Curator’s report

I’m delighted to write the Curator’s Report for this edition of the newsletter as I have been acting Senior Curator while Laura Turner is away on Maternity Leave. Laura gave birth to Margot Elizabeth Smith, on 17th August and both are doing really well.

Since the summer newsletter, there has been the very sad news of the loss of Kath Dunnington and, more recently, of Diana Hitchcock. Diana was a longstanding, loyal member of the Friends and Kath worked for a long time as Gallery Guide. Both will be dearly missed. Our thoughts are with Alan Hitchcock and Tony Dunnington and their families.

There has been a considerable amount of progress at the gallery since the last newsletter. The brand new Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA) gallery spaces are now formed on the first floor and looking stunning. The reception and shop areas are currently being designed and the contractors, Simpsons of York, will soon start to place the wooden flooring. If you look towards the gallery from Marygate, you’ll see that the scaffolding has now come down to reveal new rendering and a brick screen on the roof concealing the air handling plant. The wall of ceramic tiles will soon go up on the south side of the building.

In recognition of the most generous bequest by Peter and Karen Madsen, the suite of three ground floor galleries will be known as the Madsen Galleries. These galleries are almost complete, the first coat of paint is on the walls and the lighting track is installed, signalling that the re-opening of the gallery is coming ever closer. We are working towards relaunching in summer 2015 and will announce details as soon as we are able. We hope to hold a public event in the spring to reveal more about the opening displays, and our plans for exhibitions and events, so do look out for publicity about that.

The curatorial team have been extremely busy and continue to plan the opening exhibitions, artist commissions, gallery interactives and interpretation. All our well-laid plans will soon come to fruition as we prepare to start moving the collections back into new fine art storage and install all the gallery spaces, as well as all the reception and back of house areas.

We are extremely grateful to each and every person who has donated money to the Fine Art
Store appeal, which has now reached its target of £70,000! A truly remarkable feat and our heartfelt thanks go to you all. The new store will be more accessible than before and we will be organising regular tours of the store when the gallery is open. We are indebted to Tony Baker, whose help in designing the art store has been invaluable.

We recognise that two and a half years is a very long time to be without the gallery and the Friends committee has done a fantastic job in maintaining enthusiasm amongst the membership and even managing to encourage new members to join. The Friends continue to provide important support to our activities and we are grateful for significant grants this year towards conservation of several ceramics and paintings which will be going on display, including ‘Leaping Salmon’ by Bernard Leach. Recently a group of paintings from the Lycett Green collection have gone to Mark Roberts’s studio for restoration, including ‘St Zenobius’ by Renaissance artist Bernardo Daddi. The Friends have kindly supported two artist commissions, with Phil Eglin and Clare Twomey. They have also supported our Lowry: Take one Picture schools competition by funding artists workshops in schools. The results will be shown in the inaugural exhibition in our new Project Gallery. This is such an exciting time to be involved in York Art Gallery and we can’t wait to reveal everything that has been going on to the public next summer!

JENNY ALEXANDER
Senior Curator, Art and Science (Maternity Cover)

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**Getting ready for CoCA**

For those Friends whom I have not yet met, my name is Fiona Green and I am York Art Gallery’s new Collections Facilitator for Art. My job is to make the Gallery’s collections more accessible for everyone and in particular I am working closely with Helen Walsh (Curator of Ceramics) on our new Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA). I thought I would take this opportunity to discuss some of the projects that I am working on at the moment.

We have just launched a digitisation project to help get more of our collections online. There is a vast amount of archive material, mainly from WA Ismay’s estate but also items connected to the Milner-White and Anthony Shaw collections. The project will include photographing these objects and creating new records for them on our record management system Adlib. Our digital team work hard to ensure that any updates on Adlib are pushed through our systems within twenty-four hours to ensure our online collections have the most relevant and up to date information and images
on them. My mission is to get all our archival material created online within the next few years with the aim of encouraging new research and greater understanding of British studio ceramics and our collections. I am also very pleased that one member of the Friends of York Art Gallery has volunteered to help me achieve this mission and look forward to encouraging more of you to work with the ceramics collections.

