



Friends of York Art Gallery

NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2020

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

I have chosen a portrait of North Yorkshire-born Dr. Thomas Gale by Sir Godfrey Kneller for the image to introduce my final 'view'. He was the subject of my first Lunchtime Talk. Commissioned by Samuel Pepys in 1689 for his library in London, Dr. Gale was prominent in Pepys' circle, which included Sir Isaac Newton and John Evelyn, and he was Master of St. Paul's School in London, a reforming Dean of York and an acquisitive North Yorkshire landowner. On Pepys' death the portrait transferred to the Gale estate in Scruton, where it remained on display for more than two centuries until Hans Hess purchased it at auction in 1953 for the Gallery's collection.



Sir Godfrey Kneller, Dr. Thomas Cole, York Art Gallery Collection, by Permission of YMT.

Portraiture has been a particular interest of mine since I first visited an Art Gallery. Being interested in local and social history, portraits can reveal details about the period in which the sitter lived, suggest their personal circumstances and bring to mind events that were

occurring during their lifetime. A canvas is fertile ground for an artist's talent; a very personal or perhaps imagined representation of the subject, who may have employed them, intrigued them or was a chance encounter. Fortunately for the researcher, York Art Gallery does possess a comprehensive archive for many of the works in its collection. The narrative accompanying the portrait on display helps to bring the subject to life.

York Art Gallery has a substantial and diverse collection of portraiture from more than seven centuries, from the fourteenth-century imagined image of St Zenobius, the first Bishop of Florence, to Sir Herbert Read, Art Historian and President of this Charity, or Henry Baines, Botanist, who was responsible for creating York Museum Gardens. Today when you visit the *Making a Masterpiece: Bouts and Beyond Exhibition*, climb the main stairwell or circumnavigate the Burton Gallery you will encounter portraits by Anthony van Dyck, William Hogarth, William Etty, Andrea Soldi and twenty other talented artists.

This mailing to Friends includes the Schedule of Events, Talks and Visits, February to July. It lists thirteen Lunchtime Talks which will take place in York Art Gallery 12:30 -13:00 on the second and third Wednesdays of the month. The speakers include curators, MA and PhD students, artists and members of this Charity. If you haven't attended one, put a Wednesday in your diary and come along to a Talk. In addition to the personal benefit from the Talk, your presence shows support for the Gallery. Hopefully, I will be able to welcome you to a Lunchtime Talk about portraiture later in the year!

PETER GIBBARD

STUDIO VISITS

The Friends had two successful and particularly popular studio visits in Autumn 2019.

The first, organised by FYAG President Peter Miller, was to the Barley Studio at Dunnington. Twenty members assembled at the Studio on 10 October and were greeted by Keith Barley. He gave a fascinating introduction to the work of the Studio over the past forty years and in the course of the next couple of hours we were shown all aspects of the work done there. Helen Whittaker then explained her design work including her collaboration with David Hockney on his recent window for Westminster Abbey – all of it made in Dunnington! It was a totally absorbing visit and we were made to feel so welcome.

The second, organised by Secretary Judith Glover, was to artist Debbie Loane's studio at the Lund Gallery, near Easingwold. Twenty of us heard about Debbie's appointment early in 2019 by the North Yorkshire Moors National Park as Artist-in-Residence on the Cleveland Way, a long distance walk of 109 miles – hence the title of Debbie's subsequent exhibition. Her 'plein air' sketches and subsequent paintings of seven diverse locations were preceded by completing the walk herself, without stopping to draw. She felt that this allowed her to respond to the feeling of passing through this particularly varied landscape and silently allowing her senses to identify key themes. She will be exhibiting her work in the Zillah Bell gallery in Thirsk from 1 February 2020.

PETER MILLER AND JUDITH GLOVER

MEET THREE NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS – LOTTE INCH, ANNE McLEAN AND JEANNE NEUCHTERLEIN

Lotte Inch



I run a contemporary art gallery specialising in British Studio Ceramics and Contemporary Prints from its established home in Bootham, York. The gallery and my freelance curating business were established in 2012 with a pop-up gallery on High Petergate, and has since grown into a well-respected venue for carefully curated, thematic exhibitions.

I come from a background in Heritage and Museums, having worked for organisations such as Trust New Art, the National Trust's

Contemporary Art Programme and Leeds University Art Gallery. Alongside promoting contemporary British Studio Ceramics in the North, my main area of expertise lies in the placing of contemporary works within historic settings.

I am co-founder of the York Galleries Network and its associated Art Map, a founding member of the Guild of Media Arts and an advisory member of the York BID board. I am also the curator of Make it York's Bloom! Festival which returns to York for its second year in June 2020.

