

Friends of York Art Gallery

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Bernardo Bellotto (1722-80), *The Piazza San Martino, Lucca*, 1742-1746, oil on canvas, 50.8cm x 72cm. Photo credit: York Museums Trust.

This painting has recently returned to York Art Gallery after a year on tour in Japan.

Fostering the appreciation of Fine Art since 1948



Much has happened and been discussed during the past year. Under the active chairmanship of Charles Martindale, the meetings of the Friends' Committee have been a forum for discussion of many aspects of the Friends' focus and governance. This has been yeasted by the constructive and thought-provoking contributions of many on the Committee.

It has to be emphasised at the outset that the Friends are in a fundamentally good position. With a record membership of over 900, we are in a robust state to support the Gallery through difficult financial times. Local government has been under pressure all over the country, and York has not escaped from this or from cuts in government funding. It is anticipated that this financial pressure will continue, and so the Friends' support for the Gallery will be increasingly important.

The main show of the year was of new works by Harland Miller which took over the ground floor for about six months. Miller played a part in many events in the Gallery, and made the exhibition an active part of York's visual experience. We look forward to a major exhibition of Japanese prints in the forthcoming year, and there is an excellent smaller display of Harold Gosney's work in the Upper North Gallery until the spring of 2026.

Over the past year Beatrice Bertram, as Senior Curator, has been tireless in working for the Gallery, and we are fortunate in having such a lively and resourceful generator of activities. Dr Eleanor Jackson has been appointed as Curator of Fine Art during the past year to help Beatrice. In this they have been generously supported by Kathryn Blacker, who, as the Chief Executive of York Museums Trust, has had major funding problems to contend with. York is among the lowest funded per capita cities in the country, Whitehall seeing it as a wealthy city. The Gallery staff have always made a visit to the Gallery a pleasure, so a huge thank-you to them for the welcome they extend to us.

Moira Fulton has once again organised a succession of enterprising events and visits for the Friends during the year. Ron Clayton has been successful in finding members to present regular 'Artworks of the Month', which focus on different pictures in the Gallery's collection. The Collection Fund of the Friends continues to be carefully guided by Richard Bailey, but, nevertheless, do consider a donation to the Fund! In a recent innovation, David Lamb, from the Committee, curated an exhibition called *Artists, Makers and Friends* at the new Sliding Water Gallery in York, which raised over £7000 for the Friends. This was an exciting and generous initiative on his part.

At the next AGM I stand down after ten years as President. My first visit to the Gallery was in 1967, then under the charismatic leadership of Hans Hess, and my involvement with the Gallery over the years since then has continued to give me great pleasure. In all those years the Gallery has played an important part in the cultural life of the City. I wish my successor who will be elected at the AGM every success in what are likely to be challenging times.

PETER MILLER

President, Friends of York Art Gallery



William Etty, *Concert champêtre* ('pastoral concert'), after the painting which is today attributed to Titian by the Louvre but has traditionally been assigned to Giorgione, c.1830, oil on canvas, 98cm x 117.5cm.

Photo credit: York Museums Trust

This work, currently on display in the Burton Gallery, has been gifted to the Gallery, and in due course will join the permanent collection.

The Year in the Gallery

Our year at the Gallery got off to an excellent start, as we were thrilled to win the 'Event, Festival or Cultural Experience of the Year' Award at the Visit York Tourism Awards 2025 for last summer's blockbuster exhibition 'National Treasures: Monet in York – "The Water-Lily Pond."' In January, we welcomed Dr Eleanor Jackson as our new Curator of Fine Art, who joined us from the British Library. She curated a display of beautiful seascapes and landscapes from our collection in the Upper North Gallery, inspired by the York-born artist Harland Miller's kind donation of two seaside-themed works, *Whitby*, *The Self Catering Years* and *Scarborough, Have Faith in Cod* (both 2024). Fourteen further paintings were chosen to complement these, including J.M.W. Turner's *Lake Constance* (1842), which went on display to mark the artist's 250th anniversary. The re-hang also included another recent acquisition, Ro Robertson's *Porth II* (2023), presented by the Contemporary Art Society, and Gustave Courbet's *Swiss Landscape* (1869), which was generously conserved with a grant from the Friends in 2023.

