



Friends of York Art Gallery

e-Bulletin no. 1

May 2020

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EDITORIAL

Dear Friends:

Welcome to the first edition of our e-Bulletin. Over the next few months, for however long it takes, the members of FYAG'S Committee and Events Committee will be working together to help fill the void caused by the sudden disappearance of our regular activities. While we cannot hope to replace the camaraderie of a Gallery Dines Out (or In) lunch, or the feeling of privilege as we listen to the latest Picture of the Month or Curator's talk, or the buzz of a preview, we will try to offer items, by word and image, to nourish your interest in and commitment to the world of art - both in general and to our own particular little corner here in York.

Our contributors will include those who usually talk to us within the Art Gallery and those less visible who bear responsibility for other now dormant activities. But in this new venture we plan an extra dimension: we would like to involve you, our readers. As well as providing time for clearing out cupboards, getting to grips with long delayed tasks, or catching up with far distant friends, this time of seclusion also invites introspection and internal stock-taking. So we are asking those of you so inclined to think about the pleasures and insights that over the years you have gained from the world of art, how paintings, pots and sculpture have influenced your lives. It may be surprising what you find there

To get things started, in this first edition we offer a variety of offerings, sometimes with a York slant, to suggest what the content of future editions might look like. There is an initial exploration of what art lovers might find through gallery websites; a Friend remembers how she first met a Renaissance artist through a reproduction of one of his works in her father's tailor's shop; we have a report on work in progress from the Art History MA student funded by the Friends; a notice of a book, co-authored by a York-based art historian, on the Italian painter Giulio Cesare Procaccini; news that a descendant of William Etty's brother Charles has joined the Friends; and a report, extracted by kind permission of Richard Bailey from the latest Newsletter for subscribers to the Collection Fund, on a recent acquisition by the Gallery.

If you would like to offer a contribution to future e-Bulletins, please contact either Sue Greenhow or Jim Sharpe, who are working with Anne McLean and Dorothy Nott on the production of these publications, by email to newsletter@friendsofyorkartgallery.co.uk.

To start things off, here is a video from David and Geraldine Casswell. They were thinking of inviting Friends into their house to see their two paintings by Paul Martin, but the Lockdown has made this impossible. So they have very generously offered us a video on one of these works, '[Simeon](#)': enjoy!

Jim Sharpe

May 2020

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*The Editor advises on some of the internet resources for maintaining
contact with the world of art*

SURFING FOR ART

If, like me, you are reaching the point where you feel you will never be able to enter an art gallery (or, for that matter, museum, theatre, or concert hall) ever again, you can at least draw some comfort from the availability, through the relevant institutions' websites, of access to most public art collections held worldwide. So, although we can't visit galleries in person at the moment, we can plan visits to galleries we have never been to, remind ourselves of artworks (and places) we know and love but perhaps haven't seen at first hand for a while, or maybe just inform ourselves of what's out there. I, for example, was unable to participate in the Friends' visit to Dublin last year, so was interested to take the opportunity to look at the National Gallery of Ireland website. This, as well as showing a wide variety of images of the gallery's holdings, offers (among other things) fascinating details of conservation work in progress or recently carried out, podcasts, and interviews with gallery staff, including Mary Dowling, the 'Retention Co-Ordinator' for the Friends of the gallery, who reveals that the gallery's activities include yoga sessions – something to consider when York Art Gallery re-opens?

But as well as the major galleries some of the smaller institutions offer very thought-provoking contributions. Thus the Compton Verney Gallery in Warwickshire, in association with the National Gallery, and with unfortunate timing, on 14 March opened an exhibition on Lucas Cranach the elder (c.1472-1553), court painter to the Electors of Saxony and an associate of Martin Luther. As well as images the works in the exhibition and some very informative text, the website offers an excellent video tour of the exhibition by Amy Orrock, the exhibition's curator. There is also a podcast, produced by the Colnaghi Foundation, in which a number of currently practising artists whose works are on show in the exhibition discuss how their work is affected by Cranach or by Renaissance art more generally.

