NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE METHODIST MODERN ART COLLECTION

NO. 33 – SPRING 2025
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Methodist Modern Art Collection

Lent in Southwark Cathedral, Holy Week in Kirkby Stephen

Farewell to Graham Kent

The Collection at Bradford City of Culture

New Acquisition

NO. 33 – SPRING 2025

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Spring issue of the Newsletter. In it we pay tribute to the work of the Revd. Graham Kent, who stood down from the Management Committee in August. I always found him an inspirational colleague and his knowledge and passion will be sadly missed. We then look forward to some of the loans and exhibitions happening this year, and learn about the latest acquisition.

In our next issue we will be celebrating the achievements of our Chair, Prof. Ann Sumner whose term of office on the Management Committee sadly comes to an end this September.

My thanks, as always, to Fonz and the team at Cultureshock Media for all their help in producing this Newsletter.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

Management Committee Members
Prof. Ann Sumner (Chair), Katharine Farnham-Dear, the Revd. Catherine Hutton, David Maddock (Secretary, Friends Group), David McEvoy, Corinne Miller (Vice-Chair), Peter Shears, the Revd. Adam Stevenson, Peter Wakelin. In attendance: Jo Hibbard (Director of Engagement), Liz Millard (Collection Administrator), Olivia Threlkeld (Heritage & Collections Officer).

Patrons of the Friends of the Methodist Modern Art Collection
The President of Conference, the Revd. Helen Cameron, The Very Revd. Nick Bury, Phil Allison of Cultureshock Media, Lord Leslie Griffiths of Bury Port

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Front Cover: A young person contemplates Norman Adams' *Behold the Man* on display at Southwark Cathedral (photo: K. Farnham-Dear)

NEW MEMBER OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Peter Wakelin

The newest member of the Management Committee is Dr. Peter Wakelin. Peter was nominated by the family of the Collection's co-founder, Dr. John Gibbs, and his appointment was approved by the Connexional Council of the Methodist Church last December. In addition to the main committee he will join the Collection Care Conservation & Development Working Sub-Group.

Peter is an independent writer and curator who works across the disciplines of visual art, built heritage and industrial history. He is President of the Contemporary Art Society for Wales and chairs the Board of the Welsh heritage body Cadw.

He first encountered the Collection twenty years ago when he curated an exhibition about the private and public art collecting of John and Sheila Gibbs, *An Art-Accustomed Eye*. He has followed its events and exhibitions partly through the involvement of his husband, artist Clive Hicks-Jenkins, whose painting *Christ writes in the dust – the woman taken in adultery*, entered the Collection in 2011. Peter says: "I've long admired both the contents of the Collection and the creative ways that it's shared with the public in diverse venues. I'll be glad to contribute my experience of curating exhibitions and caring for collections to the work of the Committee in the next few years."

Peter grew up in Swansea. His parents, Richard and Rosemary Wakelin, were artists active in several groups and Peter was frequently roped in to help hang exhibitions. His passion was industrial archaeology. He read Geography at Oxford University and took a masters at the Ironbridge Institute. After a research fellowship at Wolverhampton Polytechnic and a doctorate on the navigation of the River Severn, he went to Cadw as its

first Inspector of Industrial Heritage. He co-authored the nomination of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape as a World Heritage Site. Later, he was Secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and Director of Collections and Research at Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales, where he was responsible for all the curatorial departments, including the renowned art collection.

His publications include authoritative guides to World Heritage sites, monographs on several artists and numerous exhibition catalogues. In 2023, his exhibition for the Brecknock Art Trust, *Hill-rhythms: David Jones + Capel-y-ffin*, which attracted 10,000 visitors to y Gaer in Brecon, included a woodblock by David Jones loaned from the Collection. An exhibition at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea last year celebrated the annual purchase award Peter and his family established in 2000 with the Friends of the gallery in memory of his parents.

Peter recently moved with Clive to the Monmouthshire countryside.

A View from the Chair

Professor Ann Sumner

All good things come to an end and sadly I am now writing my last *View from the Chair*. It has been an honour and privilege to lead the Methodist Modern Art Collection through a period of considerable change since my appointment in 2018. I will be continuing in post until September 2025, as my role has been extended to oversee crucial New Home negotiations and the Bradford City of Culture project, as well as a groundbreaking curatorial co-production exhibition over the summer months. I have been on the Committee for 21 years, since the 2004 *Art-Accustomed Eye* exhibition at the National Museum of Wales, where I was then Head of Fine Art.

My first *View from the Chair* was in the spring of 2019 when we announced the Rejuvenation Pause following generous funding from the Methodist Church for a programme of conservation and reframing to enable the Collection to continue touring and being enjoyed by future generations. We reviewed our administration introducing new procedures for the professional loaning of the Collection. We also wrote our first official policy documents, which have proved vital in negotiating a new home. Our Rejuvenation Pause was then extended because of Covid-19 restrictions. 2020 and 2021 saw the postponement of exhibitions in Coventry and Bewdley. Shortly after the final lockdown lifted, we opened our Art Trail across Coventry City of Culture with a rousing packed opening. There is no doubt that the long tail of the pandemic has defined my Chair role. Even the wonderful Eastbourne exhibition last May was partly delayed by Covid.