The internationally acclaimed artist and writer Harland Miller also gifted a special edition of his striking painting, *York, So Good They Named It Once* (2024) to the collection, which was installed in the Burton Gallery ahead of his return in March to present 'XXX'. This new exhibition showcased canvases and works on paper from his renowned *Letter Paintings* series, inspired by the intricate illuminated letters found in medieval manuscripts. Adopting the layout of book covers, these works depict overlaid letter forms, while underneath are neutral-coloured bands with mono- or bi-syllabic words as 'titles' alongside Miller's own name as their 'author'. Deploying bright, saturated colour palettes and a wide range of typefaces designed by the artist, Miller explores the expressive versatility of short, enigmatic words such as *Vex* (2022), *Boss* (2024), and his first hard-edged diptych, *Far Out* (2022). The distinctive hues and shapes of the latter were recreated using flowering plants by our brilliant Gardens team as a 'living project' in the Artists' Garden.



Harland Miller: 'XXX' Photo: York Museums Trust



Bernard Leach, *Well Head and Mountains*, panel of tiles, 1926. Exhibited in 'Not a Pot'. This work was gifted to the Gallery by Dean Eric Milner-White as part of the founding ceramics collection.

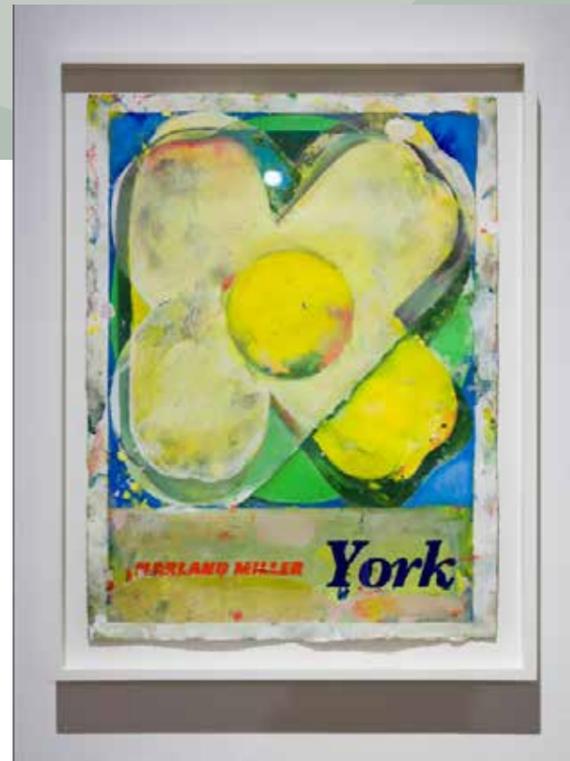
Photo credit: York Museums Trust

In the spring, Helen Walsh curated 'Not a Pot', an exhibition featuring over 120 works, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Centre of Ceramic Art. Inspired by Gordon Baldwin – arguably the UK's most influential sculptural ceramicist – who was responsible for moving pottery away from functional concerns onto a sculptural platform, the displays explore the ideas, inspiration, intentions, and impact of artists who chose to work in the ceramics world. Exhibits range from historical pieces and items from the pioneering collection gifted to the Gallery by the Dean of York Eric Milner-White in 1959, to acquisitions made since 2015. Over a third of the works in the show are on public display for the first time, alongside key loans from a private collection and a life-size ceramic chair by Eva Masterman. Two of the most iconic pieces in the Milner-White collection by Bernard Leach – the *Leaping Salmon* vase (1931) and the *Well Head and Mountains* tile (1926) – were restored with Friends' funds.



Harold Gosney: *Materials and Making* Photo credit: York Museums Trust

Our inaugural Curator of Contemporary Art, Livia Turnbull, joined the team in May. She brings with her a wealth of experience curating contemporary and digital art developed in previous roles at the V&A and the Science Museum. Livia was instrumental in the delivery of two exhibitions which opened in the Madsen Galleries this September: 'Aesthetica Art Prize 2025' and 'Future Tense'. This year's Prize, curated by Cherie Federico (Director of Aesthetica), saw themes of identity, mental health, and gender and racial equity emerge, as well as experimental uses of new media. Tobi Onobolu won the main prize for his video work *Danse Macabre*, and the local artist Sam Metz – whose work is represented in our collection – was awarded the emerging artist prize for their sculptural installation *Porosity I, II, & III*. Alumni Squid Soup's *Submergence*, in the central space, has proved particularly popular with visitors, demonstrating an appetite from our audiences for immersive and accessible contemporary art.



