



Friends of York Art Gallery

e-Bulletin 7

September 2022

Contents

EDITORIAL	2
NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER	3
WHO WAS THOMAS BODLEY ETTY?	4
WHERE ARE THE MISSING SIX MILLION BUYERS?	8
FRIENDS' VISIT TO NANCY	11

EDITORIAL

And so we find ourselves returning to normal. York Art Gallery, its front currently enlivened with Steve Messam's 'Portico', is now open Wednesday to Sunday, with free General Admission and a series of Exhibitions, some requiring an entry fee: the 'Beyond Bloomsbury: Life, Love and Legacy', exhibition which proved so popular, the 'Body Vessel Clay' and Aesthetica Art Prize' exhibitions, which run until 18 September, the third iteration of the 'Pictures of the Floating World: Japanese Ukiyo-E Prints' until November, and 'The Yorkshire Tea Ceremony' exhibition, featuring the remarkable ceramics collector W.A. Ismay, which will continue into 2023. Another sign of normality is that the activities of the Friends of York Art Gallery are firmly back on track. We have resumed our monthly lunchtime talks, a full programme of visits and other activities is up and running, and, something out of the ordinary this, the Friends' Bearpark fund has facilitated an important new acquisition, Laura Knight's *Early Morning in a Gypsy Camp*, currently exhibited in the Burton Gallery. It is, therefore, with a sense of optimism and forward movement that I put this e-Bulletin together.

The contents of the Bulletin reflect, as ever, the breadth of interests of the Friends. We begin with an introduction to a new Committee Member, Helena Cox, the inaugural Curator of the University's little known, but extensive, art collection. We then have a contribution by Anne McLean on Thomas Bodley Ety, a relative of the York-born artist William Ety, telling a story which is not only interesting in its own right, but casts light on the artist's career and family background. Ann Petherick of the Kentmere House Gallery provides a lively personal view of an aspect of the current situation in the arts, and the Bulletin is rounded off by an account from Dorothy Nott of one of the Friends' international visits. As ever, I have enjoyed putting together a publication from such varied materials, and have learnt much in the process.

A final point. Our President, Peter Miller, has asked me to remind readers about the Bookstall he mans in the Gallery selling books on Art (broadly defined). He reports book sales there have so far raised more than £5,000 for the Gallery, but that his stock of books is now low and that he would appreciate any further contributions from Friends and others. He can be contacted on peter.miller30@btinternet.com or 01904 612751, and wishes to remind potential donors that he is happy to collect any books they would like to pass on to him.

The Committee welcomes Helena Cox

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER



Helena Cox next to *Untitled* by Austin Wright, 1967, on the ramp leading to the J.B. Morrell Library.
Photo by Jonathan Gawthorpe.

I am an art historian and curator, recently appointed the inaugural Art Curator at the University of York, overseeing over 900 artworks from the University's collection, including works by renowned artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Keith Vaughan, Sidney Nolan, and Aubrey Williams. Prior to this, I worked as a Curator at Beverley Art Gallery in East Yorkshire, where I cared for a collection of Victorian and Edwardian art and curated contemporary art shows with regional, national and international artists. At the gallery in Beverley, I have overseen the project 'Reflections of Japan in East Yorkshire', bringing together Japanese art and craft items from private collections from across the region. Before moving to the UK, I worked as Curator at the Japanese collection at the National Museum in Prague, Czech Republic, where I was responsible for a collection of over 25,000 items of Japanese art and craft, and conducted an extensive series of research trips to Japan, the United States, and across Europe. I am currently finishing her PhD in History of Art at the University of York, focusing on the reflection of British culture in Bohemian/ Czech art around 1900.

© **Helena Cox**

September 2022

Anne McLean, a member of the Friends' Committee, explores the links between an obscure Scarborough churchwarden, the architect of the church that he served, and York's own William Etty, R.A.

WHO WAS THOMAS BODLEY ETTY?