In 2022 it was a pleasure to open our first inter-faith exhibition in Bristol in partnership with the Royal West of England Academy and to see the Collection so well received at Kingswood School, Bath, for the worldwide Methodist Schools *Transforming Lives* Conference. We have also made some key individual loans over the years,such as Norman Adam's *Behold the Man* to Southwark Cathedral, and a long-term loan of the famous Frank Roper *Stations of the Cross* to Woodhouse Grove School where they have inspired students over the last three years. In my role as Chair, I have travelled the length and breadth of the country and enjoyed helping to hang the works, open exhibitions and give lectures and talks.

It has undoubtedly been a particularly busy period over the last few months as Lead Committee Member for the City of Culture 2025 *Everything is Connected* Art Trail across Bradford, working in partnership with Verity Smith, Faith and Arts Development Lead in the West Yorkshire District (see her article on pages 10 and 11). I've been specifically involved with community curated events at Ben Rhydding Methodist Church. We successfully applied to the Gibbs Trust for funding for the Writer in Residence in January. This follows the appointment of the Artist in Residence for Bradford 2025, also generously supported by the Trust. The Trust has also met the exhibition's transport costs. Working with the District and the Trust we now have a really exciting programme ahead this autumn. David Maddock and I enjoyed visiting Bradford Cathedral in February to discuss events being organised there. The opening weekend events on 4 -7 September will be attended by the President of Methodist Conference.

Before Bradford 2025 however we have Kirby Stephen's *Revelation* exhibition (see page 5). We always seek

to support rural locations who request the Collection and I'm looking forward to seeing Stephen Radford and his members again in their beautiful church, when I go to lecture on 24 April.

I am thrilled that two new acquisitions, George Walsh's *Preaching* and John Reilly's *Love Triumphant*, will be on display for the first time in Ben Rhydding this autumn. I know our founders would have been delighted to see an abstract artwork enter the Collection and Reilly's work is discussed further on pages 12 and 13.

My time with the Committee comes to an end shortly after that of my colleague the Revd. Graham Kent who has played a key role on the Committee for many years. We have worked together for a long time and this Newsletter is a key tribute to him and his dedication to the Collection. I am also sad to announce that Emily Fuggle has had to step down. She so enthusiastically convened the Exhibitions and Planning working sub-group, bringing her museum experience, and contributing to our new approach to interpretation. Emily has a new teaching position at Queen Mary University of London and we wish her well with this. We are

A View from The Secretary to the Friends

David Maddock

delighted to welcome a new Committee member, Dr. Peter Wakelin, a former colleague from my days working in Wales, who brings many relevant skills and much experience. Currently an advert is out to recruit other new Committee members, and we hope this might appeal to some of you. Jo Hibbard, Director of Engagement, is leading the recruitment process for my successor to be in post by September when I stand down. I wish them all the best in the role and thank my fellow Committee members past and present as well as you, the Friends and supporters of the Collection.

My final hope is to find a permanent home for the Collection. Positive discussions are currently progressing. There are hopefully firm foundations for all activities on which my successor can build. I look forward to seeing many of you in Bradford this September. Lastly my thanks go to Katharine Farnham-Dear for her excellent editing of this Newsletter.

Ann Sumner in Bradford in front of *The Ramadan Pavillion* by artist Zarah Hussain and FAUM's Lead Designer Fatima Mujbil. David and Ann visited just after it was unveiled in Centenary Square in February 2025 (photo: D. Maddock)

Friends should be aware that the Revd. Graham Kent's excellent lecture 'Acquiring New Works for the Methodist Modern Art Collection' may still be accessed on the Methodist Church website at: https://www.methodist.org.uk/faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/art-collection-resources/videos/.

Later this month,Friends will be notified by e-bulletin of a lecture by Corinne Miller intriguingly entitled 'A little free daylight, hooks and string and they'll talk away quietly and continuously all by themselves: The paintings of Eularia Clarke'. As readers will be aware, Corinne is Vice-Chair of the Management Committee, an Associate Tutor on the MA in Museum Studies at Leicester University, and the former Head of Culture, Arts and Heritage for Wolverhampton City Council.

We also hope, this year, to introduce a series of five-minute Reflections on particular works from the Collection which, again, will be brought to the Friends' attention by means of the e-bulletin.

Lastly, I would ask Friends to make a note of the Reception and Lecture by Professor Ann Sumner on Wednesday 10 September 2025 from 7.00 – 9.00pm at Bradford Cathedral. Entitled 'Seeing the Spiritual: the Story of the Methodist Modern Art Collection' the event is conceived as part of the Bradford City of Culture celebrations and the multi-site exhibition of works from the Collection in the city. Just as importantly, as far as the Friends are concerned, the event also marks the end of Ann's contribution first as Trustee and then as Chair of the Management Committee. Do attend if you can, or, alternatively, watch the video, details of which will be disseminated by e-bulletin.