Harland Miller, *York*. Acquired 2025, oil, watercolour, and pencil on paper, 51 x 38.5 cm.
Photo credit: York Museums Trust

Rounding off this year's programme, a new exhibition on the York sculptor Harold Gosney opened in the Upper North Gallery on 15 November, curated by Associate Collections Curators Caitlin Doley and Rob Wake. 'Harold Gosney: Materials and Making' features over 20 pieces of sculpture produced between 1989 and 2025, with accompanying drawings, and a newly commissioned film produced in-house. The exhibition focuses on the key themes of the human figure, horses, and natural forms, highlighting Gosney's exploration of materials and the importance of drawing in his practice. Many of the works on display have never previously been exhibited, and these are showcased alongside pieces in our own collection such as *Reverie* (2015) and the poignant *Bam* sculpture (2004) with its associated drawings. Our paint sponsors Little Greene kindly supplied the beautiful 'Hicks' Blue' wall colour (last seen as a backdrop for Monet last year). Do make sure you visit before the show closes on 28 June 2026.

We have an exciting programme of exhibitions and events lined up for the year ahead. First, 'Making Waves: The Art of Japanese Woodblock Print' will run from 27 February to 30 August 2026 in the Madsen Galleries. This exhibition will bring together Japanese prints from our own collection (some of which were conserved and mounted thanks to the Friends in 2021) with key loans in a range of media from regional and national institutions, and contemporary artists. The displays will tell the story of the medium from its early development in the Japanese book trade, to its peak of popularity with the genre of *ukiyo-e* ('pictures of the floating world') in the 18th and 19th centuries, and its reinterpretation by revival movements

throughout the 20th century to the present day. Over 100 works by major artists such as Kitagawa Utamaro and Utagawa Hiroshige are featured; among the star loans is an original print of Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave*, one of the most famous artworks in the world (loaned by Maidstone Museum).

In September 2026, in collaboration with the Department of History of Art at the University of York, we will stage a major exhibition focusing on the sculptor, designer, and illustrator John Flaxman (1755–1826) in the city of his birth, on the bicentenary of his death. The exhibition brings together key loans from regional and national institutions, alongside rarely seen works from our permanent collection, and audiences will discover Flaxman as an artist 'hidden in plain sight' – as a storyteller whose work in ceramic, silverware, and on paper continues to resonate in compelling and unexpected ways. The exhibition will feature more than 100 objects that situate Flaxman at the centre of an international network of artists, including William Blake, William Etty, Henry Fuseli, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Angelica Kauffman, J.M.W. Turner, Josiah Wedgwood, and others. It will be accompanied by a lively programme of public events, and a publication – produced thanks to grants from the Paul Mellon Centre and the Friends – which will contain a collection of new writing exploring themes raised by the show.

Artworks from our collection have appeared in several national and international exhibitions this year. We lent an important group of 21 works by artists including Ladi Kwali and



J.M.W. Turner, *The Dormitory and Transept of Fountains Abbey – Evening*, 1798, watercolour on paper, 48.5cm x 62.5cm. This work was lent to the exhibition 'Austen and Turner: A Country House Encounter' at Harewood House. Photo credit: York Museums Trust

Magdalene Odundo to the Ford Foundation, New York, for their exhibition 'Body, Vessel, Clay: Black Women and Contemporary Art'. A further six pieces by Ladi Kwali featured in the recent exhibition 'Nigerian Modernism' at Tate Modern, and eight works by Donald Locke were included in 'Resistant Forms' at Spike Island, Bristol. Closer to home, we were pleased to lend J.M.W. Turner's *The Dormitory and Transept of Fountains Abbey – Evening* (1798), to the exhibition 'Austen and Turner: A Country House Encounter' at Harewood House, and Carmichael James Wilson's *Whale Fishing in a Polar Sea* (1845) to the Captain Cook Memorial Museum in Whitby. Finally, Helen Chadwick's sculpture, *Ego Geometria Sum IV: Boat, age 2 years* (1983) formed part of an exhibition on the artist at the Hepworth Wakefield, and will tour to both the Museo Novecento, Florence and the Kunsthaus Graz, Austria in 2026.

In terms of acquisitions, there have been some notable additions to the collection during 2025. We were finally able to realise our long-held ambition to acquire work by Harland Miller, thanks to his extraordinarily generous suite of donations: three paintings from his *Bad Weather* series (*York*, *Whitby*, and *Scarborough*, all 2024) and one work on paper, *York* (2025), created exclusively for our 'XXX' exhibition. Our grateful thanks go to two members of the Friends for gifting us a beautiful etching of *Kirkham Priory Gateway* (1988) by John Piper. This print depicts the ruined gatehouse of Kirkham Abbey, near Malton, and complements our existing three paintings and two prints by Piper, as well as our extensive collection of views of ruined abbeys in North Yorkshire.

