



Friends of York Art Gallery

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2017

CURATOR'S REPORT

As we welcome 2017 it's a good moment to reflect on the gallery's achievements in 2016, and look forward to the exciting plans for the year ahead. In Spring 2016 we opened *Truth and Memory: British Art of the First World War*, a partnership with the Imperial War Museum. The exhibition was expansive in its examination of the art of WWI and I'm sure many of you were deeply moved, as I was, by the subjects portrayed. In summer, we launched our inaugural commission in the artist's garden and in Autumn we opened our *Flesh* exhibition featuring over 60 loans from major UK public and private collections. 2016 also saw a flurry of awards and award nominations— from the announcement in July that York Art gallery was a finalist in the Art Fund Museum of the Year awards, to our success as Family Friendly Museum of the Year and our recent nomination for European Museum of the Year. All of these nominations and awards have brought greater awareness and recognition of the great work that takes place at York Art Gallery, and the amazing transformation of the building.

In Spring 2017 we launch *Albert Moore : Of Beauty and Aesthetics*, an exhibition developed with the Museum de Buitenplaats in Eelde which brings together over 25 of the artist's paintings from across the UK. Incredibly, this will be the first time the work of this York born artist has been seen in a monographic exhibition since 1894. Spanning the artist's career, the exhibition includes early paintings such as *Elijah's Sacrifice* of 1863 (Bury Art Gallery), to Moore's iconic and vivid *Midsummer* of 1887 (Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum) and the last painting he completed shortly before his death, *The Loves of the Winds and The Seasons*, 1893 (Blackburn). The exhibition will be complimented by new collections displays exploring the Moore Family of York, Later Victorian paintings and the History of the York School of Art, which from 1879 to 1976 was housed within the gallery's building.

In Summer we have a fantastic display of Picasso ceramics in our Centre of Ceramic Art on loan from the Attenborough family through Leicester Museums. In addition, we are planning to bring a contemporary art project to the artist's garden and we will announce details of a new fundraising campaign soon. In Autumn, we have a display of works by

Paul Nash from a private collection and displays of Nash and his contemporaries curated by artist John Stezaker. In Autumn we will also be showcasing our new Evelyn Commission, inspired by the Evelyn Award in the 1950s where contemporary artists such as L.S Lowry and John Piper were commissioned to produce new works of art responding to the City. We are incredibly grateful to the two friends of York Art Gallery who have generously supported this scheme, enabling us to commission Marinella Senatore to produce a new art work about York.

Many thanks to all of the Friends of York Art Gallery for your ongoing support and we look forward to seeing you in 2017 and wish you all a Happy New Year!

LAURA TURNER

Senior Curator

INTRODUCING:

As the Friends of York Art Gallery MA Student Research Scholar for this year, I have found my experience so far immensely instructive and enjoyable. I've had the opportunity to engage with the collection in various ways and work on both Curatorial and Education initiatives surrounding the upcoming spring exhibition, *Albert Moore: Of Beauty and Aesthetics*, for which I will curate a related show in one of the Madsen galleries.



My academic background in nineteenth-century British art and previous research on Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830-1896) is well-suited to my work on this exhibition. In one room, I will show works of art created by the contemporaries of Albert Moore (1841-1893) with the goal of exploring the multiple manifestations of and icons associated with Aestheticism in later-nineteenth-century England. Bearing in mind my MA dissertation topic on Leighton's Venetian pictures of the 1860s, I will analyse the ways in which artists participating in the Aesthetic Movement grappled with the art being created around them, while also looking back to Renaissance Masters to reinvigorate the Classical on their own terms. The other room in the Madsen Gallery will contain a few examples of the paintings and possibly works on paper of the Moore family. By looking at pictures such as Henry Moore's large seascapes and Edwin Moore's hyper-detailed watercolours, I will demonstrate the family's range of skill and subject. This part of the exhibition will draw on familial and stylistic influences that shaped Albert Moore's work.

Along a different vein, my discussions with Gaby Lees, Assistant Curator of Arts Learning, have helped me consider how to make this exhibition as accessible as possible to visitors of diverse ages and abilities. Drawing on tactile objects such as scarves and cameos that represent the Aesthetic and Classical in everyday life for nineteenth-century publics, I will design learning tools and access programs with Gaby's assistance that promote the most enriching visit possible.

I look forward to progressing in my research and sharing my findings with the Friends of York Art Gallery. Please don't hesitate to contact me with queries or insights regarding my work at set542@york.ac.uk.

