarity in spotting areas of previous retouching, identification and removal of often minute foreign bodies and trapped fibres, (dating from former conservation interventions) and can reveal distortion of the canvas caused by the sheer weight of thick paint layers. These are just some of the problems that came to light. The phenomenon of ‘non-drying’ twentieth

century paints is another headache for restorers; something that is **only now** the subject of serious research and is not yet well understood.

Remedial work therefore included re-stretching the canvas, consolidating areas of raised paint cracking and minor indentations in the canvas and re-mounting in a new frame, to an agreed design and fitting new museum standard acrylic glazing.

And on it goes. Ruth describes work on four paintings, by Dennis Hawkins, John Reilly, William Roberts and Francis Hoyland as ‘nearing completion’. This will then leave 13 works still to be conserved. There is also an agreement in place for a sculpture conservator to work on the four aluminium reliefs by Frank Roper *Stations IV, VII, XIII and XIV, from a set of Stations of the Cross*, together with Michael Edmonds’ *The Cross over the City*. The Ropers had to be ‘temporarily retired’ from touring some years ago, on account of their fragile state. It will be exciting to have them available to interested parties once again.

*The Editor*

*'The Methodist Ascension - perhaps the most graphic I've ever painted...'*

It is always sad to have to report on the passing of one of our artists. By a timely coincidence it was on last year's Ascension Day that I, belatedly, learnt of the death, in May 2018 of Peter Rogers. His remarkable work, within our Collection, on this very theme never fails to make a real impact whenever it goes out on loan. The painting very much proves the point that he is invariably described as a visionary painter. His good friend, sculptor David Wynne, described his work thus - 'As with Giotto and Blake, he reminds us of our childhood dreams and aspirations'. Rogers always maintained that the inspiration for this particular work came from his experiencing a vision on one occasion when he happened to be in London's Royal Albert Hall.

Although prolific in his output it is hardly surprising that he was not particularly well known to art lovers in the UK as he was, for much of his later life, based in New Mexico where he tended to maintain a low profile. He, nevertheless, remained a proud member of the Royal Society of British Artists.

It might be of passing interest to take a look at an alternative version of

*The Ascension* (see below) sold at auction, by Bonhams, back in 2005. Dare I suggest that it does not quite match the quality of his 1963 oil held within the Methodist Modern Art Collection? A view perhaps confirmed by the artist himself who considered the Methodist *The Ascension* the best of a series that he painted - 'perhaps *the* most graphic I've ever painted'.

Rogers was represented for many years by a gallery in Santa Fe, capital of the State of New Mexico, a city whose artistic credentials are perhaps better acquainted with the artist Georgia O'Keeffe.

His friends and his family remember him as a brilliant, humble, gentle, and passionate man.

The other work by Rogers, held in the Collection, is *The Mocking of Christ*. Wrexham poet David Subacchi contributes to this short tribute in the shape of another of his occasional poems, inspired by works from the Collection. Reproduced by kind permission of the author.

*The Editor*

## The Mocking of Christ by Peter Rogers

Two incidents are combined here  
Or perhaps confused  
The mocking of Christ  
And the crowning with thorns  
But it does not matter

Eight Roman soldiers  
Are having fun  
By baiting and insulting  
A seated Christ  
They are helmeted

And wear armour  
Except one who reclines  
On the floor  
Of the governor's palace  
As if preparing for sleep

I ask a Minister about him  
Oh he is just fed up with it all  
He answers  
Who wouldn't be  
Mockery must be heavy work

Leaving the exhibition  
At the Methodist Church  
In Regent Street, Wrexham  
I remember that the council  
Has incorrectly translated

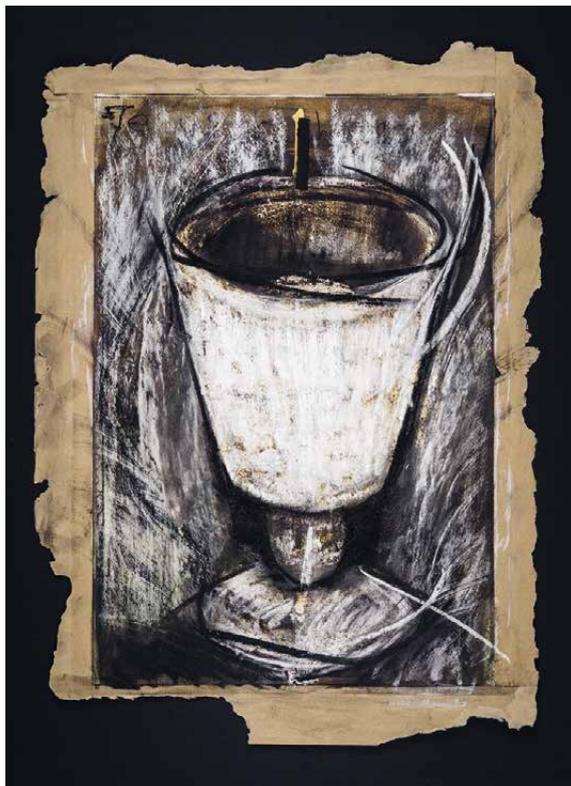
The street name into Welsh  
Using a word that means  
Governor and not Regent  
A reminder that these days  
There is always something  
To be fed up with.