If you are not yet a Friend of the Collection and would like to join us, please contact me at friendsofmmac@gmail.com.

Current Loans and Exhibitions

LOAN TO SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL

The Management Committee are delighted to be loaning *Behold the Man* by Norman Adams to Southwark Cathedral in London to be their Lent art piece 2025. The Cathedral has a tradition of using a work of art as a focus for Lent.

Visitor Engagement Officer, Emily Thorne, says: "We hope that by looking into the face of Christ's suffering, we embrace all those who are suffering in the world today. This relates to our commitment to social justice and, specifically for 2025, modern slavery. We will be working with the charity Hestia on this theme."

The work is hanging in the sanctuary at the High Altar of the Cathedral and visitors will be able to leave a short, written response to it.

Behold the Man © TMCP hanging in Southwark Cathdedral (photo: O. Threlkeld)

REVELATION! REFLECTIONS ON THE PASSION AT KIRKBY STEPHEN

During Holy Week, Kirkby Stephen Methodist Church in Cumbria will host an exhibition entitled *Revelation! Reflections on the Passion* featuring works from the Collection. Using a new approach, three works will be originals - Roy de Maistre's *Noli me tangere* and *The supper at Emmaus,* and Ceri Richards' *The supper at Emmaus* - while the other two - Gislaine Howard's *The washing of the feet* and Jacques Iselin's *The Elements of the Holy Communion* - will be high quality reproductions. It is hoped that this exhibition will model a new way of touring the Collection whereby 'pre-curated' selections on particular themes can be hosted by churches with more limited resources.

The exhibition will feature storyboards. On these, the minister at Kirkby Stephen, the Revd. Stephen Radford, has interpreted the significance of the events depicted in the pictures, whilst Management Committee co-opted member David McEvoy, who is working on the Lived Experience Artists' Biography Project, has provided biographical information about the artists. The biography of Roy de Maistre is something of a revelation in itself as he is an Australian artist little known in the UK.

On the morning of Thursday 24 April Professor Ann Sumner will give a talk about the Collection and the church will host services throughout the week.

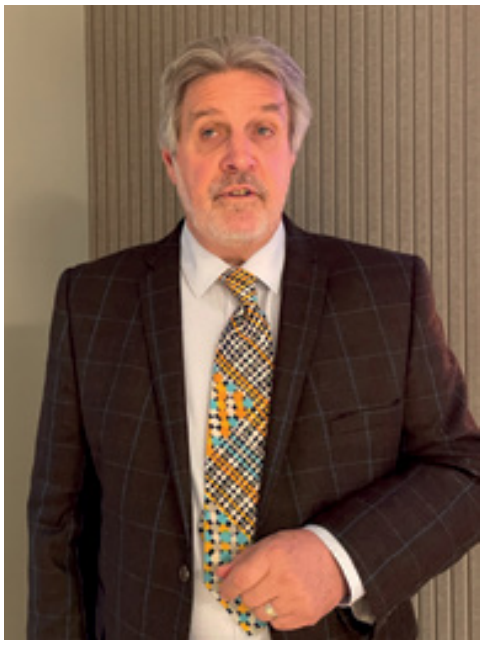
Kirkby Stephen Church forms part of the Kirkby Stephen, Abbleby and Tebay Circuit situated in a deeply rural area between the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District – a beautiful place to visit in the Springtime. Kirkby Stephen itself is a traditional market town of historic buildings, cobbled yards, quaint corners and interesting shops in the beautiful Upper Eden valley.

For further details see back page or contact stephen.radford@methodist.org.uk.

Roy de Maistre's *Noli me tangere* © TMCP will be on display in Kirkby Stephen Methodist Church

Graham Kent

In Focus



The Methodist Modern Art Collection has been a major part of my life and ministry for a long time. Sometimes it's kept me sane (or saner!). It is a wonderful collection and I am very attached to some of the works including the ones I have been involved in acquiring. It's been very special.

I first encountered the Collection in 1975 when I went to Wesley College Bristol to help lead a clergy training event. The Collection happened to be there, left behind from a previous event, and I was asked to talk about some of the works. That's how I started to use the visual arts in my ministry.

God gave me a gift and I try to use it. I was able to realise that art could speak to me and to others. I always appreciated well designed things - a school staircase, a London bus, - I 'had an eye' as someone later put it.

At primary school we went into the local parish church, which was more dramatic than our Methodist chapel, and they had a very good reproduction of a mother and child by Raphael which absolutely stunned me. And I came to realise that art was a way of God addressing us and helping us to address Him.

Later, the Methodist Church paid some of the fees for me to study for my masters degree in Art History because they thought they should have at least one minister who knew about about these things. So whilst serving in Circuit I did an MA part time at Leeds Polytechnic: The History of the Interpretation of Art.