Next year Helen, the YMT communications team and myself will be busy touring the country promoting the Centre of Ceramic Art in the run-up to the reopening of the Gallery in Summer 2015. We plan to attend many of the major ceramic fairs and events held across the UK, to raise awareness of CoCA and our plans. We will be taking examples of some of our pots for visitors to handle, some of our publications to flick through and will provide access to our online collection and other digital resources such as our films on YouTube and our online exhibition about WA Ismay. We want to generate interest in the wide range of workshops, learning programmes and family-fun events that will be available when the Gallery opens.

The big pack has already commenced in preparation for the move next year. With two large gallery spaces in CoCA to fill, along with objects being used in other exhibitions, we have approximately 2000 ceramics to wrap and safely box up. Some of our Gallery Guiding Staff are helping us in this mammoth task out in the cold museum store- hot cups of tea and biscuits have been flowing fast! The protection and conservation of our objects during transit is extremely important. We have to ensure that each separate object is comfortably packed with acid-free tissue paper and bubble wrap and stored safely in padded crates, ready for transportation. We have to carefully label each box too, listing each object inside and giving instructions as to which exhibition they will be placed in, to ensure a smooth and organised unpack.

In order to help make the Gallery’s collections more accessible I have had several meetings with community art groups in the York area and work closely with Gaby Lees (Assistant Curator for Arts Learning and Territories Coordinator) in order to plan a range of life-long learning, family and community activities and events for CoCA when it opens next year. I won’t spoil any surprises just yet but one volunteer project that runs across YMT in general, is Hands on Here which some of you may already be familiar with. This project is designed to be run by members of the community, providing other visitors with information and handling sessions using our collections. I will be overseeing these sessions for CoCA and hope that some Friends will want to participate. We can choose a theme that you are most interested in and I will help you to design a talk and/or handling session around this theme to encourage other visitors to take an interest in your interests!

As you can see this is a busy time for everyone at the Gallery organising and preparing for the big opening next year. I hope to see some more of you next year when I present a lunch time talk for you and in the
meantime, if anyone has any ideas for CoCA or interests in the ceramic collections then please get in touch with me fiona.green@ymt.org.uk.

FIONA GREEN

**Visiting the Mercer Art Gallery**

On 18 September a small group of Friends boarded a coach in York to visit the Mercer Gallery in Harrogate. The Mercer was holding an exhibition entitled Art and Yorkshire from Turner to Hockney, plus the bonus of a smaller exhibition of First World War posters by Frank Brangwyn which had recently been restored with the funding provided by the Friends of the Mercer. The curator, Jane Sellars, had agreed that upon arrival, during refreshments, she would give a talk on the exhibition. As it happened, as we arrived the curator was engaged with unexpected Gallery business, but nevertheless made herself available to our group and was particularly attentive, for which we are very grateful and thank her for her generosity of time.

The exhibition itself did not disappoint. The work was hung very cleverly in distinctive themes: Yorkshire’s landscape, its City and Industry, the sea, and, of course, its people. The work was enhanced by the wonderful clean lines of the Gallery which led one quite easily from one theme to another. It is almost impossible to pick out favourites because there were so many outstanding works on show. However, I have always been drawn to the wonderful Fred Elwell and The first Born (1913): the joy of the soft and warm light, the delicacy and poignancy of the whole painting moves me every time I see it. And what a wonderful surprise to see a self-portrait of the man himself alongside the work. I was once again astounded by the skill of the Brontes, which linked in very nicely with Hockney’s photographic collage entitled Ponden Hall (Thrush Cross Grange). What a joy it was too to see the curmudgeonly Alan Bennett there among the people of Yorkshire.

I mentioned Frank Brangwyn at the start of this piece. The Gallery gave the posters a prominent place at the beginning of the exhibition, and it was indeed a wonderful experience to see his remarkable work, so revealing of the anguish and pain of the era.

Thank you Mercer. It is quite fitting, I feel, that a selection of York’s own travelling art work will be exhibited there for a final stop before returning home.

JACKIE DAVID
The Lycett Green Wheel of Fortune

Spending time researching the Lycett Green Collection has really highlighted the huge impact that this gift has had on the history of York. But for such a pivotal event, I’ve been struck by how easily the collection could have ended up in another part of the country, or indeed, the world. Rather than stemming from a long held desire to give something back to the city of his birth, Lycett Green’s decision to leave his collection to York seems to have been the result of a series of twists of fate and sudden changes of heart.