For people with more modern tastes, the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art at Gateshead, recently hosted a major exhibition of work by Judy Chicago to mark her eightieth birthday. The Baltic's website carries a number of items generated by this exhibition. There is a deep discussion of the theoretical and ideological dimensions of Chicago's work and their current relevance by James Bell, an artist, art educator, and PhD candidate at the Northumbria University, and a shorter video on Chicago's work by a member of the gallery staff. To this is added a video 'in

conversation' discussion of Chicago's work, involving Irene Aristabel, the Baltic's Head of Curatorial and Public Practices, and Frances Borzello and Diane Gelon, both of whom have worked with Chicago.

Friends who have not already discovered it might like to know about the BBC's 'Culture in Quarantine' site, which aims to create 'a virtual festival of the arts' rooted in the experience of national lockdown. There is a 'Visual Arts' section which, among other good things, currently offers a video by Dr Jacqueline Cockburn on 'Las Meninas', a work of 1656 by Diego Velasquez held by the Prado. And, to explore possibilities further and bring in the art dealers, *Christie's Online Magazine* for April 2020 (no. 216) has articles involving Andy Warhol, 'Journeys of the Mind' taken by artists who depict far-flung locales without leaving their studies, a list of ten great art novels, and, reassuringly, a list of the ten best virtual museum experiences in Europe. So, even in these locked down times, we can still make some sort of contact with the world of art.

Jim Sharpe

May 2020

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Susan Greenhow reflects on a painting that has a particular personal resonance for her, [The Taylor \('Il Tagliapanni'\)](#) by Giovanni Batista Moroni in the National Gallery, London

TWO TAILORS

Arkell Bros., Tailors and Outfitters, at 61 High Street, Banbury was where, probably in the 1950s, I first encountered [Giovanni Battista Moroni](#). Not that I knew the name then, but a framed copy of the artist's most famous portrait, of a sixteenth-century tailor, handsomely clad in a creamy white doublet, cutting shears in hand, was always to be found in this, my father's establishment. 61 High Street was a half-timbered building dating back beyond the time of Moroni; by the early twentieth century it had become a double-fronted shop with stockroom and cutting room behind. If you climbed a sequence of narrow, dark stairs, you reached an attic workshop, airy and well lit, where you would find, sitting cross-legged on a raised platform, three Spanish tailors, exiles from a long-gone war. They would be sewing by hand the garments that my father had cut with shears not so different from those in the portrait.

The copy of Moroni's tailor was provided, I recall, by the trade journal *Tailor and Cutter*, and his image was often to be found proudly displayed in one of the shop windows for all the town to see, propped up amongst the bales of English worsteds and hand-loomed Harris tweeds, the Pringle sweaters and the Daks trousers. He was such a familiar figure to me that

he seemed an adopted member of the family and as such rather taken for granted.

Subsequently, after I embarked on a life away from that small country town, for many years Moroni's tailor disappeared from view but not from my consciousness. Yet it wasn't until 2014 that I came face to face with the actual portrait of my father's fellow craftsman. That year the Royal Academy mounted a major exhibition of the work of Giovanni Battista Moroni, and it was here that I discovered an enormous respect for this principled painter. I admired him particularly because, rather than strike out to Venice where he might have rivalled the greatest artists of his age and won the patronage of the great and the good, over a period of thirty years he chose to depict members of the community of which he was a part: the citizens, minor aristocracy and craftsmen of the city of Bergamo, in the district of his birth. And what penetrating portraits they are! Here are living, thinking, working people who have paused for a moment to be captured in paint to allow future generations to share in their lives. I walked amongst this canvas company as I might in a gala gathering of small city worthies, wanting to stop and chat when I met an inquisitive glance, and I felt drawn to this Renaissance artist as to no other of my acquaintance. These pictures told me that Moroni really understood the fabric of his society, that he cared for his community and was proud to be a part of it.

In its depiction, he bequeathed to succeeding generations a truly revelatory gift.

I returned to 'my' tailor to meet again that enquiring gaze and found that he had somehow become an embodiment of the artist. And there was something more: I realised that the qualities and ideals of this joint persona had been shared by his fellow craftsmen in a small country town in England four centuries later.

Susan Greenhow

May 2020

© Susan Greenhow, May 2020

PROVENANCE RESEARCH: PREPARING FOR AN EXHIBITION

The Evelyn Collection is an important collection of topographical prints, drawings, watercolours, and other materials assembled by Dr William Arthur Evelyn, a medical practitioner who arrived in York in 1891 and became Treasurer and then Secretary of the Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society (YAYAS), in which roles he became a major benefactor of the City. Here Genevieve Stegner-Freitag, holder of this year's MA studentship at the University of York, which the Friends sponsor and support financially, writes about her work on some of the prints in the collection as she prepares for an exhibition once the Gallery re-opens.