(Opposite, top)  
The fully restored  
and reframed  
*The Mocking of  
Christ* looking  
rather splendid.  
Photo: Ruth Bubb

(Opposite, bottom)  
Detail from *The  
Mocking of Christ*  
showing a small area  
of the painting in  
UV detail, revealing  
either losses of  
surface layer, and/  
or retouching.  
Photo: Ruth Bubb

(This page) Peter W.  
Rogers (1933-2018),  
*The Ascension*,  
1964. Oil on canvas.  
Sold at auction.  
Photo supplied





## VIA CRUCIS

*(‘An interpretation of the Way of the Cross using Scriptural Stations’)*

In recent years, my Via Crucis series has been shown over the Lenten period in the cathedrals of Exeter, Hereford, Worcester and Peterborough, and most recently in Bath Abbey. In the light of what we have all been facing with the global pandemic, and with Holy Week again approaching, I felt the need to revisit my original notes on the 14 works.

### *The Cup of Acceptance. Station I:*

This morning, I sat for a while in front of this image and came to a deeper understanding of what it means, especially in this extraordinary time. Our lives have been so disrupted, and we are having to find new ways of dealing with the change in our everyday routine, in our work, play and the way we communicate with each other. With *Acceptance* comes commitment, to ‘stay safe’, both we ourselves and, where possible, assisting our neighbour in so doing, thus helping to slow down the spread of this virus. In using commitment to find positive

ways to deal with what is in front of us we can celebrate and share the gifts we have through different channels of creativity such as singing, art, theatre, dance - and thus maintain a positive hope for the future.

*Washing of Hands. Station V:* Rather a pertinent title for these times.... In this station Pilate symbolically washes his hands of any further responsibility for Jesus. In our present day we are washing our hands, with the added important ingredient of soap, to prevent this contagion spreading. The symbolism of water to cleanse, is found in so many religious rituals across the World: in Catholicism, Judaism, Hinduism and many more. Today I found Thich Nhat Hanh’s short Buddhist prayer, ‘Washing of hands’, and have added a line of my own. I will now be using this as I wash my hands, during these unsettling days -

‘Water flows over these hands;  
May I use them skilfully to  
preserve our planet  
as I construct and shape this day.’

May you all ‘stay safe’ and well.

*Crown of Thorns. Station VI:* There is a lot of fragmentation in this picture, the jagged brown paper, the golden orb that has been shattered into the crown of thorns. What a shock it must have been for the followers of Jesus, to see him abused and subjected to such terrible degrading treatment and suffering, causing many to despair and feel hopeless. The creative journey is often like this. Beginning with excitement and enthusiasm, and then comes a place where nothing seems to work, you have to let go of what you know of expectations and projections and be in a place of emptiness before anything real can manifest itself. We are witnessing the disintegration in so many lives, yet so many are using their creative resources to reach out to others and give hope.

Readers may recall seeing a reproduction of Caroline’s rather fine painting of *The Cockerel - Station IV* in the Spring 2016 edition of the Newsletter.

## THE EMPTY TOMB

I sometimes go to the Orthodox services. One Easter, attending a Greek Orthodox liturgy for the Resurrection, the priest

talked about the first Easter morning, when the Holy women went to the tomb. They did not go, full of joy, wearing Easter Bonnets which, from an early age was my experience of celebrating Easter Sunday. That first Easter Day was a very different experience for the women. The priest pointed out how shocked and disturbed they must have been to find an empty tomb.

When I make collages, I usually begin with a fragment from a discarded drawing, and then let an image unfold. In this case, this collage was made soon after attending the above-mentioned service. I had been thinking about what it would have been like to see the empty tomb and not comprehend what had happened, so the image emerged through tearing and attaching bits of previously created images and, maybe, corrugated paper, drawing and adding marks and introducing the gold, which sets it apart from simply being any empty tomb.

### THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER

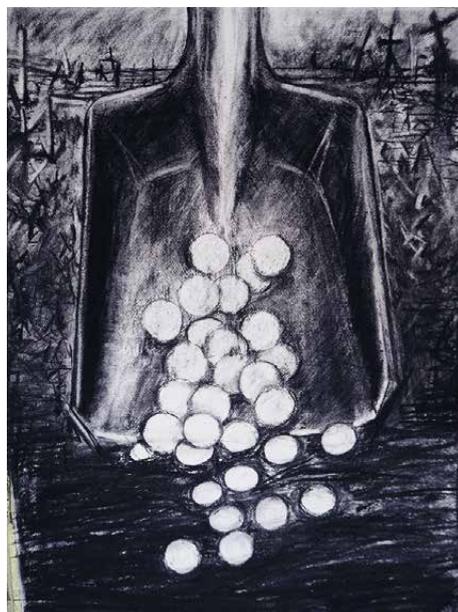
In this recently completed drawing I set out to explore the unanswered question - What actually became of the thirty pieces of silver that was the payment for Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Christ? Other than knowing that 'they were thrown down on the floor of the Temple' there appear to be conflicting accounts as to where the silver ended



up... Might it indeed, as tainted 'blood money' have been buried, with Judas' body, in a hastily dug grave? Looking rather more closely at the background and you see hints that this is perhaps on the edge of Calvary... Look again and it might seem to morph into areas of barbed wire, maybe on a World War I battlefield?... Or is it an image of some rather more distant killing fields in the perennially nasty wars that always seem to afflict some corner of the planet? Interpretation is perhaps, once again, in the eye of the beholder...