I noticed this memorial plaque on a visit with the Friends to the church of St-Martin's-on-the-Hill, Scarborough. The church was designed by the renowned Gothic-revival architect, [George Frederick Bodley](#), and features wonderful Pre-Raphaelite paintings and stained glass. The plaque, high up on the wall of the nave, commemorates Thomas Bodley Etty, who served as churchwarden there for almost twenty years and died in 1807, aged eighty-seven. Before arriving at the church, we had visited Scarborough Art Gallery, where William Etty's painting [The Choice of Paris](#) is prominently displayed. Knowing that the Etty family had roots in Yorkshire, and noting the middle name, I wondered whether there was a family connection between the churchwarden, the artist, and the architect.

Everyone deserves their fifteen minutes of fame, so here is Thomas Bodley Etty's. He was indeed related to William Etty, the artist - he was his nephew, the son of his elder brother, Walter; and, although not related by blood to G.F. Bodley, the architect, there was a connection by marriage.

The link between the Etty and Bodley families lies in the London firm of Bodley, Etty and Bodley, which manufactured gold lace for military uniforms. Walter and William Etty's uncle, also named William, was a partner in the firm. There must have been a close bond between the uncle and his nephews because, on his death in 1809, he left them life-changing legacies. His untimely death was the result of a foot injury: 'a mortification...brought on by having unfortunately cut his toe to the quick, which in six weeks proved fatal' (*Hull Advertiser*, 10 June 1809).

Sums of £1,000 were left to each of his sons-in-law. These were Thomas Bodley, his co-partner in the business, who was one of the executors and the husband of his daughter Martha, and John Singleton Clark, a doctor who was working in Hull at the time. Bequests of £2,000 and £3,000 respectively were left to Walter and William Etty. The latter's capital sum was to be invested by Thomas Bodley, and the income used to support his training as a portrait painter. This is an important milestone on William Etty's path to becoming a noted artist and Royal Academician.

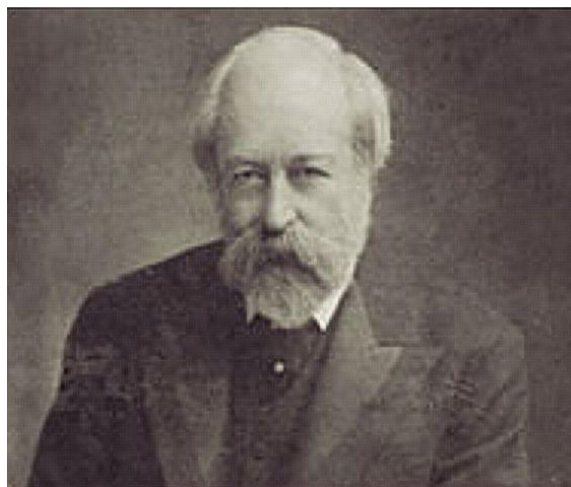


William Etty (1787-1849), *Self-Portrait*, c.1843
York Art Gallery, YORAG_85-001
Photo credit: York Museums Trust

A younger brother, Charles, received £200, to help set himself up in business. The will is long and quite challenging to read, but these appear to be the principal gifts. The uncle's own son, also named William, was left money to buy mourning clothes, as were other family members, but does not appear to be a main beneficiary. A few days after his father's funeral, he drowned while bathing in the sea at Sheerness (*York Herald*, 24 June 1809). He was twenty-eight years old.

Walter Etty took the place of his uncle as partner in the gold lacemaking business, and in 1810 married Jane Hamilton at the Church of St Edmund the King and Martyr, Lombard Street, in the City of London. Thomas Bodley was one of the witnesses. The couple had seven children, four of whom survived infancy, and Thomas Bodley Etty was the youngest of these. It seems likely that he was named after Thomas Bodley, who played such a close and supportive role in the lives of his father and uncle. Correspondence between Thomas Bodley and William Etty R.A. has survived and is held at York Archives.

Thomas Bodley Etty grew up to be a civil engineer by profession. In 1853 he married Sarah Craven, the daughter of a wealthy Hull surgeon, Robert Martin Craven, whose estate at his death in 1859 was valued at the equivalent of £2 million pounds in today's values. It was this legacy that provided the resources for Sarah's sister, Mary, to act as benefactress of St Martin's Church. Her chosen architect, George Frederick Bodley, was the son of another Hull doctor, William Hulme Bodley, who, in turn, was the younger brother of Thomas Bodley.