While researching the Art Fund archives in August, I stumbled upon a memorandum from October 1937 noting that ‘Mr. F.D. Lycett Green called at the office as he proposes to bequeath his collection to the Wakefield Art Gallery.’ Lycett Green’s family were originally from Wakefield, and having spent a good deal of time in the city as a child perhaps this had been a longstanding intention. However, he seemed to have changed his mind less than three years later. A letter from 11th July 1940 revealed that Lycett Green was now considering leaving his paintings to York, but had reservations about leaving them to the Gallery. He wrote ‘I do not wish them to be hung in the existing art gallery on Exhibition Square which does not seem to me to be at all suitable or safe from the risk of fire.’ In the absence of a suitable display space in York, he put forward alternative suggestions. His first choice was the new National Gallery in Auckland, New Zealand, ‘to form the nucleus of a collection of old masters’ showing that wherever his pictures ended up, his primary concern was that they went to a gallery where they would have a truly transformative impact. Wakefield was still a contender ‘if they could be properly shown at the gallery there’, while the third option was Leeds, where his pictures could be shown either at Leeds Art Gallery or ‘they might look well at Temple Newsam’.

In 1947 Lycett Green had another change of heart. He wrote to the Art Fund again, instructing them to ‘disregard all the instructions as to the disposal of my collection of pictures’. He had now settled on a decision to give them to the National Gallery of South Africa at Cape Town. By this time, he had moved to Cape Town and was a trustee of the Gallery, which goes someway to explaining another about-turn. However, due to a difference of opinion with the Gallery Director he withdrew
the offer suddenly in 1954. That same year, Lycett Green paid a chance trip back to York, and on visiting the Gallery met its dynamic new Curator, Hans Hess. The encounter confirmed his final choice, and he pledged the entire collection to York. This one gesture transformed the Gallery’s reputation, swiftly establishing the city as a major centre of art historical research.

Incidentally, Lycett Green did end up leaving a few pieces of decorative art in the Gallery at Cape Town, including a fine collection of Iznik ceramics. Perhaps if he had foreseen the establishment of CoCA 60 years after his bequest those might well have been packed up and shipped to York too.

ELOISE DONNELLY
National Gallery Curatorial Trainee supported by the Art Fund.

The University of York History of Art Society

“History of Art” is a funny sort of topic, it seems. Utter the words to a new acquaintance and you will receive either a wide-eyed and rapturous description of favoured artists and current exhibitions, punctuated with questions about one’s own preferred movements and career aspirations: or the questioner will stare blankly at the air for a moment, before asking slowly, “So, paintings and things?” One then attempts to remember what exactly the first year course at university contained, in order to reply as splendidly as possible. Or, if the situation is the latter, we feel the fire in our burgeoning Art Historian hearts flaring up, and we spend the next half an hour subjecting the poor innocent person at the dinner party or on the train to much the same sort of enthusiasm as we received before, in a stunning attempt to lead them to the light, describing the life-changing effect of our favourite painting, the overwhelming joyfulness of impasto, the brilliance of Bernini. The Art History Society of the University of York aims to allow one to continue this conversation, albeit on a slightly grander scale, and with the addition of world-class support and opportunities, and the occasional party...

As our name implies, we are, in the first instance, essentially a straightforward academic society. Established in 2010 to complement the Department of History of Art, we have evolved over the last four years into an even more comprehensive and expansive organization. Our mission statement is:

“To provide the art-loving community of the University of York with opportunities and experiences designed to enhance understanding and appreciation of the art world and its career possibilities, as well as supporting members’ social and artistic interests during their time in York.”

With this in mind, we aim to provide our Members with both the serious – lectures, careers talks, internship opportunities, practical experience and first-hand contact with the art world
– with the social – parties, socials and film nights, designed to encourage the mixing and mingling that can be a challenge when nipping between the lecture hall, the library and the seminar room.

The Society is run by a small but perfectly formed committee, which is currently predominantly made up of second year History of Art students. We meet once or twice a fortnight, and have recently begun opening the occasional meeting to interested parties ahead of our elections next term, to allow them to see what we do and how we do it. We are all involved in other areas of University life – the Norman Rea Gallery and Unknown Magazine being two examples – which is providing some exciting opportunities for us to create some wonderful partnerships with other university initiatives and societies.