### SOL INVICTUS

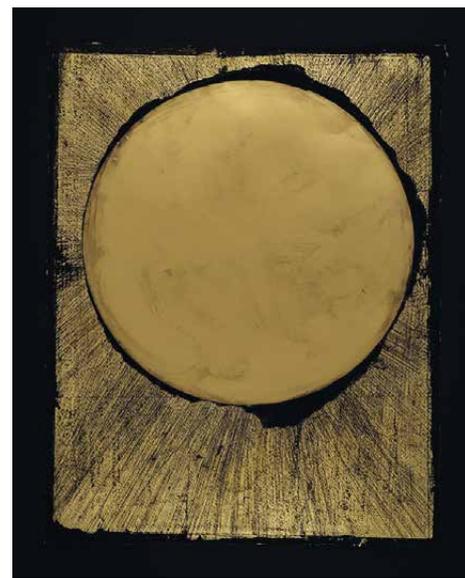
Sol Invictus, the Unconquered Sun, is the initial inspiration behind this image. It is an ancient Roman celebration of the sun, commemorated on 25 December. In creating this collage, I chose to work with this image. The sun is so much bigger than our individual lives. The sun is as a life giver, all life is sustained by it, even when hidden by clouds it is still there. All over the world, people have aspired to bring the spiritual into their lives, as they recognise a greater force than their daily grind of merely ensuring survival. The presence of God permeates all our lives, no matter what our belief or religious leanings. Using the symbol of the sun for the Resurrection Station, I felt I linked it to that important time of the year when the sun rises in the sky again, and we celebrate the birth of



Jesus into the world. And again, with his resurrection, he bursts out of the mortal flesh he took on and shows his true nature - the Unconquered Son. An image for Easter Day.

*Caroline Waterlow is an artist and Friend of the Methodist Modern Art Collection and has, on occasions, exhibited her work in tandem with the Collection, notably at St. John's Methodist Church, Llandudno, Nexus Walcot Methodist Church, Bath, and in Bath Abbey, where her painting, 'The Refugees', an image of the Holy Family, in flight to Egypt, remained on show for an extended period.*

### The Editor



(Opposite) Caroline Waterlow (b.1951), *The Cup of Acceptance, Washing of Hands*, (Both from *Via Crucis*), 2014-15.

See also Front Cover: *The Crown of Thorns*.

All fourteen works are mixed media including wood ash, metal leaf, pastel, charcoal, acrylic and ink on paper. Photos: Peter Stone

(This page, above) Caroline Waterlow (b.1951), *Sol Invictus*, 2019. Collage: Fabriano paper, gold paper, gold leaf and charcoal. Photo: Peter Stone

(This page, far left) Caroline Waterlow (b.1951), *The Empty Tomb*, 2014. Collage. Photo: Caroline Waterlow

(This page, left) Caroline Waterlow (b.1951), *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 2018. Charcoal on paper. Photo: Peter Stone

## A TIMELY LOOK AT THE ANNUNCIATION

*Friend of the Collection, and our Northern Correspondent, Revd John Lansley offers us a personal insight*



We may study paintings of the Annunciation for all sorts of reasons, from art-historical analysis to using it as an iconic aid to devotion. With Lady Day, The Feast of the Annunciation celebrated on 25 March it seems an opportune moment to consider how various important artists have approached this quite challenging subject. The first which I got to know well was by Domenico Veneziano in the Fitzwilliam Museum. It introduced me to Early Renaissance Art and I still love the calm beauty of the colour and design both in the setting and in the reverent exchange between the two figures. More recently John Drury's book 'Painting the Word - Christian Pictures and their Meanings' (Yale University Press in association with the National Gallery, London, 2015) has focussed my attention on a range of versions of the Annunciation, from Duccio to Poussin. We can appreciate these from an art-historical or aesthetic standpoint, but, as Drury (formerly Dean of Christ Church, Oxford and now Fellow and Chaplain, All Souls College, Oxford) points out, they can also be read theologically as ways of meditating on the coming of the Word into human history. For the Annunciation is a *story* – a narrative explanation of the Incarnation, as the crucial merging of the interface between God and humanity and the coming of the Word into history.

The narrative elements which these paintings need to get across are the

giving and accepting of God's gift of the Word, and this is expressed in the relationship between the two pivotal characters. In Duccio's painting Gabriel strides in commandingly, while Mary almost cowers away, while at the other extreme Poussin's smiling angel points at the hovering dove and at Mary's womb, while she sinks back with open arms to receive Jesus. Probably the best known is the version by Filippo Lippi where the lunette shape of the canvas curves the two figures towards each other in an intimate conversation, while Mary looks down at the dove in her lap and God's hand points down in blessing.

What is perhaps missing from all these pictures is an element of surprise. Painters have tended to go to town on the splendour of Gabriel's appearance, particularly the wings, and it is understandable that Mary should wonder 'what manner of salutation this should be' (Luke 1.29). And perhaps Gabriel is equally surprised by Mary's youth and innocence: Certainly, he treats her bewilderment much more gently than he did Zechariah's earlier. I could imagine his amazement at the full incredible daring of God's plan, and the burden which can only be borne by Mary because of her innocence. Gabriel has brought God's Word: now Mary will bear Him.