The 'Making Waves' exhibition provided the impetus for the new acquisition of a Japanese woodblock print – purchased, and supplied with mount and frame, with a grant from the Friends – Toyohara Chikanobu's *Evacuation of Chiyoda Palace* (1896). This print shows the elite guard of female samurai who were responsible for protecting Chiyoda Palace, which housed the shogun's mother, wife, and concubines. We anticipate that the work will be a highlight of 'Making Waves' and will serve as a legacy of the exhibition. The Friends, alongside the Contemporary Art Society's Omega and Griffin Funds, also enabled us to acquire an important international ceramic sculpture for the collection. *Kindred* (2023), by Bahamian-born emerging artist Anina Major, is the first of her works to be acquired for a UK public institution. Major has developed her own ceramic material and an innovative clay-plaiting technique based on traditional Bahamian straw weaving. This piece supports our commitment to strengthening holdings by women artists – do look out for it in our upstairs galleries, where it will be displayed very soon.

As always, I thank the Friends for their continued support.

BEATRICE BERTRAM

Senior Curator, York Art Gallery



John Piper, *Kirkham Priory Gateway*, 1988, ink on paper, 40 x 52 cm. Recently gifted to the Gallery by two members of the Friends.

Photo credit: York Museums Trust

Anne McLean writes about a stage in the prehistory of York Art Gallery

A 'Great Exhibition' was held in York from June to October 1889 in the building which today houses York Art Gallery. The building had been designed and built ten years earlier for the second Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition using funds generated by its predecessor, the 1866 exhibition (this had been held in the grounds of York Asylum, Bootham). Both the earlier exhibitions were very successful, drawing large crowds and making a healthy profit. They have left a permanent legacy in the form of York Art Gallery. Did the Great Exhibition of 1889 have a similar impact, and did it live up to its name?

At the time of the exhibition, the building was being managed by the Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Institution, the successor body to the committees which had organised the earlier exhibitions. Indeed, several members had served on both these committees, working tirelessly to provide York with a permanent exhibition space. A high priority of theirs was to give citizens access to art, and in 1882 the foundations of a permanent collection were laid when one of their members bequeathed his large collection of paintings to them. The benefactor was John Burton, a horse dealer from Poppleton, and the Burton Gallery is named after him.

As well as housing the Burton collection, the building was used as an entertainment space, staging concerts and lectures. However, with a very large hall at the rear (now demolished) the Institution struggled to pay its way and regularly made a loss. The committee's proposed solution in 1889 was to hold another exhibition, no doubt in the hope of repeating their past successes. Their objectives were publicised in the local press:

[the exhibition] will be of superior character, and great care will be taken by the management to exclude such exhibits as may tend to lower the tone of the Exhibition. As inducement for the highest



York Exhibition Building, 1886, from a lantern slide by Tempest Anderson.

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**GREAT EXHIBITION,
YORK.**
JUNE TO OCTOBER.
PARTIALLY IN AID OF THE COUNTY HOSPITAL, AND PARTIALLY IN AID OF THE CITY DISPENSARY.
WILL BE OPENED IN STATE BY THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR.

Yorkshire Gazette, 22 June 1889

class of exhibitors to come forward, diplomas of honour, gold and silver medals, and ordinary diplomas, will be awarded after due examination by experts and jurors.

(York Herald, 26 September 1889)

The exhibition's official title was to be 'the Fine Art, Ecclesiastical, Educational and Industrial Exhibition' (quite a mouthful), and a certain proportion of the takings was to be donated to the County Hospital and the City Dispensary.

The committee decided not to organise the event themselves but, to use a modern phrase, outsource the task to someone else. The man they chose was Joseph Davis from London. Despite being an optician by trade, he had previous experience as manager of the Anglo-Danish Exhibition in South Kensington, which had royal patronage and raised over £5,000 for the British Home for Incurables. It must have looked like an ideal arrangement – Davis had experience and a record of success.

Davis hired the entire York Exhibition Building and was therefore responsible for all the costs. His name and title – 'Joseph Davis Responsible Manager' – are engraved on the prize medal (see illustration). Note that the committee's proposed title has been replaced with the 'Great Exhibition York'.

Davis received some credit for making use of a building which was widely considered to be a white elephant, and for organising an art competition in association with the York School of Art and Design, but there were also complaints about his management, in particular about the judging and distribution of medals. The promised 'experts and jurors' were not identified (or even seen), and it was reported in the local press that award winners, instead of receiving a medal, were given a diploma and the option to buy a medal for 20 guineas (the equivalent of three months' wages for a skilled worker or about £1,800 at today's values). One exhibitor, a stained-glass manufacturer from Leeds, later took Davis to court for breach of contract having only taken a stand at the exhibition on the promise of a gold medal and being unhappy to receive a diploma instead. He also disputed the value of the medal, with an expert witness deeming it be worth 10 guineas rather than 20, and the court ultimately ruling against Davis.