In the early 1980s I was encouraged by the Methodist Church's Property Division to work with others calling on congregations to think about what their buildings looked like - presentation, lighting, colour, comfort, welcome. There was a major report by the Property Division on how the church should deal with its listed buildings reflecting the growing conservation movement. And I later became minister of a very beautiful listed building - Heptonstall Methodist Chapel. I wanted to be involved in getting it restored properly and using it to teach people about Christianity - Turning Tourists into Pilgrims - using heritage as a means of evangelism.

For a while I was Visual Arts Secretary for the Connexion two days a fortnight. I felt it was important to listen to what artists were saying in our culture. The Church should always know what people are talking about. William Temple said, "You can't redeem what you can't understand", although, of course, it is God who redeems, not us. What are artists saying to us? How are people responding? We live in a world of multiple languages; more than when Temple was alive, and more than when I was ordained in 1978. We need to be able to find ways of talking about God which are not the traditional ways. Christian history has shown us that art can really enable people to worship and to explore. It can provoke people to think about the big things facing them and facing the world, such as death and climate change.

Then in 1997 I was asked by Secretary of Conference, Brian Beck, to form a Working Group to consider the future purpose, management and governance of the Collection. That group included John Gibbs, son of the founder of the Collection. After submitting our report, John became the Chair of the 'Trustees' of the Collection, and I became the Secretary. In due time, the 'Trustees' morphed into the Management Committee.

It is important for the Church to have this art collection. Every year thousands of people go to art exhibitions and galleries or look at art online. We live in a very visual culture, but some of it is very fleeting. The Collection requires people to stand still, to pause and to be addressed. It requires people to think about it, to chew it over and to form their own opinions. The Church has tried in the past to dictate what people should look at and how it should be understood, and that has not worked. People have their own relationship to God, and God addresses people as He wishes. Art has its place among all the other languages and media that are available. Exploring something like suffering cannot be done in trivial ways and we need art as a language as well as verbal ones.

For example, when I went to Kings College London to read theology, I was a guest in the Theological Hostel in Vincent Square. There was chapel there with a magnificent sculpture by Louis Osman, a pupil of Jacob Epstein. It is now in a chapel of Kings College on the Strand, (King's website explains, 'the silver mantrap cross by Louis Osman is made in the shape of a working mantrap.... based on the idea that Christ on the cross prevented evil from trapping mankind in death. The silver palm leaf, symbol of the Messiah, holds apart the jaws of evil, a crown of thorns, so enabling man to go free.'). It was very unusual, and it was rather mind blowing for me, as a country Methodist aged 18, when I was told to pray with it! But I decided to pray with it every morning for a year. This enabled me to explore many things about prayer and about the sacrificial death of Jesus. I have a photo of it in my study to this day. It made me realise artworks can enrich spirituality in a way which is beyond the literary.

The Collection can help people discover they are spiritual beings and if this just happened to one person, it would be worth having it.

I have been involved in about thirty exhibitions, but the most memorable was when the Collection went to Ballymena in Northern Ireland in 2015.

I knew the Moravian minister, now a Moravian Bishop, Sarah Groves when she was in West Yorkshire. Sarah moved to a Moravian settlement just outside Ballymena called Gracehill. She had seen the Collection in Bradford and she said: How about bringing the Collection to Ballymena?

Ballymena had been a loyalist stronghold and been through some vicious, violent times. There were still army watchtowers in place. There was a group of ministers from about 20 different denominations and a very courageous council of churches. Being invited by them to take the Collection to this place where there had been such terrible conflict, where Christian denominations had a long history of distrust and where churches were still so diverse, was a very interesting experience. Ballymena wanted to reinvent itself and there was generous funding available as part of the 'peace dividend'. The town had a very good arts centre that was able to take the whole Collection, so it was a big exhibition. As there were brilliant curators dealing with the technical side, I was able to concentrate on how the Collection was used. I spent a lot more time on this exhibition than normal. At weekends, individual works were lent out to individual churches, churches that were making real efforts to listen to each other and begin to trust each other despite their difficult history. Somewhat mischievously, I suggested inviting a minister from another denomination to come and talk about the work of art lent to each church. This was groundbreaking! For some people unity and diversity and healing and reconciliation and trust-building is not at all easy. But the Collection shared in that ministry of reconciliation.

I will never forget the formal civic opening event. There are always church leaders and civic dignitaries who want to speak at these events. At this one, everyone wanted to be there from all the denominations that were taking part and from every political party. They all wanted to speak, and they all wanted be photographed with me as a representative of the Collection. The event took about three hours! It was very important that everyone was there and was listened to in a neutral space. They were very anxious, but also very proud. The most moving thing, at the end of the opening, was a joint choir of children from two denominational schools, Protestant and Catholic, singing together. All their parents and teachers were there, and many were weeping because they never thought they would see those two schools singing together. It was so momentous. I talked about this at Focolare as it seemed appropriate to their ecumenical vision.