Before joining York Art Gallery as the FYAG-funded MA Student, I worked in collections management roles for six years at various museums and galleries, including the Smithsonian Institute's Natural History and Hirshhorn Museums. Each of my jobs involved various duties, but provenance research was the great connector. My project at YAG, on prints of York held in the Evelyn Collection, is no different. On museum collections databases, Adlib at YAG, there are a few lines of text describing each work. This might not seem much, but it is a standard format for museum catalogues. Such information is known to anyone working in a museum or familiar with museum practice: an artist (if

identified); the title of the work; its medium and dimensions; sometimes a short ekphrastic passage; and provenance information. But, as in any museum, sometimes not every artwork has the full catalogue information, often owing to past transfers from handwritten to electronic cataloguing.

When I began my work on the prints in the Evelyn Collection (made between 1790 and 1820), I noticed a pattern with the data-entries: the provenance records were lacking. This discovery left many questions about these works and how to interpret them unanswered. Since this discovery in October, I have taken two different directions in my efforts to build the provenance records: to find explicit information, or to research contextualising details on prints produced in England during this time-span.

Finding written records of individual prints occurred on occasion; in the YAG archives, notes and communications speak to the history of some prints or artists found in the Evelyn Collection. Using my inchoate palaeography skills, I discovered the histories of some prints from the time when they entered the gallery collection in 1931. On other occasions I found information on the reverse of the prints: old accession numbers and short annotations or comments (such as an artists' name from a previous attribution). These snippets of information served as clues leading to more

sources of information. For instance, sometimes the artist's name, while spelt correctly in Adlib, was misspelt on the back of a print, which on occasion led to separate artist folders in the YAG Archives.

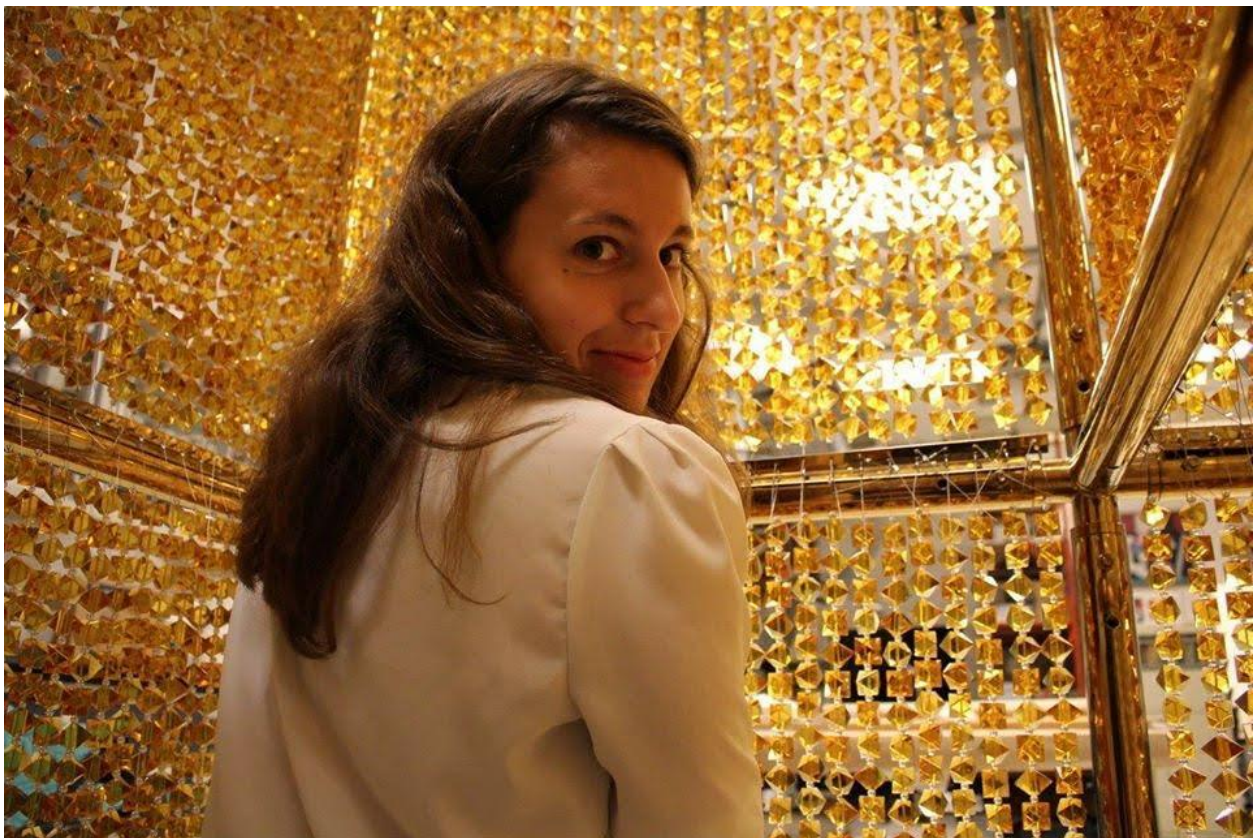
More often than not, however, I could not find any records for a particular print. This usually occurred when there was no identified artist or publisher on the work itself or in the archives. Indeed the (attributed) titles of many of the prints did not help determine any provenance, as many titles are merely descriptive of their subject (York) rather than specific titles, which would be easier to find in various sources. This problem led me to undertake research about prints produced in England at this time, on picturesque and topographical genres as well as on print artists working in Northern England during the period. The lack of specific provenance records, however, also allowed me to engage more with the details of the works themselves: what motifs were featured, how the medium directed the way I read the work, and so forth.