Anne McLean

I was born in Oxford and have lived in York since coming here to study History at the University of York in the 1970s. I spent my working life in IT and joined FYAG when I retired in 2010. Since then I have followed my interests in art and history by taking courses at the Lifelong Learning Centre and being an Archive Volunteer at the National Railway Museum. From 2014 to 2019 I was a member of the York and East Yorkshire Art Fund Committee, supporting its programme of events and looking after the Committee's web page and email communications. I look forward to carrying out a similar role for the Friends and contributing to the future of the Art Gallery.



Jeanne Neuchterlein

I am Reader at the University of York, where I have taught Northern Renaissance art history since 2000. I moved to the UK in 1998 while writing my PhD and, contrary to original intentions, never returned permanently to the United States, although I go back often to visit family. I have published widely on German and Netherlandish art in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including most recently the book *Hans Holbein: the Artist in a Changing World* (Reaktion, May 2020).



Currently I am Director of York Art History Collaborations (YAHCs), overseeing the History of Art Department's external partnerships with galleries, museums and heritage institutions,

including York Museums Trust. I am also the current Deputy Editor of the journal *Art History*. In 2014 I co-curated *Strange Beauty: Masters of the Northern Renaissance* at the National Gallery, London, together with Dr. Susan Foister. At York Art Gallery I recently curated *Making a Masterpiece: Bouts and Beyond 1450-2020* with Dr. Beatrice Bertram.

FRIENDS TRIP TO GLYNDEBOURNE

On 26 October 2019, thirty-eight Friends of York Art Gallery left York in the dark on our second excursion to Glyndebourne. It was a long drive to Penshurst and a watery reception on a rainy day, but the house did not disappoint with its wonderful 60ft high chestnut beam hall, images of porcupines and stage-sets for Wolf Hall.

The Sidney family, we learnt, had been in residence for seventeen generations, following a gift from Edward VI, and the house was the birthplace of the Elizabethan poet Sir Philip Sidney. After lunch and a somewhat damp tour of the gardens, we boarded the coach for our hotel just outside East Grinstead, a pleasant improvement on the previous year's accommodation, where we met up with our blue badge guide, Richard Madden.

It was a later start to the following day for our visit to Charleston, home of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and, latterly, Clive Bell. For many, this was the highpoint of the trip and a venue where we would have loved to have spent more time. The house itself was not large but full of paintings, murals and fabrics created by the inhabitants together with an efficient fire system designed by Roger Fry. Some of us managed to fit in the new exhibition galleries, others the *Famous Women Dinner Service*, yet others, the garden. Our next stop was Lewes for a couple of hours' free time, the chance for

refreshments and a trip to Anne of Cleves house, given to her as part of her divorce settlement by Henry VIII. It was in Lewes that we were joined by our thirty-ninth Friend, the intrepid Moira Fulton, whose domestic crisis on Day 1 had prevented her from joining us at the start.



Porcupine at Penshurst Place: Dorothy Nott.

Arriving at Glyndebourne we had time for a wander round the gardens before the start of *Rigoletto*. As with the previous year, the singing was wonderful, especially from the South African soprano, Vuvu Mpofu, but we were all grateful to Richard for his advance precis of the production which we found virtually incomprehensible, another example of innovation for innovation's sake. The evening was rounded off with a relaxing meal in the opera complex and, in spite of the shortcomings of the production, the visit was widely enjoyed.

Day 3 saw us make our way to Standen House, an Arts and Crafts house designed for the Beale family by Philip Webb, friend and associate of William Morris. The interior bore witness to Morris' influence though he never visited it himself and contained some wonderful examples of embroidery by Mary Beale. Those Friends who had the time and energy to explore the gardens were treated to spectacular views of the landscape, interrupted only by unusual sculptures among the trees. Leaving just after lunch we had a lengthy journey back to York, unfortunately compounded by an unexplained 'obstruction' on the motorway after a full and rewarding excursion.

TRIP TO DUNDEE - 24 TO 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

We knew we were in trouble when we saw a sign saying 'Unsuitable for HGVs', being directed by a lady farmer through her farmyard, negotiating narrow bridges and road with inches to spare. We eventually arrived back on the A1 just south of Edinburgh after an accident had blocked the A1 in both directions.



After our eventful journey north, the rain held off for our walk around the grounds of Bonnington House, known as Jupiter Artland. Dotted around the 100-acre estate are thirty-six bespoke permanent works commissioned from leading international artists. In Greek mythology Jupiter is the archetype for happiness, creativity and enjoyment, and it was specifically this trinity that the owners wanted to put into the foundation of their park. There is even a sign by Peter Liversidge, pointing upwards at a 70-degree angle with the inscription 'Jupiter 893 to 964 million kilometres' if you had any doubt where the planet is. The 'Cells of Life' is the first work which greets visitors and is the biggest with its lush green mounds and mirror still pools and is a land form celebration of the cell as the basis of life.