Going forward, I am part of the committee organising a tour of Scotland by the Collection in 2026. The Collection hasn't been to Scotland since the millennium when it went to Edinburgh and Glasgow. I was involved in that too. Those were two wonderful exhibitions. Methodism is a small but faithful denomination in Scotland and doing some incredible work there. The Collection is going for a Gathering in Dundee to be held before a Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland. (The theme in 2026 will be Gathering to Create). And the Edinburgh Circuit is keen to host the Collection during the Edinburgh Festival. We are still exploring other different locations - maybe Kirkcudbright where I am fortunate enough to own a house. Management Committee member Adam Stevenson is also very much involved.

We have this wonderful Collection. We should use it well, and we have done in many many ways. We need a good home, but the Collection should also keep touring. It should keep being refreshed, keep inspiring and encouraging and comforting and consoling and all things that works of art can do. God speaks to people through art. The most important thing that can happen to a human being is to discover God, so we must do all we can to help this to happen. As St. Paul says, "By all means, to save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

Graham Kent's Choice of Work

I am very committed to Graham Sutherland's *The deposition*. I think it is a magnificent work. I am very happy with everything we have acquired, but the Sutherland is a wonderful piece, and he is a great artist exploring this great theme of the deposition and burial and, I think, almost the resurrection, of Jesus in a very powerful way.

One of the high points for me, after many many years of thinking and praying about it, was for the Collection to be in Coventry during the City of Culture and for our Sutherland to be in the Cathedral below his phenomenal tapestry, *Christ in Glory in the Tetramorph*. I still find it moving thinking about it now. When Coventry Cathedral opened in the 1960s that tapestry was the first time I had seen something of modern art as a child. I loved it, and I bought a brochure or a postcard and showed it to people in my local chapel. I remember two or three people, good thoughtful people, being horrified at Christ being portrayed that way; they had no time for any kind of abstraction. But I thought it was amazing that people were 'speaking' about Christ today and not just reproducing a gothic cathedral, much as I like gothic cathedrals. This was so different. I didn't know anything about Sutherland really. I just thought this was a thing of enormous impact. The sheer size of it! And it was tapestry!

Every square centimetre of this painting is different. Sutherland's sheer skill in handling paint and colour is just amazing. And, in the right light, this picture is about the dawn of the Resurrection as well as the burial of Christ. This body is going into the tomb, but it also looks as if it's about to spring out of the tomb. The image is very sacramental. We can see a chalice; the grave-clothes like towels for the foot washing on Maundy Thursday; we can see the frontal of an altar. The tomb is eight sided like a font for full immersion baptism. This was painted in 1947. We know Sutherland, like many of his generation, was profoundly affected by photographs of the liberation of the Nazi death camps. The central figure is emaciated, like a camp victim. And it could be male or female. The theology of the Passion of Christ is much more multi-faceted than we sometimes realise, including His being with us in all the messes and the pain of our lives. This work speaks to that.

The deposition by Graham Sutherland © TMCP, the Revd. Graham Kent's choice from the Collection

Working with Graham Kent

Former Chair of the Management Committee, John Gibbs, shares his memories of working with the Revd. Graham Kent.

For many years, I worked beside Graham Kent to promote, display, and interpret the Methodist Modern Art Collection. Our collaboration began back in 1997 when I was a member of a Working Group that was convened to consider the future of the Collection. Graham chaired that group which made the decision to base the Collection at Westminster College, Oxford, and to create a management body, then called 'The Managing Trustees.' Graham was asked to be Secretary, I was asked to be Chairman, and we had five fellow-trustees. In his capacity as Secretary, Graham had many responsibilities in those early days, perhaps the principal of which was masterminding the development of a continuing exhibition programme – then involving 5-6 showings per year, each lasting around 3-4 weeks. Among other things, this activity would normally involve him in making an early visit to a potential venue and meeting some of the people who, if things went ahead, would form the local organising committee. For my part, I took the lead in organising the production of the Collection's catalogue, which, written by Roger Wollen, appeared in various forms over the years.

Graham was a passionate, sometimes challenging, advocate for the Collection, who took the view that the forthright voice of common sense should be clearly heard. And I think I would link this approach with his down-to-earth conviction that the Methodist people across the Connexion should have as much opportunity to see their own pictures in their local church as in an imposing civic gallery (always assuming that the church meets the necessary display conditions, of course!).

Of the many fine exhibitions arranged by Graham during the period of my involvement, I would attach special significance to the work that he did to ensure the success of the exhibition at the splendid Braids Art Centre in Ballymena, Northern Ireland. Here it was seen as playing an important role in bringing the divided communities together, not least because it was recognised that the Methodist Church had created a collection that comprised works by artists coming from across the spectrum of Christian belief.

The breadth and depth of Graham's knowledge of modern art is truly impressive and he has a profound and personal relationship with works in the Collection. To hear him speak about them is a rewarding spiritual experience – whether he has been giving a key-note address in a great cathedral or leading the devotions at a Trustees' meeting. I will always remember the illuminating way in which he spoke to us about Graham Sutherland's *The deposition*!

He has constantly been alert to the work of artists that could be added to the Collection and I might conclude by referring to his role, together with the late Revd. Dr. John Taylor, in commissioning from the artist Ghislaine Howard the painting *The Washing of the Feet*. The result, in the view of many people, is one of the most powerful and moving paintings in the Collection.