## *Annunciation – A Poem by John, inspired by Lippi's masterpiece in the National Gallery*

The angel word-bearer  
bursts through time's wall  
in a swirl of golden plumes.

Poised, he salutes her: *Hail highly favoured one...*  
and pauses:  
*O God: this young, defenceless woman -  
She will be the seed bed for your Word?*  
Shedding his messenger pride  
Sinks to his knees:  
Hit by the divine plan  
And human vulnerability  
He stammers his message:  
*The Lord is with you?*

And she: *What? How?*  
*So be it.*  
Her book has come to life:  
*Behold, a virgin shall conceive*

The word-bearers face each other  
As slowly..., anxiously..., joyfully,  
God's Word passes between them  
and became God's Love.



(Top) Filippo Lippi, *The Annunciation*, 1449-1459. Tempera on wood. National Gallery. Photo supplied

(Above) Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255-1319), *The Annunciation*, 1307-11. Photo supplied

## BRIAN SHARP OFFERS SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS RELATING TO THE COLLECTION: 'SEEING THE SPIRITUAL' - THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION

*From 'The Marlborough Round', May 2020; reproduced here by kind permission*

*Brian remains our only Honorary Life Member of the Friends, to date and we owe him a considerable debt of gratitude for his on-going support of the Collection in so many ways. Also, belated but no less hearty congratulations to Brian, on his recent important birthday: 90 years young!*

'Back in the 1960s John Morel Gibbs, an eminent psychologist with strong

connections, dating back to wartime, with Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St. Albans was deeply concerned for Methodism, and its lack of culture, both in the visual arts and in the furnishings within its church buildings. Fortunately, he was in a position to do something about it, and he invited the Reverend Douglas Wollen, a minister in the East End of London (and a past minister in Penarth where John

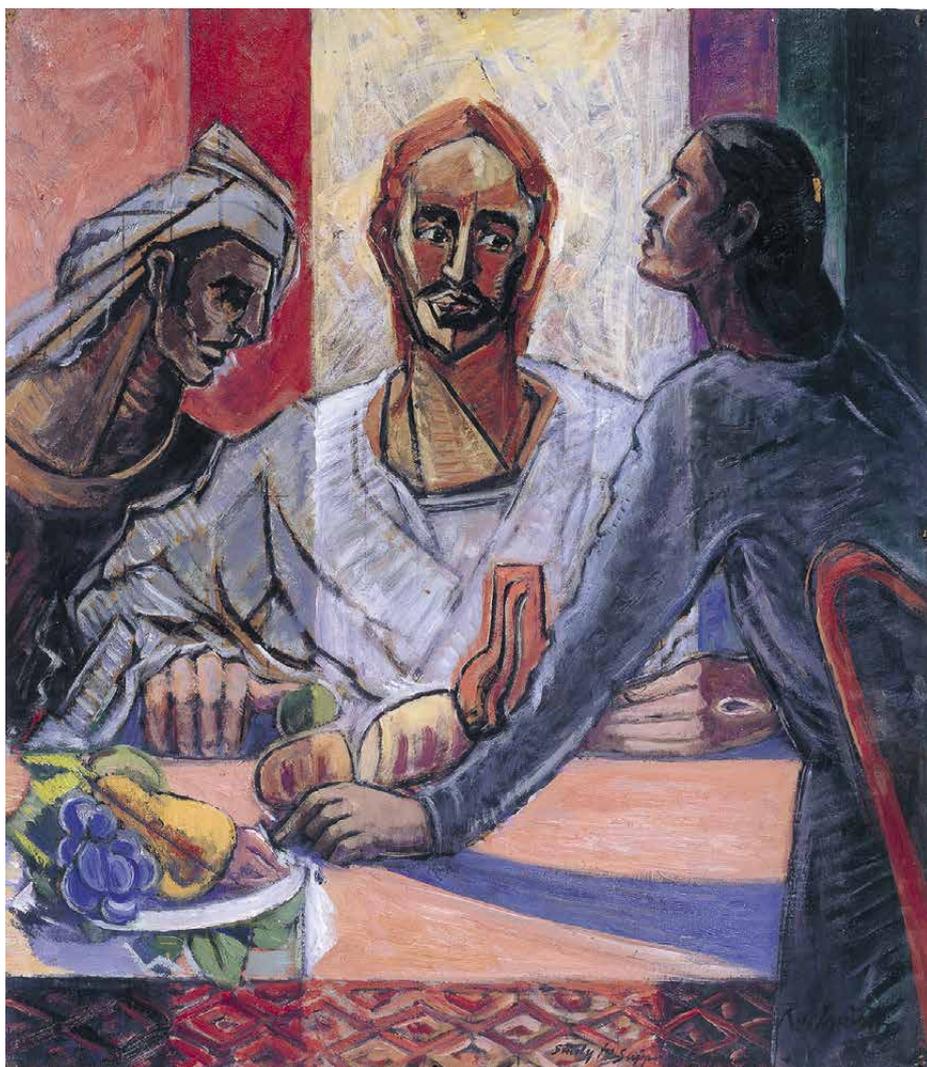
then lived), to purchase a number of contemporary religious works of art that ultimately were to become the core of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. In addition to his ministerial vocation Douglas was a regular contributor to 'The Times', writing on art exhibitions and collections and was therefore well placed to undertake this commission.