The following morning after a good night in our comfortable hotel, some even managed an early morning swim, we set off for V&A Dundee. The building, designed by Kengo Kuma, was inspired by the cliffs along the coastline of eastern Scotland that gives the impression of a huge ship jutting out into the river Tay and alongside the *Discovery* one can imagine them both about to be launched.

The centrepiece of V&A Dundee is Charles Rennie Mackintosh's oak room, originally designed for Miss Cranston's Ingram Street tea rooms in Glasgow in 1907, part of the Scottish Design Galleries with their 300 exhibits.

Our next port of call was the Royal Research Ship *Discovery* built by the Dundee Shipbuilders Company and launched in 1901. Built for Antarctic research, she carried Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton on their first and highly successful journey to the Antarctic.



The majority of our party visited the Verdant Jute Mill where they were treated to a live demonstration of the machinery by guides in period costume. A few of us went to the McManus Art Gallery; now where else could you find the famous Tay whale, the world's oldest mariners astrolabe and a Rossetti masterpiece all under one roof.

The next day we set off for Kirkcaldy Art Gallery where we were greeted by the curator, Gavin Grant who gave us a short introductory talk about the gallery. We then enjoyed the display of Scottish colourists' works and paintings by William McTaggart and Jack Vettriano. A major exhibition of the latter's life work is to be held at the gallery later next year.

LINDA DOWNEY

EVENTS

With this mailing you will receive our latest events programme. There is a wide range – both local and further away – and we hope that you will find them interesting and wish to support them. Apart from your membership subscriptions these events are our main source of making a surplus. This goes towards our mission of supporting York Art Gallery, as well as educational projects such as our financial support for a University of York History of Art scholar each academic year.

We are very pleased that over the last two years we have managed to halve the amount that was previously being spent on printing, paper and postage – and these savings go directly to our support for the gallery. We now have a system in place that involves more long term planning and we aim to have three events mailings each year. In between these we now have the possibility of emailing you if something unexpected comes up. Committee member Anne McLean has made great progress in setting up an electronic mailing list; please let us know (membership@friendsofyorkartgallery.co.uk) if you are not receiving messages or if you have changed your email address.

I will be stepping down as the Events Programme Coordinator in the New Year as I have found that doing that as well as being Secretary is too onerous for one person, especially as my ceramics work is taking up more time. Do let me know if taking on this role is something that might interest you. It is not necessary to be a member of the full committee and it is a great way of getting to know a wide range of arts-related people, including the curatorial staff at the Gallery.

The Events Sub-Committee aims to introduce new events and one that I started off a year or so ago was lunchtime chamber music events. We had two successful concerts involving post-graduate music students from the University of York. We are now looking for someone else to take over responsibility for planning these – please let me know if this could be something that would interest you.

JUDITH GLOVER

Email: secretary@friendsofyorkartgallery.co.uk

PETER GIBBARD TO STAND DOWN AS CHAIR

Peter Gibbard is to stand down as Chair, as the FYAG Constitution requires, at this year's AGM in March 2020 after seven years on the Friends Committee and it is proper to pay tribute to his sterling contribution to the activities of the Friends over that period. During those seven years, he has spent four as Secretary and three as Chair and has been assiduous in promoting the interests of the Friends in both roles.



He was brought up in Canada and has had a working lifetime in the telecoms industry. It brought him to Europe to develop the Canadian company for whom he worked. He spent four years in Ireland in the 1970s but moved over to England as the firm expanded. He came to live in York in 1993 after spells in London and Derbyshire because he and his wife both found it such a beautiful city.

His wife, Sharon, became a life member of the Friends and through her he also became interested in the Art Gallery. In 2012 he

met with Dorothy Nott and Margaret Addyman, enquired about a vacancy on the Committee, and subsequently was appointed Secretary at the AGM in March 2013. His enthusiasm and attention to detail was immediately apparent and rarely a week would go by without him visiting the Gallery. He found a particular interest in the archives of the Gallery and gradually began piecing together the contribution that the Friends had made to the acquisition of pictures, the conservation of the collection, the promotion of educational activities within the Gallery and support for exhibitions. He found that almost half a million pounds had been spent in these ways since 1948 by the Friends and this included the acquisition of over a hundred paintings, sculptures and ceramics for the Gallery. This led to *70 Years of Giving Art*, an exhibition in 2018 which demonstrated what a vital contribution the Friends had made over that time to the successful life of York Art Gallery.

There is no doubt that Peter's input will be much missed on the Committee but he will still be taking an active part in the Gallery's activities with talks, suggestions and advice. We thank him for his huge contribution over the last seven years.

PETER MILLER

President

*This newsletter is edited by Jim Sharpe. Please send items for the next newsletter to
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