SAMANTHA TIMMS

FRIENDS TRIP TO LEICESTER 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

It was a dull and rainy morning – not at all what was expected from the forecast – and yet there we were 29 souls ready to embark on the fairly long journey to Leicester for a packed day. The tedium of motorway driving was brilliantly lifted by the thoughtfulness of Martin Lomas, who brought with him the most wonderful books celebrating and explaining the Expressionist Art movement that we were about to see, together with the Picasso ceramics. These books were passed around the group with interest and certainly whetted appetites about what was ahead of us that day. And as our journey progressed, the skies became clearer and we were hopeful that more conducive weather conditions were on their way.

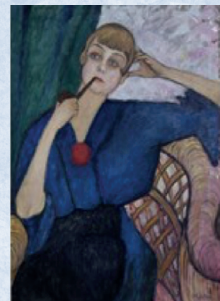


Sailing Boats off Fehmann
woodcut by Ernst Ludwig
Kirchner (*Die Brücke*)

On arrival at the New Walk Art Gallery and Museum we were met by the curator, Simon Lake. He explained that he had to dash off for a moment because he was hanging the portrait by Bryan Organ of Sir David Attenborough which was going to be unveiled that afternoon by Sir David himself! What august company we were keeping that day!

Our large group was divided into two for the curatorial talk. I was among the first group and immediately fell under the spell of Simon's art historical explanation of their superb collection in the German Expressionist Art Gallery. Taking us through the earlier years of work with 'Impressionist' influence, on to the artists painting under the umbrella of 'Die Brücke', and on to 'Blaue Reiter'. We were shown work labelled

Portrait of Anna Rosland by Gabriele Muntser (*Blaue Reiter*)



Portrait of Anna Rosland
by Gabriele Muntser
(*Blaue Reiter*)

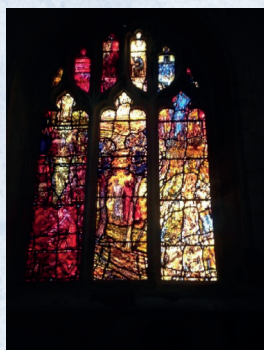
'degenerate' by Hitler, and I, personally, will never forget the sketch by Max Slevogt of 'The Suicide Machine', created as an attack on the absurdity of war (why wait for death in war when it could be over and done with by putting a coin into a slot machine to activate a gun that would end your life there and then!).

Simon then almost immediately began his talk to the second group. It was quite clear by the end of the morning that we had to drag ourselves away from this fascinating Gallery and the absorbing talks by the Curator, who spent so much time with us in spite of his extraordinary duties that lay in wait that afternoon.

I just had time to visit the wonderful 'Modern Art' room which was quite small, but every painting was a nugget of gold – Nash, Nicholson, Spencer, Lowry – all located just off the Victorian Room. I haven't even mentioned the Picasso ceramics and the Arts and Crafts furniture. Do please go and visit this wonderful eclectic Art Gallery and Museum – it is a real hidden treasure of Leicester.



Max Slevogt,
The Suicide Machine



The Redemption Windows
– Tom Denny

With hardly time to breathe we were then whisked off to the Cathedral to see the resting place of York's much-loved King Richard III (depending upon your point of view!). Here the enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff briefed our group on the tomb, the pall and replica prayer book. The Tom Denny stained glass windows were definitely a highlight, watching over the tomb and displaying the most heavenly light through the stories of the King, linked to biblical themes and contemporary life.

Onward again, past the youthful statue of King Richard III, to the Visitor Centre. This modern exhibition does a super job of explaining the life and times of Richard to those who are not so well versed in that period of history. On the upper floor there is a fun list of all the actors who have portrayed our King in the play – though they have not included Martin Freeman, who did a splendid job in 2014! Then the exhibition goes on to explain the story of how the bones were found through Phillipa Langley's determination. At the end of the room a replica skeleton is arranged and through active button-pressing one can determine his exact wounds and where. One is left in no doubt that they certainly meant to kill him! The final experience is the grave site itself. I have seen this three times now and still find it quite moving.

This final visit of the day had to end by 4pm with the closure of the Centre, but some of us still found time to squeeze in the Guildhall opposite, where the beautiful Great Hall is said to be one of the best surviving wooden framed halls in the UK.

You may be wondering, dear Friends, what the weather was doing by now ... I am happy to report that the sun was shining and a large number of our group were able to sit outside, enjoy a cup of tea and lively conversation over the discoveries of the day.

