



Friends of York Art Gallery

## **Minutes of the online Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023 at 6 pm**

**Apologies** were received from Vivien Flynn, Susan Greenhow, David Lamb, Bridget Marr, Christine Roe, and Louise Wheatley.

**1. The Chair welcomed** everyone and declared the meeting open. He spoke of the challenges facing the Friends, but also of the resilience they had shown in meeting them. He appealed for new and younger, preferably technically skilful, members to join the committee. One space remained open at present. He then highlighted two important, forthcoming events, both of which are designed to celebrate the Friends' 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:

- a) A visit to Heslington Manor House Gardens in June
- b) A talk by Tristram Hunt, director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, in October

He welcomed Kathryn Blacker the newly appointed CEO of Yorkshire Museums Trust, and pledged the Friends' help to her.

In turn, KB thanked everyone for their warm welcome to her. She emphasised two things:

- i) the need for cooperation and collaboration between YMT and the Friends
- ii) YMT's complicated finances

The issue of Finances could be further divided as follows:

- a) Revenue—finding enough money for all three of YMT's institutions. Cooperation needed between YMT and the Friends.
- b) Capital—this required careful stewarding. Again, careful cooperation was necessary regarding various funds.

A question was put on the use of the Burton bequest: did it preclude charging to view paintings? The answer was unclear. KB thanked the speaker for drawing this fund to her attention. The Chair suggested that further questions on matters of policy could be put in writing either to him or to KB.

**2. The minutes of the AGM of 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022** were approved as a true and sufficient record of that meeting.

**3. Peter Miller gave the President's address.** He summarised 2022 as a busy year, and a better one than the earlier two years, especially 2020 when 43 gallery jobs had been lost owing to the Covid crisis. Opening times for the gallery were still reduced but the exhibitions had been impressive, and admission was free for the main galleries (excluding exhibitions). He commended the beauty of the Annual Report, with its Japanese Ukiyo-e covers. He especially wished to thank the FYAG committee for its fine work, and he congratulated the Chair on his inspiring leadership. He then personally welcomed Kathryn

Blacker, and ended by thanking everyone who had helped in various ways on the bookstall in the foyer of the gallery.

#### **4. There were two elections** to the FYAG committee.

i) **Peter Miller** was re-elected President, nem. con. He was proposed by Charles Martindale and seconded by Anne McLean. Peter said he was very happy to serve as President a second term.

ii) **David Lamb** (proposed Charles Martindale, seconded Anne McLean and James Grierson) was elected to the committee, nem con. The Chair read from a note that the candidate had sent him detailing various work and committee experiences which he felt qualified him for the role.

#### **5. Treasurer's report.** Firstly, the Chair thanked Paul McLean for his sterling work. Finances were in a healthy state. CM referred to three matters:

i) Reserves: these should only be drawn upon in special circumstances.

ii) Subscriptions: these had not risen for some time, despite increasing costs. Should they go up? A show of hands largely suggested they should. A final decision was not taken but will be taken by the committee.

iii) MA bursary. This was costly and FYAG's contribution had now been held at £4,500.

The Chair then handed over to the Treasurer, who showed charts demonstrating that all in all finances were in a good state. None the less, various costs, such as events and operating costs, had risen.

#### **6. Approval of the Accounts** for the year Ended 31 December 2022. These were approved, nem con.

#### **7. The appointment** of an independent auditor. Approved, nem con.

**8. Any Other Business.** The Chair referred to a letter he had received from a member complaining that the meeting was still on Zoom and not in-person, and therefore lacked the sociable aspect. A show of hands largely supported Zoom meetings. John Roe observed that the task of secretary was not made easy by the Zoom format. He also supported the complaint about lack of sociability. He could not call witnesses, as those disapproving of Zoom had stayed away. Liz Prettejohn mentioned the York Art History Dept's system of combining in-person meetings with a Zoom extension. She would inquire. Dorothy Nott said that a meeting of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society in Priory Street on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 had managed the combination. The matter would be further considered by the committee.

**9. Curator's report.** Morgan Feely gave his curatorial report touching on items contained in the Annual Report. These were mainly on exhibitions. He said the lighting of the newly acquired Laura Knight painting in the Burton Gallery was a great success, and it was planned that such lighting would be extended throughout the gallery. There had been staffing changes, but Arts Council funding was assured. The gallery would receive a loan of a Monet, as part of the National Gallery's bicentenary celebrations. The Aesthetica Art Prize would open on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, and the Wall of Woman (CoCA) was launched on 8<sup>th</sup> March,

International Women's Day. He was stepping down as acting Senior Curator, and he expressed his gratitude to members for their help and efforts.

The Chair mentioned in addition William Etty's copy of the *Fête (or Concert) Champêtre* in the Louvre believed by Etty to be by Giorgione (now usually assigned to Titian). This was a loan but might become permanent. It had never left Etty's studio during his lifetime. Apparently, it is in better condition than the Titian original which has degraded, and therefore has become all the more important.

**10. FYAG MA Bursary-Holder.** Kuhu Kopariha was welcomed by the Chair. She expressed her gratitude for bursary help, and outlined her research projects. She described herself as a curator with ambitions to become an art historian. She thanked Becky Gee and Morgan Feely for their help with her research. She had been working on three artworks in particular: the recently acquired Laura Knight painting *Early Morning in a Gypsy Camp*, *Captain John Foote* by Joshua Reynolds, and the ceramic piece by Claire Curneen, *Irene Tending to the Wounds of Saint Sebastian*, which she had just given as a gallery talk.

The meeting was declared closed at 7.30.

John Roe