At the time of the launch of the Collection it comprised thirty-two works, represented by such artists as Edward Burra, Elisabeth Frink, John Reilly and Graham Sutherland. Today, with further acquisitions there are some fifty-five works in the Collection. As well as British painters, it features paintings by artists from Australia, France, Germany, India, Japan, Southern Angola and the USA. Almost from its inception the Collection has been available for exhibition throughout the United Kingdom although, at the time of writing, the entire Collection is undergoing a major programme of conservation and restoration.

It is impossible to show the entire Methodist Modern Art Collection in a publication of this nature, but I will just feature one of the paintings to give readers a flavour of what treasures make up the Collection - Roy de Maistre's *The Supper at Emmaus*.

The Collection has found respect throughout the art world and Methodism is probably the only denomination that can offer such a collection, en masse, that can, by arrangement, be made available to people in their own locality. We should be thankful that the Church is able to offer such a cultural experience to the world at large'.

*'We should be thankful that the Church is able to offer such a cultural experience to the world at large...'*



Roy de Maistre (1894-1968), *The Supper at Emmaus* 1958. Oil on board. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

# ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD

## A REVIEW OF THE SALISBURY EXHIBITION: CELEBRATING 800 YEARS OF SPIRIT AND ENDEAVOUR

*Salisbury Cathedral, March 2020-April 2021*

It was in early March 2020 that the exhibition 'Celebrating 800 years of Spirit and Endeavour' opened within the precincts of Salisbury Cathedral, their largest promotion in some two decades. Sadly, within a week, the Covid-19 lockdown meant that the building had to be closed to the public, although the few external, and very impressive installations remained accessible. This 'on-off' pattern of access has remained the way of things until the exhibition is finally set to close in mid-April 2021. Enormously frustrating for all concerned. However, the availability of a 'virtual tour' of the exhibits offered some compensation, with some 25,000 'hits' registered over the ten-month period to mid-January. [www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/spirit-endeavour-interactive-virtual-art-tour](http://www.salisburycathedral.org.uk/spirit-endeavour-interactive-virtual-art-tour)

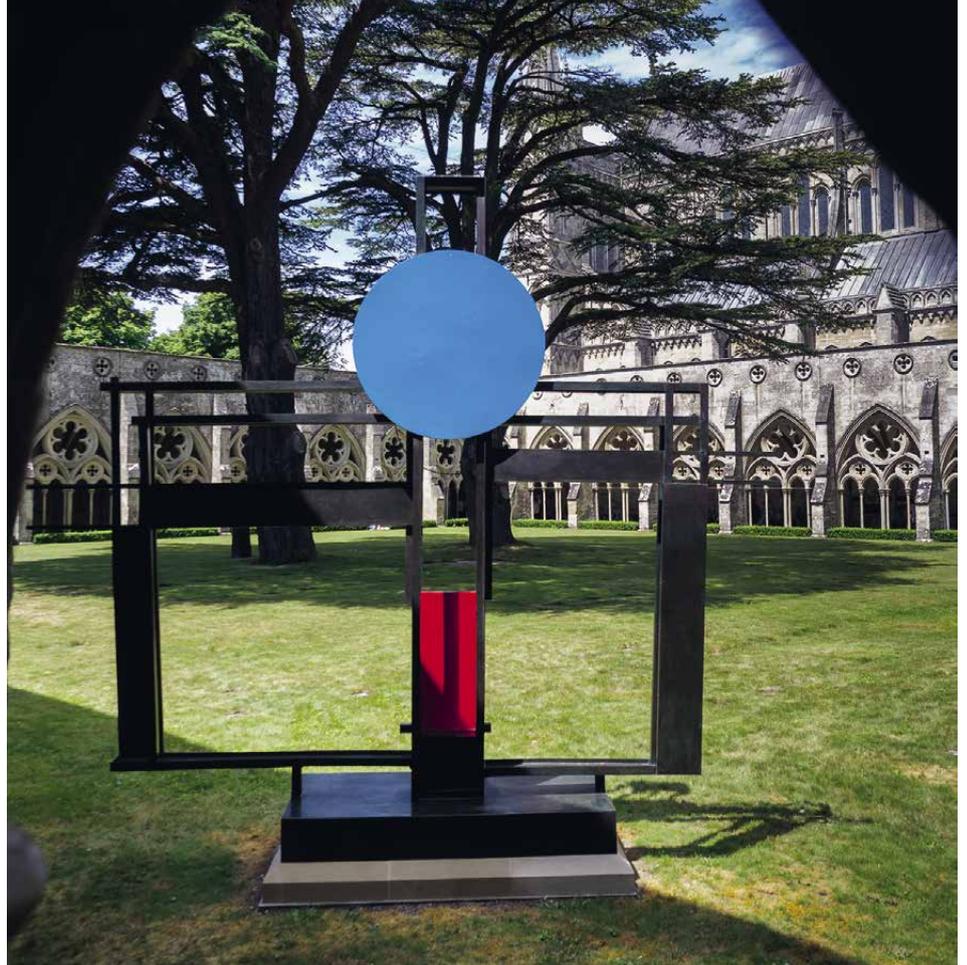
The exhibition was curated by Jacqueline Creswell, who was instrumental in bringing the Methodist Modern Art Collection to Salisbury in 2013 when the Collection was shown both in the Cathedral and the Young Gallery. As the Cathedral's Visual Arts Adviser, she assembled work from some of the most important and influential contemporary artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, including Antony Gormley, Shirazeh Houshiary, Henry Moore, Grayson Perry, Conrad Shawcross, Stanza and Mark Wallinger. With 2020 marking 800 years since the move from Old Sarum, the challenge for the curator had been to mount an exhibition that embodied the spirit, ambition, faith and endeavour that brought about that move and the construction of the present magnificent building now at the heart of this historic city. Dr Robert Titley,

