

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 21 March 2023



## President's Address

Good evening,

Somewhat paradoxically, we have in 2022 enjoyed a busy year at York Art Gallery. After the privations of Covid and the loss of forty-three jobs over the whole of York Museums Trust in 2020, 2022 has returned to a more normal state of affairs. It is sad that the opening hours have had to be curtailed, but the exhibition programme has been an impressive one, and the making of the Permanent Collection free to York citizens is a most welcome development.

During the past year there have been a number of staff leaving the Gallery. Beatrice Bertram has been on maternity leave, but Morgan Feely is very ably filling her post until she returns. Laura Turner has moved to a new job as Exhibitions Officer at Beningbrough Hall, and our shop manager, Ginny Leadley, has stepped down after many years' service. Reyahn King has left York after six and a half years to become Director of Heritage Properties for National Trust Scotland. We wish them all well in their new jobs.

We have, as ever, to extend grateful thanks to our hard-working Committee. Charles Martindale as Chairman has offered inspired leadership in exploring with the Gallery how to improve conditions, especially the lighting, in the Burton Gallery. Paul McLean has stepped up to replace Azizah Clayton as Treasurer; John Roe has taken over as Secretary from Benjamin Hilliam; Sue Smallpage continues as Membership Secretary, and Anne McLean as Website and Communications Officer. The Events Committee under Moira Fulton (see the back page for membership) has organised a most attractive programme over the past year as well as 'The Gallery Dines Out' at Bedern Hall, and has worked hard to provide trips in this country and abroad for the Friends. Ron Clayton has meanwhile kept the 'Art Work of the Month' on schedule, and Jim Sharpe has kept the Members informed through his editing of the e-Bulletin. All this involves a huge amount of work, and we are deeply indebted to the Committee for keeping the business of the Friends so lively and rewarding.

One of the main legacies of Reyahn King's time in York as Chief Executive of the York Museums Trust was in making the exhibition programme more diverse and reflective of changes in British Society. A show of Refugee Art in 2018 resulted in the purchase by the Friends for the Gallery of an important work by Mohammed Sami, himself a refugee, entitled *British, American Scarecrow*. It was evidently the first piece he had sold to a public gallery in the UK, and so I was pleased to read in a recent copy of *Art*

*Quarterly* that he is to have a major exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre in London in 2023 and is establishing an international reputation.

Reyahn King left York in the later summer of 2022 and her replacement, Kathryn Blacker, takes over as Chief Executive in January 2023. She has worked at the Minster for the last nine years as Chapter Steward, but also has museum experience, having been Deputy Director of the National Science and Media Museum at Bradford. We look forward very much to working with her.

PETER MILLER

**President, The Friends of York Art Gallery**

**March 2023**