The Society has had a successful first term of this academic year, beginning with our beautiful stall at the University Freshers’ Fair, complete with homemade scones! Once we had explained the distinction between the Art Society (“no, we don’t offer life drawing”), the History Society (“no, we don’t do trips to the Berlin Wall”) and ourselves, the crowds proved very interested in this new sort of subject, particularly students (and academics too) from other departments, from Biology to Teaching to Philosophy to Law. This discovery of our extensive potential audience was very gratifying, and is inspiring us to reach out in the new year to even further outside our own department for new Members, speakers and partners. In October we took our Members to the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art at the kind invitation of our own Professor Michael White, to see an incredible exhibition with which he had been involved: International Exchanges: Modern Art and St. Ives. This proved to be a wonderful evening, providing opportunities for us to meet the brand-new Director of MIMA, Alistair Hudson; view in the flesh the work of some of the foremost artists of the early twentieth century, from Nicholson and Hepworth to Mondrian and Kandinsky; and see just what an exciting institute MIMA is. The exhibition is open until the 25th of January, and, deeming it very much worthy of the trip, we encourage everyone to go! We also headed to City Screen to see Tate Modern’s first “Exhibition on Screen”, Henri Matisse: The Cut Outs, and enjoyed a night out on the town the toast the end of term. This Spring Term we have an exciting array of events in the pipeline, from casual socials, the first of our “Teatime Talk” seminar series and a screening of the brilliant Mr Turner in collaboration with York Student Cinema, to a daytrip to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Hepworth Wakefield, and a fabulous end-of-term bash.

We are enormously lucky to have a great number of contacts and supporters at our fingertips, both within and outside the University. We hope to make the most of as many of them as we can over the coming months, be that by organising talks, internship opportunities for our Members, or Patronages of the Society. The Department, and the University itself, are very encouraging of us, and we would love to strengthen these friendships – the suggestion of the Society working with them to more extensively catalogue and emphasize the University’s art collection is one we will definitely be exploring further. Our involvement with you, the Friends of the York Art Gallery, a connection forged upon our joining with SASSY a couple of years ago, is one which we are enormously grateful for, and very much looking forward to exploring even further in 2015.
Introducing Magdalena Łanuszka

My name is Magdalena Łanuszka, I am an art historian from Cracow, Poland. I work as a Research Assistant on the new National Inventory Research Project (NIRP), which was created to provide the research on pre-1900 Continental European oil paintings in English public collections. NIRP is a partnership between the History of Art departments at Birkbeck, University of London, the University of Glasgow, and the National Gallery, London. It is a great adventure to work on the paintings collected in York: I have a chance to discover many interesting and often unknown aspects of the various masterpieces, which is often really fascinating. I would like to share my thoughts on one of the paintings that I have researched: “Ribera and his family”, 1861 by the Belgian painter Bernard Weiser (1822 - 1860s) (YORAG:159). The picture is quite typical for a 19th century academic painting; its subject matter is an everyday life scene set in the past, which in this case is the depiction of a painter and his family. The depicted artist is the baroque painter José de Ribera (1591–1652); he was born in Spain and his painting shows the influence of Caravaggio in its dramatic chiaroscuro and realistic forms. Ribera probably had a chance to meet the Caravaggionisti in Rome, although he quickly moved to Naples, where he stayed for good. By the Italians he was called Jusepe de Ribera or Giuseppe Ribera, as well as Lo Spagnoletto (“The Little Spaniard”).

Bernard Weiser depicted Ribera as an old man, painting two women; in the background we can see smoking Vesuvius. The painting was given to York Art Gallery in 1887 as “Ribera and his daughters” which, in my opinion, is actually the correct title, although the Gallery Catalogue assumed that the painting shows Ribera with his wife and daughter. Moreover, I think that there is an interesting story behind this picture.