However, winners in the art competition do appear to have received medals. According to press reports two gold and three silver medals were presented to



Interior of the Exhibition Building, 1881.
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students of the art school by Sir Joseph Terry, and diplomas are not mentioned. The gold medals are again said to be worth 20 guineas. It is difficult to imagine Davis being able to afford to buy them in the first place if this was true. Examples do come on the market occasionally, like the one illustrated here, and they are made of a base white metal with gilt applied to look like gold.

Other reports in the local press describe the exhibition as popular and financially successful, but it is impossible to know how true this was, as no figures appear to have been issued. Presumably, Davis either did not keep the information, or did not want to share it. Correspondence between him and the committee of the Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Institution published after the exhibition shows that the relationship had completely broken down, with the committee accusing Davis of bad faith. In their opinion he had not managed the exhibition in either the way they wanted or the way he said he would. They found the ecclesiastical and educational displays to be poor and the general entertainment to be 'the kind commonly associated with a Music Hall' – they would not have allowed it if they had known.

Davis was also accused of not honouring his commitment to the two charitable institutions, the County Hospital and the City Dispensary. He denied having agreed to give the former 5% of takings and the latter 2.5%, or that he had ever said he would open his accounts to scrutiny. He made a hasty donation of £20 to the two charities before departing York.

The following year, Davis was to be found organising the Leeds International Exhibition, which was held on a large site and unfortunately for him failed to attract either enough visitors or exhibitors. His debtors foreclosed on him, and in October 1890 he was declared bankrupt. At his bankruptcy hearing he was named as 'Isaac Josephs, trading as Joseph Davis'. Despite this setback, he must have decided to stay with exhibition management as five years later he reappears in the historical record as 'responsible manager' of the Scarborough Fishery and Marine Exhibition.

The Great Exhibition was a disappointment for the Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Institution, which recorded another loss for that year. One feels that the Committee had been too trusting in appointing an outsider and had not realised how much control they would lose by doing so. For some years they had been exploring the idea of transferring the Exhibition Building to the Corporation, and this experience must have strengthened their resolve. In 1892 with great fanfare, and at a cost of £6,000, York Corporation took over the building and its art collection, and the Yorkshire Fine Art and Industrial Institution was wound up.

ANNE MCLEAN

Website and Online Communications Officer



Prize medal, Great Exhibition, York, 1889

A Favourite Painting

Giulio Cesare Procaccini's *Annunciation* is a masterwork in the art of painting. Flesh-tones are blended to a porcelain finish, but in many areas the artist has left brushstrokes purposefully visible on the wooden picture support. The Virgin's white veil is a particularly breathtaking passage of painting, revealing Procaccini's total mastery of his materials. Transparent white paint thinned with turps was swept across the Virgin's neck and red mantle, thereby repeating with the brush the action of wrapping of an actual veil. Whereas usually in painting of this period, brushstrokes are blended to model form, here Procaccini used his brush like a drawing instrument so that exposed marks form the compositional structure. In thicker passages of paint the artist did something analogous. For the fabric around Gabriel's sweeping neckline, he pressed the medium-rich paint so that it collected at either side of the brush, and these thicker parts read as the ridges of folds. Similarly with the lily, the thicker paint reads as the outer edges of the petals, and the transparent parts as their centre.

Giulio Cesare Procaccini
(1574-1625), *The
Annunciation*, 1605-1615,
oil on wood,
62.8 x 49.5 cm.
Photo credit: York Museums
Trust



For good reason, the *Annunciation* has been identified as an 'oil sketch' – a small-scale, freely-executed painting that leaves exposed working processes, often acting as a preparatory study for a final composition. Yet no larger-scale work by Procaccini with the same composition has been identified; nor do we know when the *Annunciation* was painted, or for whom, even though we can be quite sure that it was painted for private contemplation. The work is an end in itself, and would have been appreciated as such by a clientele for whom drawings and the artist's touch were desirable possessions.

Readers may be surprised to learn that Procaccini trained as a sculptor, turning to the brush in his late-20s. Born in 1574 in Bologna, the son of the mannerist painter Ercole Procaccini the Elder, the teenage Giulio Cesare followed his elder brother, Camillo, to work for Count Pirro I Visconti Borromeo at his villa in Lainate, near Milan. It was here that he received training as a sculptor from the artist overseeing the artistic projects at the villa, allowing him to produce two nymphs for the grotto there. He continued to work as a sculptor, carving statues of saints and narrative reliefs for Milan's churches and the Duomo until the turn of the century, when his career took a new direction. According to his biographer, Carlo Cesare Malvasia, Procaccini had undertaken tours of Rome, Venice, and Parma to see works by Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, and Correggio. Thereafter he changed his course, and became a painter.