JACKIE DAVID

NEW PROPOSED DATING FOR THE PORTRAIT OF CHARLOTTE FITZROY

The project National Inventory of Continental European Paintings, which included the research of 231 continental paintings from York Art Gallery, resulted in many new conclusions of the examined artworks. New datings, attributions and interpretations have been proposed, even in some cases of rather well-known and well-researched pictures. I would like to present such an example: a new dating for “Portrait of Charlotte Fitzroy” by Peter Lely.

Portrait of Charlotte Fitzroy (YORAG: 18) depicts the fourth child of the Duchess of Cleveland, Barbara Villiers, by Charles II, formally acknowledged by the king in 1672. She married Sir Henry Edward Lee (1662/3-1716), who was created Earl of Lichfield, Viscount Quarrendon, and Baron Spelsbury. She was famous for her beauty, and she was subsequently painted by Simon Verelst and at least twice by Godfrey Kneller. Her later depictions show similar facial features, which support the proposal that she is the sitter in the YORAG: 18. On the other hand, judging from her other portraits (both as a child and as an adult), Charlotte had dark hair. However, she may have been depicted by Lely as blonde to better fit the personification of Beauty that she represents, and also to strengthen the contrast with the dark-haired servant boy.

The attribution of the York painting to Sir Peter Lely is widely accepted and additionally supported by the fact that there is a mezzotint by William Faithorne (1656-1701), repeating the composition (with minor changes and with the portrait of a child of different features), entitled ‘Beauty’s tribute’ and inscribed with the verse: *‘Beauty commands submission as it’s due, Nor is’t the slave alone that owns this true, Much fairer Youths shall this just tribute pay, None Fate deplore, but thankfully obey’*. The engraving is inscribed as after P.Lely (*‘P. Lelly pinxit’*), and is assumed to be a portrait of Elizabeth Cooper, possibly the daughter of Edward Cooper who published the print.

But what about the dating of the portrait? Well, for a long time it was assumed that the painting in York was created ca. 1672 on the occasion of Charlotte’s betrothal to Sir



Henry Edward Lee. However, their betrothal actually took place in 1674 and on that occasion the couple were portrayed by Jacob Huysmans. The Huysmans' painting was for a long time in the private collection, therefore it was not widely known, but since 2012 it has been in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. Now we can compare the two portraits of Charlotte: apparently she seems to be younger in Huysmans' portrait than in the one in York! The betrothal took place when Charlotte was 10 years old, and the wedding was three years later. As a



result of this comparison it may now be assumed that YORAG 18 is more likely to show 13-year-old girl, who is receiving homage as the new Lady of Lichfield. The new dating also corresponds in detail to the late style of Peter Lely (who died in 1680).

BY MAGDALENA ŁANUSZKA

CONSERVATION OF SAMSON AND DELILAH

In May 2016, the Studio was asked by York City Art Gallery to examine and assess, for the requirements of conservation, three paintings which were to be displayed in their upcoming exhibition 'Flesh'

A painting of 'Samson and Delilah' 1642 by Pieter Claesz Soutman was one of those paintings. Soutman was a Dutch artist of the 'Golden Age' where art flourished in the new Dutch Republic of the 17th century.

The painting was carried out in oil paint on primed canvas and measures approximately 152 x 135 cm. The picture is framed in a gilt convex bevelled frame and depicts Delilah close to a sleeping Samson. A maid and a man with shears are leaning over from the right.

The Painting was first examined on 9th May 2016. Surface dirt covered a slightly discoloured resin varnish on the painting. There was evidence of an older discoloured varnish in the upper right quarter.

Poor retouching and over-paint were visible in the lower right quarter where the red gown and particularly the foot of Samson appeared to have been clumsily re-painted. Discoloured retouching was also visible on Samson's forehead, beneath his left arm and to the face and gown of the man on the left. The original paint on the collar of this man also appeared to have been 'thinned' by possible over-cleaning in the past.



Retouching to damage or repaired areas is often carried out in conservation work on paintings. The purpose is to ensure that the viewer's eye isn't disturbed by a damaged area and preserves the harmony of the picture which is a 'timeless illusion'. However, all trained Conservators abide by the main principle that 'the Artist's intentions are paramount', and any retouching must always be kept to a minimum and only cover damage and repairs, not original paint.

The frame had also suffered previous damage and old repairs were visible, particularly along the top edge. Further losses were also occurring down the left side.

CONSERVATION HISTORY

On further examination at the Studio using Ultra-violet light and Infra-red photography, retouching over old damage, with 'over-paint' on 'Samson's' red gown and foot were confirmed. The painting had also been wax-lined.