José de Ribera married Caterina Azzolino, the daughter of Neapolitan painter. She was born in 1601, so she was 10 years younger than her husband; clearly the age difference between the people in the Weiser’s painting is much bigger. In fact, I assume that the scene in the painting happened in 1647. Their oldest daughter, Margerita, had been married for 3 years then (as a married woman, she has her head covered); her husband was a respectable judge - Giovanni Leonardo Sersale - so her social position was secured. Her little sister Maria was 6 years younger and we can see her wearing a wreath of flowers in her hair, as she is (still) an honourable 11-year old virgin. In 1647 de Ribera was 56, which also fits to this depiction. Why did I assume that it is all set in 1647? Because of Vesuvius! The volcano did not actually erupt that year, but tumults in Naples were promptly compared to a volcanic eruption by local historians. It was an uprising against Spain (Naples became part of the Spanish Empire in 1504), and to suppress it the army was sent, under the command of Don
Juan José de Austria, the illegitimate son of Philip IV of Spain. De Ribera actually even painted the portrait of Don Juan, who apparently was a regular guest in the painter’s house. Finally the scandal happened: Don Juan seduced de Ribera’s youngest daughter, Maria. She lost her virginity in the arms of the charming royal bastard and as a result she ended up with a bastard of her own… She gave birth at the age of 14 to a baby girl, who was brought up in the conven of the Decalzas Reales in Madrid and later became a nun there, known as La Serenissima Sor Margarita de la Cruz y Austria. In the documents she was referred to as a daughter of Don Juan de Austria and a grand-daughter of Ribera. She died in 1685.

Now we get the whole picture, don’t we? It is not just a family scene placed in the past: it is a story about impending scandal, which is always exciting. We look at the naïve smiling girl and we see the smoking volcano behind her: that makes us think of the destructive power of passion that may quickly ruin a good name that had been built for years. Soon, dear Mary, you will not be able to wear a wreath anymore, the shame will take away your smile. What a contrast to the respectable older sister! These were probably the thoughts of the audience at the exhibition in the Crystal Palace, exactly 150 years ago. And today it is a fun puzzle for the historian of art, and satisfying to find out what the artist might have meant.

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**A year (nearly) in the life of a new Executive Committee Member**

Well, did I know what I was letting myself in for? Of course not!

On an impulse earlier this year, I responded to a plea for new members of the Executive Committee of the Friends. Thus I found myself caught up in an election at the AGM, and, almost before I knew it, seated round a table in the Museum with a large number of people I didn’t know, attending my first Committee meeting. And the most unexpected of all was at that meeting, to be invited to give my opinion on an issue of real importance to the city of York! Phew!

That first committee meeting was exceptional in a number of ways, but since then I have found them all (so far!) very interesting and stimulating – quite unlike committees I have worked with in the past. As part of each agenda, we have to consider, discuss and decide on proposals from the Gallery staff for support from Friends’ funds, so we are contributing directly to the work of the Gallery in a number of different ways, some artistic, some practical, all fascinating.

There are also a number of more mundane tasks to help with, for example ‘stuffing’
envelopes for members’ mailings several times a year. But whatever I have done in these past few months, I have done as part of a team, who started out as strangers to me, but have increasingly become friends.

I didn’t anticipate that, either. But it all goes to show that it was a most excellent impulse earlier in the year. I didn’t know what I was letting myself in for, but I am so glad I let myself in for it!

SUE RUSHTON

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**Sculpture Victorious**

Debuting at Tate Britain in February 2015, following a successful run at the Yale Center for British Art, Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901 represents the first exhibition of its kind, in its examination of the making and viewing of sculpture in Britain and its empire during the reign of Queen Victoria. Revealing sculpture’s inventiveness, ubiquity and cultural and political centrality in the nineteenth century, the exhibition brings together a rich array of works, including figures and reliefs in marble, bronze, silver, sheepskin, and wood, as well as gems, cameos, and porcelain objects, many rarely, if ever, seen by a wider public.

Co-organized by the Yale Center and Tate Britain, and accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Center in association with Yale University Press, with copies available ahead of the opening at Janette Ray books in York, the exhibition was curated by Martina Droth, Associate Director of Research and Curator of Sculpture at the Center; Jason Edwards, Professor of History of Art at the University of York; and Michael Hatt, Professor of History of Art at the University of Warwick. The organizing curator at Tate Britain is M. G. Sullivan, Curator, British Art 1750–1830. The exhibition and the research in support of it received important funding from the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

JASON EDWARDS
Introducing Jye O’Sullivan

As the research scholarship MA student for the Friends of York Art Gallery, and York Art Gallery, I’m currently researching the York School of Art from 1880, up to its closure. Although outside of this research project my academic interests include alternative theoretical modelling, architectural identities, and interdisciplinary study, this project has actually afforded me a fantastic opportunity to merge two at first seemingly disparate aspects. In being given the chance to write an original piece of cultural history (bearing in mind the problems associated with the term) I have actually been granted the opportunity to create a methodology of cultural-history writing which is rooted within an interdisciplinary and accessible model.