The *Annunciation* is a self-conscious display of painterly virtuosity, although perhaps we detect a sculptor's sensibility in Gabriel's twist. The archangel's rotation demonstrates an understanding of the figure as it inhabits real space, hinting towards Procaccini's study of three-dimensional models. His capacity to condense these spatial effects and the psychology of Gabriel and Mary into a small-scale work would have drawn further admiration from an erudite patron, who would have been accustomed to seeing these attributes realised in his monumental altarpieces adorning Lombardy's churches.

Today the *Annunciation*, with its shimmering blue-green palette, appears as fresh as the day Procaccini painted it. As one contemporary remarked, 'grace flows from Procaccini's brushes' – *piovono le gratie*. This is in plain evidence on the walls of York Art Gallery. What could be more appropriate in a painting representing the transmission of grace towards, from and within the Virgin Mary?

AMANDA HILLIAM
Committee Member

Programme of Events 2025

Our programme of events published with the Friends Annual Report in February 2025 was greatly expanded by additional events throughout year. The most important addition was the extremely successful art exhibition, organised by David Lamb in November.

We began the year in January with a fascinating lecture on Van Gogh, delivered by the renowned art-historian Professor Griselda Pollock. This had been organised by Margaret May, sadly now retired from the Events Sub-Committee. In early March, Dr Dorothy Nott arranged a visit to Beningbrough Hall to see the photographic exhibition on the paper mosaics of Mary Delany (1700-88); our tour of this beautiful display of Mrs Delany's work was led by Laura Turner, former Curator at York Art Gallery. Also in March, we had a morning seminar on a very unusual topic, Japanese traditional crafts and toys, presented by Dr Helena Cox, Curator of York University's Art Collection, who had curated an important collection of the toys in Prague's National Gallery. Our next talk, by Kirstie Mitchell, was on an exhibition of a more local, but little studied topic, the manuscripts and silverware from Yorkshire Parish Churches, now in the custody of York Minster. These had been displayed in an exhibition in the Minster's Undercroft in 2024-25. In April we were fortunate to have been able to have a very interesting tour of an architecturally important but rarely opened country house, Boynton Hall, near Bridlington. Here the owner, Mrs Sally Marriott, gave us an extensive tour of the house and grounds. This was followed by lunch in Bridlington and a tour of Bridlington Priory Church. Cynthia Barbor organised a visit in May to another country house, the 18th-century Sutton Park, in Sutton-on-the-Forest. Members enjoyed seeing the eclectic art collection and touring the lovely gardens on a fine summer's day. Our fourth country house visit, in June, to Thirsk Hall and Sculpture Park, was less satisfactory with a rather perfunctory tour of parts of the Hall, an inadequate lunch, and a prolonged tour of the sculptures in the grounds. Fortunately, our next event in July, organised by Dorothy Nott, the overnight visit to the World of Wedgwood and the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery at Stoke-on-Trent, was far more successful and thoroughly enjoyed



Friends visit to Boynton Hall

by all participants. Ron Clayton, most of whose time for the Friends is taken up planning the monthly Gallery talks, kindly agreed to arrange a visit to Burton Agnes Hall, in July when the beautiful gardens were at their best. In August we travelled by coach to the Sitwells home of Renishaw Hall in Derbyshire. Here we had a specialised in-depth tour of the house and its art collection. The week-long tour to Southwest Cornwall organised by Dorothy Nott in September was a great success, with a very varied programme of visits. A new venture, also in September, was the joint social with members of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society at Bedern Hall, which could lead to further shared events. In October a small group of members had the special privilege of having a guided tour, with the curators of the Exhibition on Turner and Jane Austen at Harewood House. The excellent talk on the Bolton Percy Psalter by the new Curator of Fine Art at York Art Gallery Dr Eleanor Jackson in October, and the ever-popular tour of the Gallery stores, with Robert Wake, in November demonstrated the importance of our links with the staff at York Art Gallery. Our second seminar, of the year, given by Dr Maddie Hewitson at the Bar Convent was based on a significant religious painting by the Pre-Raphaelite artist John Everett Millais.