Canon Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral and Chair of the Cathedral's Arts Advisory Committee is quoted thus - *'Art speaks where words often fail. What better way to mark the foundation of this extraordinary building? The works have brought their own meanings – and now, in conversation with this place created for the meeting of heaven and earth, new meanings are emerging for us to ponder, about what it means to be human – and, for some, about God.'*

The exhibition, in some ways, seemed to home in on the fragility of our lives. Aspects of the Cathedral's life over the centuries were examined in works

like Lynn Chadwick's *Sitting Couple on a Bench* and Grayson Perry's *Death of a Working Hero*, which called to mind the working men and women who built the Cathedral and the families that made up its community.

Shirazeh Houshiary's *String Quintet*, an evocation of sound waves with their varying flow patterns, referenced the music that is central to Cathedral life, while other work like Craigie Aitchison's *Crucifixion* explored overtly Christian subject matter, addressing the faith that inspired the Cathedral to be built and that has sustained it ever since. Aitchison's painting is loaded with mixed emotion, from the sorrow of pain to the promise of redemption. It is physically huge and has to be the largest Aitchison painting, on this familiar





theme of his, that I have come across, measuring as it does, over two metres in height and pulsing with both colour and spiritual meaning. Richard Harries, the former Bishop of Oxford, speaks of finding in Aitchison's religious paintings 'a powerful sense of spiritual isolation' and even a 'sense of pity'.

On the North Lawn, Henry Moore's monumental *Large Reclining Figure*, one of the best known and most iconic examples of Moore's fascination with the reclining female figure, seemed to strike a note of poignancy when juxtaposed with the Cathedral, which is dedicated to Mary, the Blessed Virgin.

*Daedalus* by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, the legendary craftsman cast in bronze from prefabricated aluminum and brass casting moulds, again spoke of the real craftsmen and women, who continue to restore and repair the work of their forerunners. Similarly, *Stairway*, a stunning piece by American sculptor, Danny Lane took us heavenwards, climbing ambitiously skyward in line with the spire, reminding us of Jacob's Ladder, set up between heaven and earth; the viewer's eyeline carried naturally through to the apex of the Cathedral's 55-metre, 14th century spire, the tallest in the UK. The two forms made almost seven centuries apart, seemed symbolically to link extraordinary achievements of vision and soaring creativity. This six-metre-tall sculpture has been one of the landmark works of the Cass Sculpture Foundation

at Goodwood. The artist himself writes - '*The poetic engineering of contemporary materials (post-tensioned industrial glass and steel) rhyme with the structural adventures of the medieval architects and masons who completed this magnificent cathedral in only 35 years. It's an honour to be in their presence*'.

Mark Wallinger's *Threshold to the Kingdom*, 2000 video installation was another interesting piece with a difference. In essence it invited the viewer to reflect on comparing the experience of returning home from a flight abroad, negotiating the transit, from 'airside' to 'landside', with the altered state of delivery into the Kingdom of Heaven itself. All to the gentle background of sound of the Allegri 'Miserere'. The Management Committee have, for some time, been keen to explore the possibility of acquiring an appropriate video work that might be toured as part of the Collection.

A clever and pertinent inclusion of a number of works from the Cathedral's own Collection sat well with the loaned works; among them, Barbara Hepworth's *Construction (Crucifixion)*: *Homage to Mondrian* will be familiar to many and the William Pye *Font* is always a showstopper. The Cathedral also commissioned new works from Bruce Munro and Daniel Chadwick.

In the excellent catalogue that accompanied this exhibition Jacqueline Creswell comments on the incredible

input of the entire workforce involved in setting up this very fine show, very much a race against time with lockdown looming. - '*A testament to the twin themes of spirit and endeavour which defined the whole exhibition*'. She, and they, are to be heartily congratulated on the end result.

As a footnote, I found it profoundly heart-warming and, somehow, entirely appropriate that this Cathedral, where prayers are offered up daily for the healing of the nation should, in mid-January, be turned over to the logistically demanding exercise of vaccinating large numbers of elderly folk with the anti-Covid 'jab'. All against the background of this fine exhibition with, as an added bonus, the sound of a sequence of familiar voluntaries played on the famous Father Willis organ!