It is then for this reason, not just the temporary closure of the York archives, that I am beginning my research process with a series of interviews with attendee’s of the York School of Art, in any capacity, whether night school classes or a full time student. I strongly feel that it is only by starting with these memories, that I can write a cohesive cultural history which humanises the text allowing for the collection of subjective thoughts to form a framework which can work sympathetically with the archival research.

This idea of balance is really the most fundamental aspect of the work in both the research, and the completion processes. Whilst the archival and historical research is balanced by the humanising memories and stories, the essay which will come out of the research, I aim to balance with an interactive digital model of the building, a replica portfolio, and a collection of the stories and experiences of as many of the people who were involved as possible, along with an accessible history of the development of the school, but architecturally, and in terms of what was taught.

So far, this research has led me to have some fantastic interviews with people of completely different background, not to mention some interesting anecdotes about scandals at the school and the problematic love lives of the students! But most importantly, it’s creating a unifying cultural history to understand the function of the York Art School as something important and with a place not only on a local level, but certainly via its alumni, on a wider national level. Exploring the styles and nature of what was taught, couldn’t be more indicative of the ideologies and cultural thoughts in and around York at the time, and by comparing these to other schools, a huge framework of British cultural thought over the period can be at least in part established.

Many of the Friends of York Art Gallery have already hugely helped by contributing either their own stories, or other peoples, and if you attended the York School of Art at any point between 1880 to its closure, please don’t hesitate to get into contact with me at: bjos500@york.ac.uk. I look forward to hearing from you.

JYE O’SULLIVAN
Beccy Ridsdel – A New Wave of Ceramics

Contemporary Ceramicist, Beccy Ridsdel, makes work which has a conceptual bent. This could be seen as unusual for many ceramic artists, but for Beccy the underpinning concepts drive the work completely. Ideas, coupled with technical precision, make for a body of 3-dimensional work which challenges our conventional understanding of the ceramic object. Beginning with an idea worthy of visual discussion, Beccy immerses herself in research, planning and experimentation so that she can find the most suitable solution for her conceptual problem. The work that consolidates this process is honest and convincing and can be interpreted on a number of levels.

In her most striking series, the surgically altered plates, Beccy has become involved in a strange process of adaptation and revelation. The plates, seemingly once in perfect condition with comforting and sensitive floral detailing, have been cut away, stripped back and peeled to reveal a dense pattern previously concealed beneath the surface. Whilst enchanting, there is also an eeriness about the work. The plates can now never again be used as they were intended but they are perfect Fine Art objects. The result, fuelled by the use of actual surgical equipment, resembles some kind of autopsy or brutal experiment. Beccy is asking the viewer to be a part of this procedure and in complying we found ourselves peering instinctively closer to examine the object’s internal contents, as if it is really not our place to do so.

Beccy’s practice explores the way we perceive the ‘ugly’ and the ‘beautiful’. She talks about using and manipulating supposedly ‘unloved’ aspects of our lives to produce work that tricks the viewer into seeing beauty when it may not be typically present. In order for her work to be believable, Beccy ensures that technical brilliance and absolute precision are involved in the production of each piece; it is important for Beccy to make sure each object is made correctly. She wants to encourage the viewer to wonder how the work has been achieved and the way in which it has been crafted.

In conversation I asked Beccy how far her work is linked to craft. Her answer made me agree, once again, with the case for exercising skill along with sound technical and material understanding in order to put across a concept convincingly. At a time when Fine Artists are being questioned about their practical ability alongside the creative ‘idea’, it is refreshing to discuss a series of Fine Art objects with an artist who feels her work is embedded in craft and born out of craft traditions. As an abstract painter concerned with spatial and compositional ideas, I also get a kick out of employing accuracy which, for me, originates from an awareness of technical drawing and geometric sculpture. Beccy, who trained as a ceramicist, also wants to embody physical and technical elements and this is evident in her attention to the overall ‘finish’ of her work.