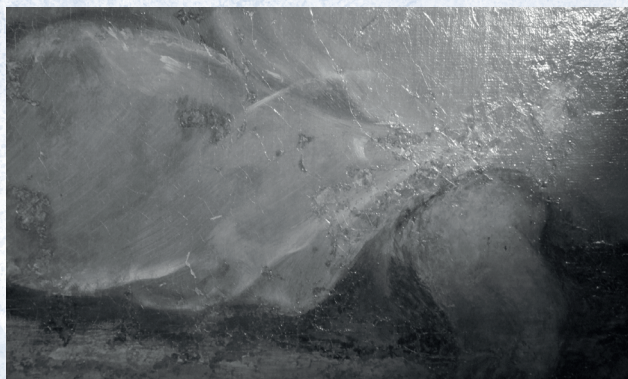
Sometimes due to serious damage or structural problems, paintings are lined with a new canvas adhered to the back of the original canvas with an adhesive mixture. Over the centuries, this was often an organic glue such as boiled 'rabbit skin' glue mixed with wheat flour, starch paste and linseed oil. This was applied to the back of the painting and then the new canvas was ironed over the top with hot heavy irons.

During the 1960s and 70s wax-resin adhesive became popular and this meant that lining could take place on a large 'Hot table' with a heated metal surface. The adhesive would be applied to

the new canvas which would be placed on the metal table. The adhesive would also be applied to the reverse of the painting, which would then be placed face up on the new canvas. A strong clear heat resistant film could then be placed over the whole table, covering the painting and new canvas beneath. Air is then sucked out from these layers using a vacuum pump, so that during the heating process the clear film can form around the painting and bond the new canvas under pressure without harming the brush strokes of the picture as hot irons could do. The wax-resin adhesive would also impregnate the paint and ground layers and consolidate any loose paint.

Today specially prepared synthetic adhesives are used in place of the wax-resin which has been found to discolour paint surfaces in some cases.

Creating a Report and recording all work carried out on paintings is also very important. Letters and information supplied by York City Art Gallery refer to previous problems and conservation treatments to the 'Soutman' painting –



1951 (Winter) The painting was restored by Holder & Sons Ltd, London and returned to the Gallery in January 1952.

1952 (August) Discolouration appears around 'Samson's' nose and beard, also around the drapery over his legs. A greasy substance is also identified on the canvas reverse. When contacted, the Restorers could not offer an explanation for the substance but described having encountered and treated 'blistering' of the paint in these areas.

1971 (April) The painting was restored by Herbert Lank. He found that the painting had been heavily re-painted and altered over the red cloak (drapery over Samson's legs) and the 'Turkey' rug had been painted out.

Lank's treatment report of April 1971 refers to him having retouched the treated areas with egg tempera paint and to 'Glue-re-lining' the painting. The term 're-lining' indicates that the painting had been lined at some time in the past, before it came to his Studio.

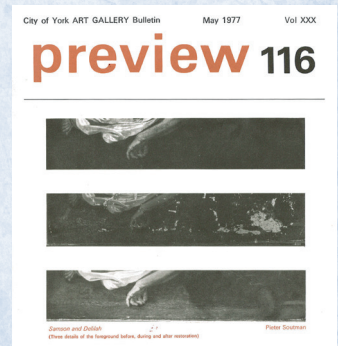
Herbert Lank became the first Director of the Hamilton Kerr Institute when it first opened in 1977. For some reason, his treatment report was later re-printed on a Hamilton Kerr Treatment Report Form, but showing Lank's conservation date of April 1971.

1977 (May) City of York Art Gallery Bulletin Volume XXX Preview 116 refers to 'Restoration' of the painting and shows before and after black & white photographs. The pre-restoration photographs show the painting in a poor and dilapidated condition. One of the photographs shows the completed restoration; however, the foot of Samson appears to be in the poor quality, over-painted style as identified in June 2016.

There are no further treatment reports of conservation work since Herbert Lank, however, if the Gallery Bulletin of May 1977 refers to a later restoration since Lank (1971), then the painting had become seriously dilapidated within six years, perhaps through some serious damage; (flooding?). I understand that an ex-official of the Gallery remembers the painting being returned following restoration at the Hamilton Kerr Institute in 1977.

1983 (January – March) The painting appears to have been on Loan to the National Gallery.

2016 (June) Following examination, the painting was found to have been wax-lined. Also, retouching and poor quality 'over-paint' to the 'red drapery' and Samson's foot was noted and identified as possible oil-paint. This lining and added paintwork is likely to have been part of a later restoration since Herbert Lank's work in 1971.