Provenance-research and other relevant knowledge from my job background helped me with my project on the Evelyn Collection: to build an exhibition about prints of York between 1790 and 1820. Exploring provenance contributed to the framework of my exhibition, with two

research pathways: to represent these prints as both fossils of a time past (aided by specific provenance records) and, paradoxically, also as living objects that influence the contemporary viewer.

Genevieve Stegner-Freitag

May 2020



© Genevieve Stegner-Freitag, May 2020

Peter Miller notes the publication of a major catalogue by a former curatorial assistant at York Art Gallery of an artist of whose work we have an outstanding example in the Gallery



Annunciation by G.C. Procaccini. Oil on panel 62.8 by 49.5 cm. York City Art Gallery.
Photo credit: York Museums Trust

BOOK NOTICE – PROCACCINI: LIFE AND WORK

GIULIO CESARE PROCACCINI: LIFE AND WORK, BY HUGH BRIGSTOCKE AND ODETTE D'ALBO (UMBERTO ALLEMANDI SRL, TURIN 2020, €200)

Giulio Cesare Procaccini (1574-1625) was a Lombard painter who enjoyed a high reputation in his time. This reputation persisted into the eighteenth century, but since then he remained largely forgotten until the second half of the twentieth century. This *Catalogue Raisonné* of some

200 identified works is the first full study of his work. It has appeared as a result of the lifelong interest in the painter of the art historian Hugh Brigstocke, an expert on Poussin and formerly a curator at the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh, who now lives in York.

Brigstocke's first job was as assistant at York Art Gallery to the Curator, Hans Hess, from 1965 to 1968. He became aware of Procaccini through the exquisite small *Annunciation* from the Lycett Green Collection in York Art Gallery. David Rogers, his predecessor at York, also showed him the large and powerful *Crowning with Thorns* at the Graves Art Gallery that was presented to the City of Sheffield by the National Union of Mineworkers in 1931. And then, when Brigstocke moved on to the National Gallery of Scotland in 1968, he found another major work of the *Raising of the Cross* that had just been bought with astonishing foresight by that gallery: www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/5295/raising-cross. When Brigstocke was becoming interested in Procaccini in the 1960s, the artist was completely out of fashion, and Brigstocke soon found that he had the field more or less to himself, despite some early pioneering research by the young Nikolaus Pevsner forty years earlier.