As a York based artist, Beccy has had numerous solo and group shows in her home city, as well as much further afield. She has clients from across the world, especially the USA and Portugal, who buy her work for their collections, and Beccy also works on a commission basis when required. The most prestigious show that Beccy was involved in was in New York during September and October 2011. Approached by the curator Todd Levin, Beccy was
asked to exhibit her work alongside other artists (including the very famous and the less well known) in a show called Night Scented Stock. Associated with Kate Bush’s 51 second song of the name, from the 1980 album Never for Ever, Night Scented Stock was held at the Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York at the 118 East 64th Street gallery space. All the artwork included in the exhibition shared an ‘otherworldliness’ that suggested peculiar as well as recognisable themes. Exhibiting alongside the likes of Louise Bourgeois, Rebecca Horn and Tony Oursler, Beccy gained excellent publicity and now enjoys reading the many articles written about her on sites such as This is Colossal, Yatzer, Beautiful Decay and Slow Art Day.

Next year Beccy will be working at York Art Gallery with one of the UK’s leading ceramic artists Clare Twomey, as part of the Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA) programme. Beccy will be combining skills with Clare and other artists to produce interactive work based on multiples and repetition in a site specific project which will be installed in the gallery. As well, following her exposure as an artist in New York, a selection of Beccy’s work will be shown in an exhibition called At Your Service at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft in 2015, before the show makes a tour of other major USA galleries.

You can see Beccy’s work on display at Priestley’s at No. 36 in York and Studio Eleven in Hull, or visit her website at www.beccyridsdel.co.uk

JENNY EDEN

Diana Hitchcock

Diana was brought up in Chislehurst, Kent. Her war years were spent in a War Department drawing office where she learnt the art of doing engineering drawings in ink on tracing linen of various parts of tanks for use in maintenance manuals, most of them isometric diagrams of gearboxes or carburetters. In 1948 she enrolled on a 3-year interior decoration course at the Bartlett School of Architecture. It was here that she first met her future husband Alan who was in his third year. In the evenings she went to evening classes at the Borough School of Art where David Bomberg was her teacher. He offered paint her portrait. To her later regret, she declined the offer! After a 3-month visit to Florence accompanied by Alan and two other students learning art history and Italian language they both got their degrees. Alan went to
Malaya on his National Service and on return met Diana again and they were married in 1954.

After 30 years raising there three daughters they retired to live in York where they both ran Stonegate Gallery for 14 years. Then followed another 14 years when both she and Alan ran the Northern branch of the charity Paintings in Hospitals. Diana gave numerous Wednesday talks to the Friends of York Art Gallery on subjects including Stubbs’ Whistlejacket, Origins of Colour, Women Artists and Portraiture.

She had promised to give another talk on 20th Century British Artists but sadly this was never to be: she died peacefully in her sleep on board the cruise ship Marco Polo when it reached Helsinki. A fitting end to another great adventurer.

A memorial service will be held in York Minster on Thursday 29th January at 2pm. All are most welcome to attend.

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**View from the chair**

It is lovely to be able to start this ‘view’ with the delightful news of the safe arrival of Laura Turner’s baby, Margot Elizabeth, born 17 August 2014. I am sure you will all want to congratulate Laura and her husband on this addition to their family.

More recently, as you will have seen from our last posting, we have sadly lost one of members, Diana Hitchcock, who has been a great supporter of the Friends. Many will recall her excellent lunchtime talk on ‘Painters of the 1950s’ in the autumn of 2014 and her great enthusiasm for her subject. Details of the memorial service for Diana will be available on the website as soon as they are available, or through contacting me on 01759 307709.

I hope that by now many Friends will have been able to meet our new MA student Jye O’Sullivan whose research is centred on York School of Art and Design from 1900 onwards, taking over from where our previous student Simon Spier left off. Jye has already given one talk to Friends and we look forward to the next on 25 February. As promised, Simon has provided the Friends with an article on his research for the Friends’ archives. It makes fascinating reading for anyone interested in the history of the School of Art and Design and offers many new insights. Eloise Donnelly, our National Gallery Curatorial Trainee has similarly provided us with much interesting research on the Lycett Green Old Masters collection and we are fortunate indeed to have the benefit of her studies.