CONSERVATION 'PRESENT' WORK

There are three stages to cleaning paintings –

1. To remove ingrained dirt from the varnish coating.
2. To remove discoloured varnish layers from the paint surface.
3. To remove, where necessary and safely possible, previous retouching and repairs.

The painting was Surface cleaned to remove dust and ingrained dirt from the varnish covering the painting. Following earlier tests to establish the nature of varnish covering the picture surface, a solvent gel mixture was prepared and used to dissolve and remove the discoloured varnish.

A separate solvent formula was used to remove the traces of an older and harder layer of discoloured varnish. The paint surface was found to contain considerable traces of excess wax-resin which should have been fully removed immediately following the previous lining. These traces were cleaned from the surface using mild solvents. The added retouching from the previous restoration was removed from those areas where the solvents had an easy and safe effect.



Under-tone was used to prepare the previously retouched areas which had covered old damage. The under-toned areas were then sympathetically glazed for minimal retouching.

The painting was re-varnished with a non-yellowing synthetic resin for future protection.

The frame cleaned, consolidated and re-repaired.

Painting was re-fitted into its frame using conservation fittings and returned to York City Art Gallery

**FRANCIS W. DOWNING
LTD**

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

We may not have won the Art Fund Museum of the Year award, but York Art Gallery has certainly been at the forefront of the art world this year. Recently, the gallery was designated Family Friendly Museum of the year, to put alongside its three RIBA Yorkshire awards for conservation, architect of the year and Yorkshire award followed by Visitor Attraction of the Year. Praise, too, came for the exhibitions, firstly for World War One paintings and sculpture and now for *Flesh*, hailed as one of the top five exhibitions in the country by the Art Fund. And then in August, Charles Holland's work *Foundation Myths* was installed in the Artists Garden. Friends can really begin to see the positive effects of the £8 million refurbishment and the hardworking and creative gallery staff.



In September our new MA student Samantha Timms commenced her studies in the History of Art Department of the University of York. She gave her first talk to the Friends at the Gallery Dines Out in early December. We hope to hear more about her research in due course. We continue to maintain our good relationship with the department through lunchtime talks by members of the staff, invitations to their own lectures advertised through our website and representation on your committee.

Sarah Sheils has been working hard on the history of the Friends from its inception in 1948 and we are intending to launch the publication at our AGM on 29 March 2017. We hope that as many of the Friends as possible can be there to celebrate the event. Copies will then be available for sale to Friends for £5.

The events sub-committee has been working hard to provide an exciting programme for next year, including trips to Manchester, Liverpool, Hull, the Watts Gallery in Compton and Leighton House as well as further tours around the Hiscox building. At the same time, Louise Wheatley has arranged for talks on the Art Work of the month in the usual Wednesday lunch time slot. Any Friend who would wish to contribute to this scheme is warmly invited to contact Louise. On 28 January Louise is also organising a conference on the *Flesh* exhibition and again contributors and participants are invited to contact her.

We are also fortunate in being able to arrange for Professor Frances Spalding to give a lecture to the Friends and guests on John Piper, in the Yorkshire Museum on 11 May 2017. This will focus on Piper's place in the British topographical tradition and will feature the first painting commissioned for York Art Gallery under the Evelyn Award, *View from Clifford's Tower* (1951).

Sadly, Leonard Robinson, probably our oldest Friend, died at the age of 100 in November 2016. Leonard was one-time chair and vice-president of the Friends and the author of a substantial work on William Etty, having been inspired to take an interest in art through his friendship with Austin Wright.

Friends will have seen the new Anthony Shaw display. Volunteers to assist with this collection are still welcome.

With all good wishes for 2017.

DOROTHY NOTT

BREAKING ART NEWS

The FERENS Art Gallery will re-open in January 2017 with an exhibition of their recent acquisition of a 14TH Century panel by Lorenzetti, newly conserved, placing the panel in context alongside his Sieneese contemporaries. The exhibition will continue into 23 April 2017.

The Bowes Museum is now exhibiting a Dirk Bouts painting entitled St. Luke Drawing the Virgin and Child. This work will travel to York for an exhibition in 2019. Friends attending the next gallery dines out on 23rd February will be able to hear art historian Dr. Jeanne Neuchterlein of the University of York explain the significance of this painting.

We now have one room available for the trip to the Bayeux Tapestry owing to a last minute withdrawal. This would suit either a couple sharing or a single individual. Please refer to the website for further details or contact Dorothy Nott on: wattnott@btopenworld.com or 01759 307 709.

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