*The Editor*



(Previous page)  
Barbara Hepworth  
(1903-1975),  
*Construction*  
(*Crucifixion*):

*Homage to Mondrian*,  
1966. Bronze with  
coloured panels

(This page, top)  
Danny Lane (b. 1955),  
*Stairway*, 2007.  
Glass and steel

(This page, above)  
Craigie Aitchison  
(1926-2009),  
*Crucifixion 8*, 1985-  
86. Oil on canvas

All Photos: Ash  
Mills Photography

## NICHOLAS HOLTAM: 'THE ART OF THE BIBLE'

The Right Revd Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury has written a number of books which touch upon his more than a passing interest in art. The following extract from a chapter entitled 'The Art of the Bible' from his book 'A Room with a View', written when he was Rector of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, makes for interesting reading. Readers may also find another of his published works, 'The Art of Worship: Paintings Prayers and Readings for Meditation', well worth investigating...

'One of the greatest privileges about being the Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields is to be the parish priest of the National Gallery, our near neighbour in Trafalgar Square. I love this partly because members of the first confirmation class I ever took as a curate in Stepney in 1980 were not very good at reading. I struggled with how best to engage them with the Bible... I bought some wonderful comic-strip books with titles such as *Moses – Desert Commander* and an excellent similar series of New Testament stories. Then I hit upon the idea that the National Gallery had a lot of pictures of biblical scenes and wondered whether my group of young people could cope with the cultural leap involved in looking at some of the great art of Western Europe. We duly visited the gallery and much to my surprise they seemed to accept it as no stranger than anything else presented to them by church. In looking, for example, at two paintings of the Nativity we explored



the difference between Luke's and Matthew's Gospels with their different pictures of Jesus. As with many clergy all over the country, I found that slides and postcards of these great paintings were a wonderful way of exploring the scriptures. Now, as I write this, I have the great good fortune of living opposite the National Gallery.

I know almost nothing about painting and the history of art, but the gallery has a superb, well-equipped staff and it has been a pleasure to learn from them. With the encouragement of the then Director, Neil McGregor who, of course, curated the millennium exhibition, 'Seeing Salvation', we began to explore the interplay of art and theology in a series of double acts: one of the gallery staff would talk about a

picture, I would read the biblical text that went with it, talk about the text and we would open a conversation about the painting and the text.'

*Bishop Nicholas was, of course, one of the VIP Guests at the opening of the 2013 'Faith in Focus' exhibition, in Salisbury, and spoke enthusiastically about the visit of the Collection to the city. He retires in July of this year, after serving the Diocese for 10 years. It can be no coincidence that this last decade under his stewardship has seen a particularly rich vein of contemporary religious art exhibited both within the Cathedral and around the extensive Cathedral Close.*

*The Editor*

*'With the encouragement of the then Director, Neil McGregor, we began to explore the interplay of art and theology...'*

Bishop Nicholas Holtam speaking in the Young Gallery in Salisbury at the opening of the 'Faith in Focus' exhibition, 2013

## EDITOR'S FAREWELL

It was a chance turning of a page in the Methodist Recorder in July 2008 and my eyes settling on an interesting looking 'ad' that led to my getting in touch with the then Chair of the Methodist Modern Art Collection, John Gibbs. He and his wife Liz then drove over to my Wiltshire home to give me 'the once over' (job interviews were perhaps less formal in those earlier days!) – and the rest, as they say, is history.

The brief, as the newly appointed Secretary to the Friends, was to oversee the setting up of this new, supportive body, ensure the steady receipt of an associated income flow and to keep membership informed through the distribution of a six-monthly Newsletter. This 25<sup>th</sup> edition - a Silver Jubilee! - marks

'keeping the works in good order and the show on the road'. This would, of course, equally well apply to what all my former colleagues on the Management Committee are involved with, on a day-to-day basis.

Highlights over the years have included witnessing our Friends Group Launch, both at the former Wesley College, Bristol and Central Methodist Church, York. Again, personally seeing the Collection so well received in such geographically diverse locations as Taunton, Salisbury, Llandudno and Bath. It was there in 2016, in the Abbey, that we took the opportunity of progressing the planned collaboration between Cultureshock Media and Tim Marlow, with the production of the

Ann Baker, and Katharine herself. We have had our good-natured battles over my rather generous use of 'the comma and the capital letter' - and they were almost always correct with their judicious amendments!

And, finally, an acknowledgement of a very considerable debt to my wife Madeleine, both in recognition of her own co-proof-reading duties and in respect of the incalculable number of hours I have spent at keyboard and screen on both Secretarial and Editorial matters, effectively abandoning her. Time now to make amends!

Perhaps I could leave you with a little prayer that has been circulating and bringing some comfort over these long months of global, medical concern;

*'We continue to be grateful for the loyal support of all our subscribing Friends...'*

the completion of my 12½ year stint as Editor. At the 10 year point it was agreed that it would be a more equitable arrangement if we split responsibilities, with Ian Baker very effectively picking up the secretarial brief in the autumn of 2018. It is now timely that we see a fresh face as Newsletter Editor. Thus, I leave you in the very capable hands of Katharine Farnham-Dear and much look forward to reading future editions as she takes the Newsletter in directions new.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve the Collection, working with a team of dedicated folk who give so generously of their time. My strapline response to all newly signed up Friends of the Collection was to assure them that their subscription goes towards

memorable 'An Introduction to the Methodist Modern Art Collection' video footage. A particular moment to savour was a busy day with the camera, in July 2012, capturing the Olympic Relay on the streets of London, seeing Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General to the United Nations, holding the flaming torch proudly aloft, to enthusiastic acclaim, immediately outside Westminster Central Hall. Then my having to dash inside in time to witness the Revd Martin Turner open 'The Sacred and the Modern' exhibition, there in the crypt of our 'Methodist cathedral!'