The most unusual and financially productive of our programme of 18 events was the superb selling exhibition, *Artists, Makers and Friends*, organised by David Lamb, which, on its own, raised over £7,000 for our funds, almost doubling the amount raised this year. Credit for this outstanding achievement must go to David who planned and supervised the whole 10-day exhibition, recruiting the artists, agreeing the conditions of sale, negotiating the use of Sliding Water Gallery, and then arranging a Private View, 4 Meet-the-Artist sessions, and the sale of the donated works of art. All of this took an enormous amount of time and effort for which we are all extremely grateful.

MOIRA FULTON
Events Coordinator



David Lamb welcomes visitors to the exhibition 'Artists, Makers and Friends' at the Sliding Water Gallery

As someone passionate about museum and gallery work and the development of my art-historical research skills, I was greatly excited to be awarded this internship at York Art Gallery. I learned how to use gallery collections to conduct meaningful and essential research, and to understand the behind-the-scenes operations of curatorial and exhibition work, both of which are critical to York Art Gallery's success. I want to thank the Friends of York Art Gallery for this opportunity. It was one of the most impactful and informative years of my academic and professional career, and I have learned an enormous amount that I will take with me into the years to come. Additionally, I would like to thank Caitlin Doley, Associate Collections Curator at York Art Gallery, for her supervision and for allowing me to learn and grow throughout the year. I

also extend my appreciation to the Gallery's Senior Curator Beatrice Bertram and the rest of the curatorial and collections team for their encouragement and support throughout the past year.

Coming into this internship, I remember being immediately drawn to Claire Curneen's ceramic work in York Art Gallery's collection. Her *Irene Tending the Wounds of Saint Sebastian* (2006) was the first work in the collection to which I devoted time and research. My research interests stemmed from my undergraduate degree, during which I devoted much of my time to studying modern and contemporary religious art. Curneen's work spurred my thinking on how the spiritual body is depicted, and how modern and contemporary art can reinvent normative and traditional images within Christianity.

Another work from the collection that I studied was Stanley Spencer's *The Deposition and Rolling Away of the Stone* (1959). I was delighted to have the opportunity to give a talk on this piece for the Friends, sharing what I discovered about Spencer's eccentric life and his important place in modern British art. During the research process, I grew enthralled by the way in which Spencer drew upon Christian motifs and placed Biblical stories and images in his immediate contemporary context, reinventing well-known Christian imagery through modern painting.

From researching Curneen and Spencer, I developed a keen interest in understanding the overlapping presence of the body, religious iconography, and contemporary contexts in art. I used this research to plan my MA dissertation, examining how modern and contemporary



Claire Curneen (b. 1968), *Irene Tending the Wounds of Saint Sebastian*, 2006, porcelain, gold lustre & blue cobalt glaze, 67 x 49 x 22cm; bequeathed, Ismay, 2007. © 2025 Claire Curneen. CC BY-ND 4.0. <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/irene-tending-the-wounds-of-saint-sebastian-272467>.

Image courtesy of York Museums Trust.

artists appropriated and reinterpreted the sculptural body of Christ to convey political and social messages. This interest led me to explore the exhibition, 'Sin,' held at the Gallery in 2022 which examined themes I was investigating in my own research. In tracing a chronology of artists who utilized the image of Christ in new and reinvented ways, I was drawn to the work of Australian-born artist Ron Mueck. His sculpture *Youth* (2009), a central focal point of 'Sin,' was the main case study of one of chapters, where I reflected on the adaptation of the body of Christ in a 21st-century sculpture, connecting the work to 14th-16th-century sculptures of Christ, and drawing out the reasons, often rooted in political messages, as to why contemporary secular artists explored art-making practices rooted in Christianity.

Additionally, I was glad to utilize the collections and first-hand experiences working with objects to support my research and writing as part of my course studies. For my course, 'Political Psyche in Britain, 1979-1997,' I was able to draw on my research done for this internship and take the work, *British, American Scarecrow* (2017) by Mohammed Sami as the main focus of my final assessment, examining the political themes present in the work and how its placement in a gallery space can begin to break down barriers between war and conflict and the viewer. I was eager to have the chance to study one of the most important contemporary works in the collection, especially in the light of Sami's nomination for the Turner Prize in 2025. I was excited about the opportunity to gain further knowledge of contemporary art in Britain while simultaneously honing my skills in using fine art collections as primary source material in my research.