G.F. Bodley (1827-1907)

Architect of St Martin's-on-the Hill

By 1881, Thomas Bodley Ety and his wife had retired to Scarborough, and in 1887 he began his tenure as churchwarden at St. Martin's. He died on 16 September 1907, and is buried in Dean Road and Manor Road Cemetery, Scarborough. The memorial plaque in the church that he served for so long remains as a reminder, not only of his own dedication, but also of the links of family and friendship between the Bodley and the Ety families.

© **Anne McLean**

September 2022

William Ety – Art & Controversy, edited by Sarah Burnage, Mark Hallett and Laura Turner (York Museums Trust in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, 1911)

Online resources: Census records, parish records, will and probate records via Ancestry UK. The British Newspaper archive.



An opinion piece by Ann Petherick of York's Kentmere House Gallery. This reflects Ann's belief, declared on the Gallery's website, that works of original art should be available to everyone.

WHERE ARE THE MISSING SIX MILLION BUYERS?

Nearly twenty years ago Arts Council research found that there were almost six million people who had said that they would like to buy original art, but had never done so.

In 2004 the Arts Council of England (ACE) published a report on the potential market for the visual arts, entitled Taste Buds.* Their research had found that there were 5.9 million people who had said that they would like to buy original art, but not done so. And that's without counting those who may have thought it but not said it, or all those who haven't even realised what they're missing.

Since then ACE has put little or no effort put into identifying who those six million people are, how they might be reached, why they don't buy, and what might persuade them to do so. The result is that the visual arts do not currently form part of most people's everyday experience, either in their homes or workplaces, and this leads to the arts as a whole being viewed by many as something alien, mysterious, and intimidating. And that goes a long way towards explaining why the arts are seen as such an easy target for government cuts.

Arts publications and the national media are full of articles bemoaning the cuts, often with justification, but in the case of the visual arts could it also be that the art-world is missing a trick? If ACE really wants to help hard-working artists, how about helping to develop an increased market for their work? Instead of promoting the outlandish and unsaleable in galleries which are 100% subsidised, how about giving genuine thought to means of expanding the market for original work?

The standard reason given by non-buyers is shortage of money, but that just doesn't stand up. Simply look at the photographs of interiors in the glossies - with a fortune spent on elaborate curtains, huge sofas, expensive flooring, etc., but frequently either with bare walls or mass-produced reproductions on the wall.

Could it perhaps be lack of confidence rather than lack of money? Buying an original painting does require confidence in one's own judgement. And the opportunity to build that judgement is lacking because, particularly in the regions and post-Covid, there are so few galleries showing good, original work of a style which the first-time buyer can relate to.

It is no surprise that estate agents focus so much on first-time buyers, for without them there can be no subsequent buyers. Every 'serious collector' was once a first-time buyer. Everyone remembers the day they took home their first piece of original art, because it was an emotional investment every bit as much as a financial one. It's scary and exhilarating at the same time, and it can transform your life. You are investing in a living, working artist, rather than buying a mass-produced product.

Many people at all income levels are no strangers to the thrill of collecting, as the spread of ephemera and 'collectables' shops shows, but something holds them back where original art is concerned. The media don't help, with the focus alternatively on historical work sold at high prices at auction, or the antics of the no-longer young 'British Artists'.

There need to be positive efforts to remove the fear and mystique. Art library schemes run by some local authorities have great potential and are proven to develop a continuing interest, but there are currently very few of them. Publicly-funded galleries could do more to work with independent galleries - joint marketing initiatives, co-ordinated private views, exchange of publicity material, and the public galleries promoting talks and discussions led by artists showing in independent galleries, for example.

Most of the work promoted by ACE is 'cutting-edge', and, even if it is for sale, is unlikely to attract those who are not currently 'engaged' with the art world. But as the late A. A. Gill once said, 'if art has to have a cutting edge, it also needs to have a handle by which people can get hold of it'. It is that handle, that means of introduction, which is missing for so many people.

There will never be widespread support for the visual arts, or arts in general, or a population which knows the difference between an original painting and a 'limited edition' reproduction produced on an inkjet printer, until genuine art is a familiar and commonplace experience in homes and workplaces.