The Revd. Graham Kent sharing his passion for the Collection at Ballymena in 2015. (Photo: John Gibbs)

MMAC Bradford 2025

Supported by the Gibbs Trust

We are very excited to be able to share more information on plans for the exhibition of Methodist Modern Art Collection works across the Bradford District.

As part of the City of Culture 2025 celebrations, five venues in the region will be exhibiting artworks from the Collection. The overall exhibition, held across two churches, one cathedral, an art gallery and a school, will open during the first weekend of September (Thursday 4 September to Sunday 7 September) until Sunday 12 October. Whilst they all will have their own theme, the venues will be linked via an Art Trail and by the overall theme for the exhibition, *Everything is Connected*. The exhibition is being coordinated in partnership with The Methodist Church's Yorkshire West Methodist District which covers the city of Bradford and its surrounding area.

We are delighted to be showcasing a total of twenty-three original works from the Collection, including new acquisitions *Preaching* by George Walsh, and *Love Triumphant* by John Reilly, which will be exhibited at Ben Rhydding Methodist Church. There will also be a series of reproductions of some artworks from the Collection displayed at several bars and cafes along the North Parade in Bradford. To give you a flavour of what to expect, the themes of the exhibition are:

Peril - in relation to faith, the environment, climate change and the impact of conflict around the world (Ben Rhydding Methodist Church)

'Jesus - Guru, Avatar, God?' - South Asian arts and heritage (Bradford Cathedral)

"Its Wings Are Almost Free" - Women artists and the legacy of the Brontes (South Square Centre, Thornton)

Women in the Bible (St James Church, Thornton)

Hope - and what this means to the school community on an international level (Woodhouse Grove School)

We are working with local communities, groups that relate to the themes, organisations, schools and individuals who would like to respond creatively to any of the artworks on display. We are also going to be working with volunteers who will kindly be giving their time to steward at venues, promote the exhibition and support creative activities over the coming months.

Here in the Yorkshire West Methodist District, we are enthusiastic about attracting a diverse audience to the exhibition and, as with previous City of Culture locations, we are expecting a significant proportion of visitors from outside the region who will be discovering Bradford and the region for the first time. We are very fortunate to have many local supporters of the Collection, several of whom are involved in supporting the exhibition and associated activities at each venue, and we know they will provide a warm welcome to all visitors during the exhibition run. I am personally very pleased to have had contact with several

Bradford Cathedral, a venue for the Art Trail

South Square Centre, Thornton, a venue for the Art Trail

circuits around the District thus far, supporting them with planning activities to engage their local communities with the exhibition and wider City of Culture programming.

MMAC Bradford 2025 is enabling opportunities for a variety of creative activity, and we are thrilled to be able to collaborate with an Artist in Residence and a Creative Writer in Residence* with funding from the Gibbs Trust. We are very grateful to the Gibbs family for their enthusiasm and encouragement with this. I must also thank all involved in the Connexional Team and the Management Committee who are supporting my colleagues and me to make this a success. I couldn't do it without you – thank you!

*(*In the process of appointment at the time of writing*).

If you have never visited the city of Bradford and the District, this is the year to do so, and you will be very warmly welcomed!

An Art Trail leaflet will provide more information for visitors on each venue, the exhibition of works and the associated programme of events. This will be published and distributed in the Summer.

If you would like more information on how to get involved and the programme of activity, please visit https://ywmethodist.org.uk/bradford2025/ or contact Verity Smith: verity.smith@touchstone-bradford.org.uk

Verity Smith
Faith & Arts Development Lead – Bradford 2025
Yorkshire West Methodist District

Yorkshire West Methodist District

New Acquisition

Readers will know we have once again started to acquire works for the Collection following our 'Rejuvenation Pause', and we were delighted to be approached by the executors of Stuart and Susan Brand with a proposal to give the oil painting, *Love Triumphant,* by John Reilly. It has been an ambition in recent years to acquire some abstract works to add to the narrative based works that make up the majority of the Collection.

Reilly (1928 – 2010), already known to readers from his four paintings in the Collection, once said that Christianity was "the leading interest in my life – it is my life." *Love Triumphant* eloquently conveys his stated aspiration to "express in visible form the oneness and unity" of the invisible power "which binds all things into one whole."

Reilly moved to the Isle of Wight in 1954 where he met and worked with the potter Joe Lester Senior before setting up the Ventnor Pottery Studio in 1958 with his wife, the potter Elspeth Henderson. He specialised in distinctive, brightly coloured ceramics, mainly plaques and tiles. One of his two daughters also became a potter. For about thirty years, he combined running the pottery with painting, but turned to painting full time in 1981.