Brigstocke's interest in Procaccini persisted, with an exhibition in New York in 2002, but in order to bring his work to a conclusion he needed a collaborator in Italy to work on documents, and a sympathetic financial

backer. Marco Voena, a Milanese art dealer with galleries also in London and St Moritz, underwrote the project and engaged Allemandi, prestigious publishers at Turin, to edit and produce the high quality volume. Weighing in at over three kilograms, with over 500 pages, it contains 212 plates, including more than eighty in colour. Brigstocke has contributed two essays on the artist's life and his distinctive working methods; and his Italian collaborator, Odette D'Albo, has also contributed two essays on the artist's patrons and collectors and his subsequent artistic reputation, as well as conducting essential archival work in Italy.

This Catalogue Raisonné would make a substantial addition to any art historical library, but at €200 it would certainly not be a casual purchase. All enquiries should be directed to Umberto Allemandi Publishing Company, Turin.

Peter Miller
President of the Friends of York Art Gallery
May 2020

© Peter Miller, May 2020

The editor reflects on members of the Etty family, a descendent of which has recently joined the Friends and contacted our Membership Secretary, Sue Smallpage, about the connection

ETTY FAMILY MEMBERS JOIN THE FRIENDS

Among the more recent additions to the membership of FYAG are Randy Etty and his son Dean. Randy is an artist, as was his father Joe (1940-2019), and numerous examples of their work can be found on the web. Randy is a direct descendent of Charles Etty (1793-1856), brother to William Etty and fifth son of Matthew and Esther Etty. Charles left York to travel with the East India Company and lived in Probolinggo and Surabaya in the province of East Java in Indonesia, eventually owning successful sugar and coffee factories there.

Joe Etty was born in Indonesia, at that time part of the Dutch Empire, but after World War II settled in Utrecht in the Netherlands, where the family still lives.

Charles was reunited with his family in 1843, when he arrived in England after an absence of thirty-one years, and in the following year accompanied William on a trip to Edinburgh, along with Elizabeth (Betsy) Etty, daughter of their brother John Etty and William's housekeeper from 1824 until his death. The Scottish Academy hosted a dinner in William's

honour, and portraits of all three were made by the important pioneering Scottish photographer partners, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. Their portrait of Charles can be found on the Website of the National Galleries of Scotland, where he is described as Captain Charles Etty, merchant seaman and sugar planter, while their group portrait of the two brothers and Betsy is also reproduced at various sites on the web and in *William Etty: Art and Controversy*, the catalogue of the Exhibition of that name held at York Art Gallery, June 2011-January 2012. Charles subsequently returned to Indonesia, where he died.

Jim Sharpe

May 2020

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NEW ACQUISITION FOR THE GALLERY: CHRISTOPHER COOK'S *MEMENTO MORI*

Some of you will have visited the exhibition 'Making a Masterpiece: Bouts and Beyond' which ran from October 2019 to January 2020. As well as focussing on the School of Dieric Bouts *Saint Luke Drawing the Virgin and Child*, this exhibition included a section looking at artworks of the so-called 'Golden Age' of Dutch and Flemish art drawn from the Gallery's collection juxtaposed with new works by the contemporary artist Christopher Cook inspired by them.

One of Cook's works, *Memento Mori*, has been purchased for the Gallery by the Collection Fund at a cost of £2,000. It is a work in graphite and resin on paper relating closely to *Still Life of Fruits and Flowers with Bird's Nest on a Marble Ledge* (1744) by Jan van Os (YORAG: 1493). Christopher's interpretation is made contemporary with a burning building added to the background and van Os's butterfly being replaced by a Death Head Hawk Moth: the two works are reproduced below:



Christopher is a well-established North Yorkshire-born artist; details of his career can be found on his website www.christophercook.cc. There is also a video on YouTube uploaded by the University of York that describes the creative processes involved in the making of *Memento Mori*. The link is:

<http://yahcs.york.ac.uk/collaborations/guest-lecture-by-artist-christopher-cook/>

Because of the closure of the Gallery the work is not currently on display, but the Curator is planning to showcase it once the Gallery reopens.

The primary objective of the fund is to raise a fund to support acquisitions for the Gallery by encouraging supporters of the Gallery to become subscribers paying a monthly subscription to the FYAG Collection Fund by standing order. We would welcome any new subscribers.

Inevitably the Gallery is currently closed, and most of its staff on furlough, so that all its activities are on hold. We hope to build the Fund in this time to support new acquisitions when life returns to normal.

Richard Bailey
Collection Fund Administrator
May 2020

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