I remain enormously grateful to my team of eagle-eyed proof-readers - Sarah Middleton, who has in all truth proved a vital anchor as an unofficial Sub-editor and more recently, Ian and

not inappropriate for art lovers and practitioners alike...

"Prayer for Many Gifts" by Stephen Cherry, Dean of King's College, Cambridge - used with kind permission

*Give me, O Lord, a calm soul and a clear head, a broad mind and a generous spirit. Give me a hunger for justice and a thirst for peace, a passion for truth and a love of mercy. Give me a painter's eye and a poet's tongue, a saint's patience and a prophet's hope. Give me a sage's wisdom and a fool's delight, a pilgrim's purpose and an angel's content.*

We continue to be grateful for the loyal support of all our subscribing Friends; this is so important. Many of you have been with us since our initial launch in November 2008. God bless you all.

# FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2021

## 4 September - 4 October 'Stories of Change: Hope, Faith and Love' Art Trail

### Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit

Relaunch of the Collection after our Rejuvenation Pause, to dovetail neatly with the celebration of Coventry's designation as UK City of Culture 2021. The Coventry Art Trail will begin appropriately in the Cathedral and feature works displayed in two other city locations namely Methodist Central Hall and Warwick Road United Reformed Church. Visitors will then be encouraged to follow the trail beyond the city centre into churches in Earlsdon, Balsall Common and Fillongley which are part of the Coventry and Nuneaton Methodist Circuit.

Coventry Cathedral, Priory Street,  
Coventry CV1 5AB;  
Methodist Central Hall, Warwick Lane,  
Coventry CV1 2HA;  
Warwick Road United Reformed  
Church, Warwick Row, Coventry CV1  
1EX;

Earlsdon Methodist Church, Albany  
Road, Earlsdon, Coventry CV5 6NF;  
Balsall Common Methodist Church,  
228 Station Road., Balsall Common,  
Coventry CV7 7EE;  
Fillongley Local Ecumenical  
Partnership, Church Lane, Fillongley,  
Coventry CV7 8EW

Contact: Christine Welham, 02476  
473932

E-mail: welham147@btinternet.com

## 7 September - 14 October 'Global Images of Christ and the Holy Family'

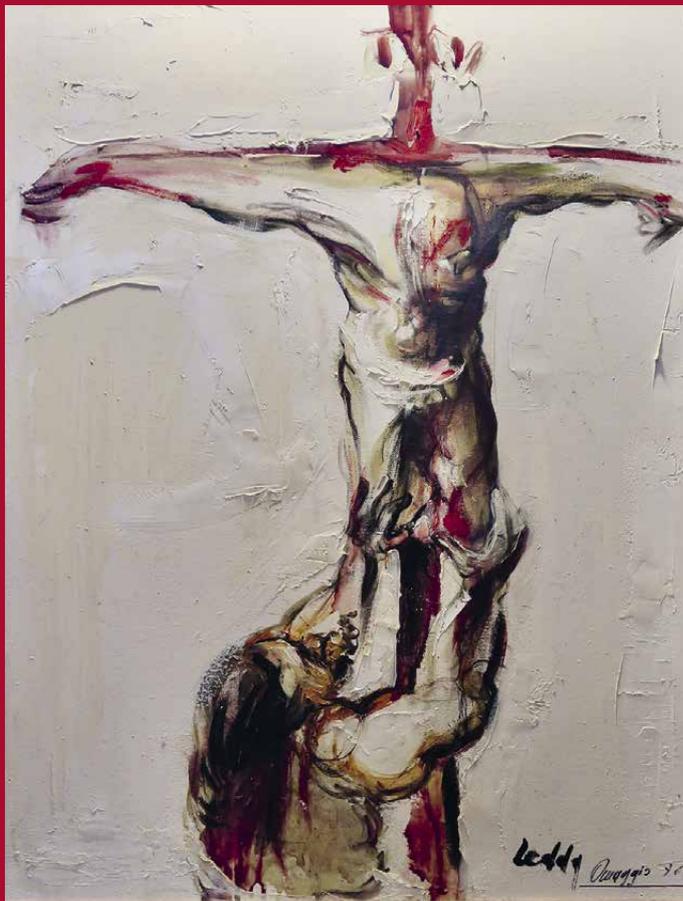
### Chester Cathedral (Possibly subject to date changes; do please check)

To include five works from the  
Methodist Modern Art Collection by  
Mark Cazalet, John Muafangejo and  
Roy de Maistre

Jointly curated with the Chester  
Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility

Contact: Revd Canon Jeremy Dussek,  
01244 324756

E-mail: office@chestercathedral.com



Perhaps reminding us that we don't have a monopoly on dramatic, contemporary representations of The Crucifixion, a painting, by an unidentified artist, on the wall of a small cloister chapel in the Basilica of St Francis, Alghero, spotted by a friend of the Editor while on vacation in Sardinia. Photo: Dr Keith Bennett

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

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### A THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

*'Alongside religion, art has been  
humanity's chief source of consolation...  
There is no reason why it should not  
continue to function in this way now.'*

ALAIN de BOTTON (Advice offered by him as a means of coping with the strain and stress brought on by the lengthy coronavirus lockdowns)