The barrier for many people is the widespread feeling that 'art is not for the likes of us', this being often coupled with a fear of saying the wrong

thing and being ridiculed. So, is it surprising that government sees arts funding as easy prey, artists struggle to make a living from their work, and many of the independent galleries showing good quality representational work are closing? Yet the economic case is powerful – the arts are worth 6% of GDP (even financial services only produce 9%), and we now know that the potential for increase is vast.

© **Ann Petherick**

August 2022

**Taste buds – how to cultivate the art market, ACE, October 2004*

And to conclude, an account of what seems to have been an extremely successful FYAG visit

FRIENDS' VISIT TO NANCY

After a shaky and fairly-nerve wracking start, courtesy of LNER and Grand Central, we all managed to catch the Eurostar and our connection to Nancy before relaxing over a congenial supper at Suzette et Gino's. The walk to the restaurant through the stately Place Stanislas at night was magical, with lights reflecting on the wrought iron and fountains, and we all looked forward to exploring further over the next few days.

Our first visit was to the wonderful Villa Majorelle, pausing only to admire another Art Nouveau building from the outside, the Huot House, designed by Émile André, but not open to the public. Villa Majorelle was built in 1902-3 by Henri Sauvage for Louise Majorelle, the furniture maker, and very recently conserved. The architect took his inspiration from nature as evidenced by fluid forms and many references to flowers, wheat, and animals throughout- in paintings, furniture, ironwork, and ceramics. This was an era when there was a strong desire for modernism, and Villa Majorelle sits firmly within the architectural context of the moment. From there we travelled to the Commanderie, which celebrates the defeat of Charles the Bold by Duke René II in 1477, a defeat which marked the end of Burgundian domination. We were reminded of the way in which Alsace Lorraine has been a victim of disputed territory by a statue with the dates 1871 (Franco-Prussian War) and 1918 (the Great War).



Villa Majorelle

The afternoon was spent in the Ecole de Nancy, crammed full of art nouveau glassware by Émile Gallé, Jean Daum, and Jacques Gruber, furniture by Majorelle, and ceramics. In the garden we were treated to a

private visit to the Aquarium also decorated with art nouveau glass and a parasol roof. From there, we had a walking tour of the Parc Sarupt, not a conventional park but a housing estate of ever more fantastical art nouveau houses. After a talk by our guide Scott Anderson, we enjoyed an evening meal in the wonderful art nouveau surroundings of the Excelsior Restaurant, narrowly saved from destruction by a ‘modernising’ mayor who favoured tower blocks.

Day three saw us on the coach to Metz. After a visit to the station with beautiful carvings and stained glass, we spent the morning in St Stephen’s cathedral. Here the highlight was the painted and stained glass, from the fourteenth-century rose window by Herman von Munster to the twentieth-century panels by Jacques Villon and Marc Chagall. This was followed by a short walk to St Maximin de Metz, a lovely transitional Romanesque/Gothic church with an astonishing collection of glass by Jacques Cocteau, deriving much of his inspiration from paganism and Greek myths. Some of the party then managed the trip to the Pompidou Gallery, a very modern offshoot of the Paris version. While the building was striking and very light, there was little art on display, though the educational facilities looked promising. Back in Nancy we were free to find our own refreshments among the many excellent restaurants.



Photo: Rod Greenhow

The following day was a holiday in France, so we spent the morning catching up on some of Nancy’s history, and the way in which Stanislas,

formerly King of Poland arrived in Nancy, and, with financial assistance from his son-in-law, Louis XV, joined the two parts of the existing town to form a cohesive whole. The afternoon was spent in the Park Pepinière and the Old Town with its magnificent Ducal Palace and Porte de la Craffe.

May 2nd was our last day, but we managed to visit the Maison Bergeret and the Musée des Beaux Arts before setting off for the train. Maison Bergeret is now part of the University of Nancy and is not generally open to the public. It was designed by Lucien Weissenburger for Albert Bergeret in 1903 and is a fine example of Art Nouveau architecture, whilst the glass and furniture are particularly stunning. Our time in the Musée des Beaux Arts was unfortunately somewhat curtailed, but we did have time to see the vast collection of Daum glassware and some of the paintings on display.

Our journey home was not the most straightforward as the check-in at Eurostar was incredibly slow for no obvious reason. However, we all made our trains and arrived home safely after a very well worthwhile visit.

© **Dorothy Nott**

September 2022