We continue to have a very busy programme and do hope that you will continue to attend and enjoy our speakers, trips and extended tours. We welcome suggestions from all Friends and offers from speakers at our lunchtime talks and Gallery Dines Out.

While the gallery has been closed, your committee has commissioned a new logo in advance of the opening in 2015. The process has allowed us to take a fresh look at how the Friends might be viewed and how we can encourage new members to join. At the same time our focus group has been working on a very short-promotional film on the benefits of becoming a Friend which we hope to show in various venues in and around York, and we expect this to be...
available in the New Year. Members of the group have also met with the Volunteers Officer of York Museums Trust and are in the process of working on a volunteer skills register, so that skills and opportunities can be better matched. I know that already the gallery has benefited enormously from the contributions Friends have made to digitalisation and copyright work, and if any Friend would wish to offer to help, then please let me know.

We have made progress with our archiving project through York City Council and Explore, which will facilitate easier retrieval of our material alongside safe storage. Four free places have been provisionally booked for a workshop on archiving on 12 February 2015 and more may be available at a later date. Again, please contact me if you are interested.

On 1 November many of us attended the lecture by Clare Twomey held jointly by the Northern Potters and the Friends. Clare is working on an installation for the opening and has asked for help. Anyone who is interested will need to register their interest with Helen Walsh. Similarly, I should be pleased to hear from anyone interested in contributing to our art exhibition in the last weekend in May 2015 at St Olave’s Hall, Marygate Lane.

On 8 December 2014 we were given the opportunity of viewing that part of the gallery’s library newly housed at the University of York. Please remember that if you do wish to borrow any items you will need to register at the university library during full service hours taking proof of address and your Friends membership card.

Our AGM will be held on 19 March 2015, when we shall say goodbye to Tony Baker as membership secretary and committee member. Tony has been a huge support to the Friends, and we shall feel the loss of his experience and enthusiasm. Sue Rushton has kindly agreed to take over the role of membership secretary and in due course we shall be inviting nominations (including self-nominations) for the vacant post on the committee.

Finally, thank you to all who gave so generously to the stores appeal. As our treasurer, Richard Bailey has confirmed our target has now been reached.

My best wishes to all Friends for 2015.

DOROTHY NOTT
FYAG at University of York Library

As of Monday 3rd November 2014 the Friends of York Art Gallery have been able to borrow from the University of York Library.

To obtain a borrowing card, please visit the University Library during full service hours, bringing with you a current Friends membership card and proof of address. There is no charge for the card but there is a £5.00 charge for a replacement if lost. You can borrow a maximum of 10 items.

For further details on how to get to the University Library, car parking and further information about our collections please see the University Library’s homepage.

Instructions can be given to FYAG members if you wish to search the Library catalogue.

Friends fine art store appeal

I am delighted to report that on 1 December the Appeal reached its target of £70,000. Our thanks to the 171 members and others who have made donations, several more than once, and to all those who have raised money for the appeal in other ways (the Art Exhibition, Gallery Construction Site tours, wine tasting, catering at St.Crux, raffles at Summer and 12th night parties).

The racking which was the focus of the Appeal is due to be paid for in January so the timing could not have been better.

Any additional funds received after paying for the racking will as promised be used to pay for other essential equipment for the Store (such as filing cabinets for the archive relating to the collection, desks and chairs) and for the cabinets which will house the ceramic collection in the new COCA galleries. The appeal will remain open if anyone still wishes to give and the Friends will continue to match donations out of reserves up to a maximum of £40,000 in total.

RICHARD BAILEY
Treasurer

Annual subscriptions

Please can I remind those who haven’t paid their subscriptions for 2015 that payment is due on the 1st January. All cheques should be made payable to ‘The Friends of York Art Gallery’ and returned to The Honorary Treasurer, 2 Dalton Terrace, York YO24 4DA. Membership fees are: Single £18.00, Two People at the same address £26.00, Patrons £46.00 (single) or £70.00 (double) and Business Corporate Members £80.00.

If you wish to pay by standing order in future the Single Members’ fee is reduced to £16.00 and Two People at the same address is reduced to £24.00. Please contact me for a standing order form.

TONY BAKER
Membership Secretary
Tel. (01904) 761978 or email tony.baker7@btinternet.com

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