Paintings have interesting lives, and *Love Triumphant* has been part of a family home for over fifty years and travelled across the world. Jo Randall, the daughter of Stuart and Susan Brand, has kindly provided this account of growing up with the painting and her parents who purchased the work:

"My parents, Stuart and Susan met each other in the late 1950s in Stepney, East London. Dad was an Anglican curate and mum a church youth worker. Dad had started his adult life (after national service) by studying Gas Engineering at Leeds University. After graduating, he decided to train to be a priest. Mum had done a range of things, secretarial training, mother's help, trained at RADA and also some repertory theatre and radio work.

They married in 1960 and moved to the seaside town of Ventnor on the Isle of Wight for Dad's first appointment as a parish priest. I was born in the vicarage in 1961, my brother in 1962. While they were in Ventnor, my parents bought a number of paintings from John Reilly's studio including *Love Triumphant*. I don't know how well they got to know John Reilly but I imagine they would have known him fairly well as Ventnor in the '60s was a close knit community of which the church was an important part. My parents never had much money to spare, so buying the paintings must have been a significant purchase.

In 1963, Dad took up a post as a parish priest in Africa during the transition into independence from what was then Nyasaland to Malawi. We travelled there by boat with our possessions (including the John Reilly works) packed in wooden tea chests. My youngest brother was born whilst we were in Malawi.

In 1964, we returned to the UK, with dad taking on a parish priest post in Wymering, near Portsmouth. My first memories of the Reilly paintings are from Wymering days, I think they were in my dad's study but am not absolutely sure.

In 1972, we were on the move again, to Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Dad had had some hospital chaplain experience whilst in Wymering and enjoyed it. This led to him applying for the post of hospital chaplain at three hospitals: Pinderfields General Hospital, Stanley Royd Hospital (formerly known as West Yorkshire Lunatic Asylum) and Fieldhead Hospital (a recently opened hospital for people with what was then known as mental handicap).

Dad loved the variety and challenge of his chaplaincy work. When I was old enough, I had holiday jobs at Stanley Royd and Fieldhead; this certainly broadened my horizons as I encountered people with difficulties that I had never come across before. I eventually pursued a career as an advisory teacher for children with special educational needs.

Mum and Dad had a wide range of friends from Stepney days onwards and there were always a lot of visitors from interesting backgrounds. The arts and theatre were important to them and they had many friends from these backgrounds. They also had strong socialist leanings and an acute conscience about people who had less advantages than themselves.

In 1979, Dad secured a hospital chaplain post at the Greenwich General hospital in London. They lived in Camberwell and then Peckham, with the paintings coming too, of course. I left home to go to university whilst my brothers stayed in Wakefield to complete their education.

When Dad retired, my parents moved to Oxford. *Love Triumphant* was in my dad's loft conversion study. This was very much his space, where he would listen to classical and church music, say matins, prepare sermons, write letters and generally curse his computer. He died at home in 2017, and Mum eventually needed to go into a care home. My brother and I took it in turns to visit Oxford at the weekends, staying at our parents' house. It was a sad time, but we both liked being there surrounded by furniture, objects and artwork that had been part of our lives over the years. Mum died in October 2023.

When the time came to think about selling our parents' house and sorting through their possessions, my brother and I would ask ourselves, 'What would Dad and Mum have thought/done?'. I did a little research online on John Reilly and came across some of his work in the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

I met Corinne Miller to hand over the painting in August 2024 at a service station on the A303 in Somerset. Over coffee, we chatted and discovered so many connections - that she lives in Wakefield (as does my brother still), that her daughter went to the same school as me, that she had worked at the former Wakefield Art Gallery (my parents had taken us there often) and that Fieldhead, where I once worked, now has a museum and arts resource base. Corinne talked about the ecumenical direction that the Collection was taking, an approach that would have been approved of by my parents.

These 'coincidences' made me feel that there was some kind of divinity at work and I returned home feeling confident that my brother and I had certainly done 'the right thing' to honour our parents' memory."

As part of the Methodist Modern Art Collection, *Love Triumphant* will continue to touch lives across the country. Its first showing will be at Ben Rhydding Methodist Church where a selection of works from the Methodist Modern Art Collection will be exhibited as part of Bradford 2025.

Corinne Miller, Vice Chair, Management Committee

Love Triumphant by John Reilly © TMCP

ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD

COLLECTION ARTIST CREATES NEW WORKS FOR NEW METHODIST CHURCH HOUSE

In 2000 Collection artist Nicholas Mynheer created a series of five sandblasted bonded windows for the chapel at Methodist Church House in Marylebone Road, London. In February 2023, the Methodist Church moved out of the Marylebone Road building for new premises in Tavistock Place, Bloomsbury. Unfortunately, the windows could not be removed and brought to the new building. Instead, the artist was commissioned to design a new series of stained-glass windows for the Tavistock Place building working with CAD (computer aided design). The resulting artworks were installed in November last year on the windows between two meeting rooms on the ground floor of the Connexional offices.

Nicholas Mynheer said at the installation "On Marylebone Road, Christ reached out to the people driving down the road but also spoke of what was happening behind him, in the building. Here, Christ speaks to people on both sides of the window. For me, the joy is that you can see through that screen and everybody's involved,"

The images on the stained glass reflect the missional and evangelistic nature of the Methodist Church and reference the description in of the kingdom of heaven in the Book of Revelation 22:1-3: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him...". The artist explained "The tree of life, whose branches are now shown bearing prominent fruits, represents all the connexions and projects that came out of the Connexional team. The positive imagery of the design is reinforced by the ripples on the river of the water of life running out across the world".

Artist Nicholas Mynheer with his new artwork at Methodist Church House

COLLECTION ARTIST'S UPCYCLED DOMESTIC OBJECTS AT LEICESTER CATHEDRAL

Meanwhile, Collection artist Mark Cazalet's colourful 2024 *Stations of the Cross* are on display in Leicester Cathedral from 5 March to 21 April 2025 together with poetic interpretation by Richard Leaf. All the surfaces of the paintings were originally domestic objects ranging from bread and cheese boards to clothes washing scrubbers and church collection plates, some embedded with nails from reclaimed roof timber.

COLLECTION ARTISTS AT THE PALLANT GALLERY, CHICHESTER

There is still time, until 27 April, to see an exhibition of Maggi Hambling's work at the Pallant Gallery. *Nightingale night* features 14 new paintings of differing sizes that explore how song, whether bird or human, can be transformed into gesture and colour. Visitors can also listen to the sounds and songs that inspired some of the works.

The Gallery says, "As expressed throughout Hambling's work, the paintings' incredible energy will explore the delicate balance of life and death." This reminds me that her work in the Collection, *Good Friday – Walking on water, 2006,* was part of a series painted in memory of her late mother in which she says she is "striving to capture the perfect image of life and death at one and the same moment".

And the excellent permanent collection at the Pallant includes more Collection artists: Aitchison, Sutherland, Frink, Heron and Richards. I particularly love to see these works of Modern Art displayed in conversation with the beautiful old Grade I listed Queen Anne townhouse.

Katharine Farnham-Dear

Maggi Hambling, *Nightingale night II*, 2023, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches © Maggi Hambling, (photograph by Douglas Atfield)

Pallant House (photo K. Farnham-Dear)

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Methodist Modern Art Collection

2025

Revelation! Reflections on the Passion
14 – 28 April 2025
Kirkby Stephen Methodist Church,
36 Victoria Square,
Kirkby Stephen,
Cumbria
CA17 4QA

Prof Ann Sumner's talk is on the morning of Wednesday 24 April.

The church has limited parking and disabled access.

3 Gen 2025
3–5 October 2025
The Collection will once again be represented at 3Generate 2025, the Methodist Church's Children's and Youth Assembly, at the NEC in Birmingham.

Bradford 2025
6 September to 12 October 2025
Works from the Collection will be exhibited at a number of venues as part of the celebrations for Bradford City of Culture.

Bradford Cathedral, 1 Stott Hill, Bradford, BD1 4EH
Ben Rhydding Methodist Church, Ben Rhydding Drive, Ilkley, LS29 8AY
South Square Centre, South Square, Thornton, Bradford, BD13 3LD
St James' Church, Thornton Road, Thornton, Bradford, BD13 3AB
Woodhouse Grove School Chapel, Apperley Bridge, Claverley, Bradford, BD10 0NR

Each venue has carefully selected works on a specific theme including women artists, South Asian art and heritage, peril in relation to the environment and the impact of conflict around the world. We also look forward to seeing reproductions of key works in bars and cafes along North Parade in Bradford city centre.

Wednesday 10 September: Friends Lecture by Professor Ann Sumner 'Seeing the Spiritual: the Story of the Methodist Modern Art Collection' 7.00 – 9.00pm at Bradford Cathedral. Followed by Reception. Supported by the Gibbs Trust.

Friday 3 October: 'In Conversation evening event: F N Souza in Focus' at Bradford Cathedral. Supported by the Gibbs Trust.

More details of venues and opening times will be in the Art Trail leaflet to be published nearer the time. Events at Bradford Cathedral will be bookable via the Cathedral website in the summer.

2026

Guildford
The Management Committee is supporting the team at St. Mary's Church in Guildford as they plan an exhibition of works from the Collection during Lent 2026.
Further details will follow.

Scotland
Vice Chair Corinne Miller is part of a team busy planning a tour of Scotland for works from the Collection in summer/autumn 2026.
Further details will follow.

2027

Marlborough
The Management Committee is supporting the team at St. Mary's Church in Marlborough as they plan an exhibition of works from the Collection during September/October 2027.
Provisionally entitled 'Picturing the Word', this is intended to coincide with the Marlborough Literary Festival.
Further details will follow.

AND FINALLY

We are delighted to report that our Lived Experience Artists' Biography Project is progressing well and the first batch of biographies will be appearing on our website this month. Prof. Ann Sumner says: "We are pleased with the research and the new light being shed on the lived experiences of artists and feel that this is a major project for the Collection that will genuinely transform the way that we present the artworks. So many of our artists are little known, so this will become a key resource for the future. Huge thanks to David McEvoy, who has undertaken the research, and to Katharine Farnham-Dear for working with me on this project"