While conducting this research, I also expressed my interest to the staff at York Art Gallery in learning more about the curatorial staff's responsibilities in their day-to-day operations. I was eager to learn more about exhibition development, curatorial decisions, and collections management from a wide range of people at York Art Gallery. I shadowed Jenny Alexander, Caitlin Doley, Robert Wake, and Helen Walsh during the installations and de-installations of various exhibitions and gallery spaces, including 'The Art of Wallpaper: Morris & Co,' 'Harland Miller: XXX,' and 'Not a Pot.' I gained valuable experience in proper art handling and packing techniques, as well as in completing condition reports for loan documentation.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Friends for this opportunity. I had an exciting year, learning something new each week and gaining relevant experience as an emerging museum professional. Thank you.

LAUREN MAROHN
MA Bursary Student 2024-5



Mohammed Sami, *British, American Scarecrow*, 2017, acrylic on linen, 280cm x 310cm. © Mohammed Sami. CC BY-ND 4.0. <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/british-american-scarecrow-322971>. Purchased in 2019 with a grant from the Friends.

Image credit: York Museums Trust.

Treasurer's Report

The charity's finances remain strong with over £175,000 in our reserves. The group of members donating regularly to the Collection Fund have now built up a separate fund of £48,000 for acquisitions. Our finances have benefited from a full programme of events and a new venture, 'Artists, Makers & Friends', a selling exhibition of work by local artists. Audited figures will be available at the AGM, the unaudited figures are given below.

In the current year we have made grants totalling £14,445.96, funded from income. The grants were:

- £975 for conservation of the painting by the York artist Mary Ellen Best, *A Woman Paring Apples* (1828-1831).
- £10,000 general grant to the Gallery.
- £2,930 for the acquisition of the ceramic sculpture by Anina Major, *Kindred* (2023).
- £540.96 for the acquisition of the Japanese print by Hashimoto Chikanobu, *Evacuation of Chiyoda Palace* (1896).

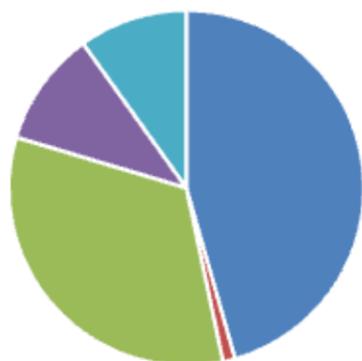
INCOME

Membership	20,986.00
Donations	510.69
Events net	14,562.72
Gift Aid	5,074.65
Collection Fund	4,554.66
	<hr/>
	45,688.72

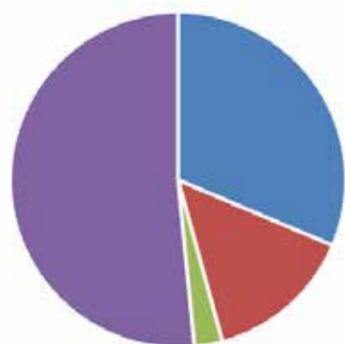
EXPENDITURE

Grants	14,445.96
Admin expenses	6,608.06
Service providers	1,249.71
Transfer to reserves	23,384.99
	<hr/>
	45,688.72

Income



Use of funds



■ Membership ■ Donations ■ Events net
■ Gift Aid ■ Collection Fund

■ Grants ■ Admin expenses
■ Service providers ■ Reserves



Hashimoto Chikanobu (1838–1912), *Evacuation of Chiyoda Palace*, from the series 'The Inner Palace of Chiyoda', 1896. Woodblock print on paper, (L) 36.9 x 25.2, (C) 37.0 x 25.1, (R) 36.9 x 25.1 cm.

Photo credit: York Museums Trust

This work has been purchased and framed with a grant from the Friends from the proceeds of the exhibition 'Artists, Makers and Friends' at the Sliding Water Gallery as a permanent record. It will be exhibited at an exhibition in the Gallery later this year.

Friends of York Art Gallery (Registered Charity No. 510659)

Committee

President: Peter Miller

Ex-Officio Members

Chair: Professor Charles Martindale

Secretary: Professor John Roe (to 22 March)

Cynthia Barbor (from 22 March),

Treasurer: Paul McLean

Membership Secretary: Susan Smallpage

Senior Curator: Dr Beatrice Bertram, representing

York Museums Trust

Elected Members

Azizah Clayton

Dr Ronald Clayton (Organiser, Artwork of the Month)

Dr Helena Cox (to 30 September)

Dr Nicholas Dunn-McAfee

Moira Fulton (Events Organiser)

Dr Amanda Hilliam (from 22 March)

Benjamin Hilliam (to 30 September)

David Lamb

Anne McLean (Website and

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Barbara Boyce

Helena Cox (to 30 September)

Gillian Gribbin (to November)

Hilary Kendall

Tim Kendall

David Lamb

Anne McLean

Charles Martindale

Dr Dorothy Nott

Collection Fund Manager

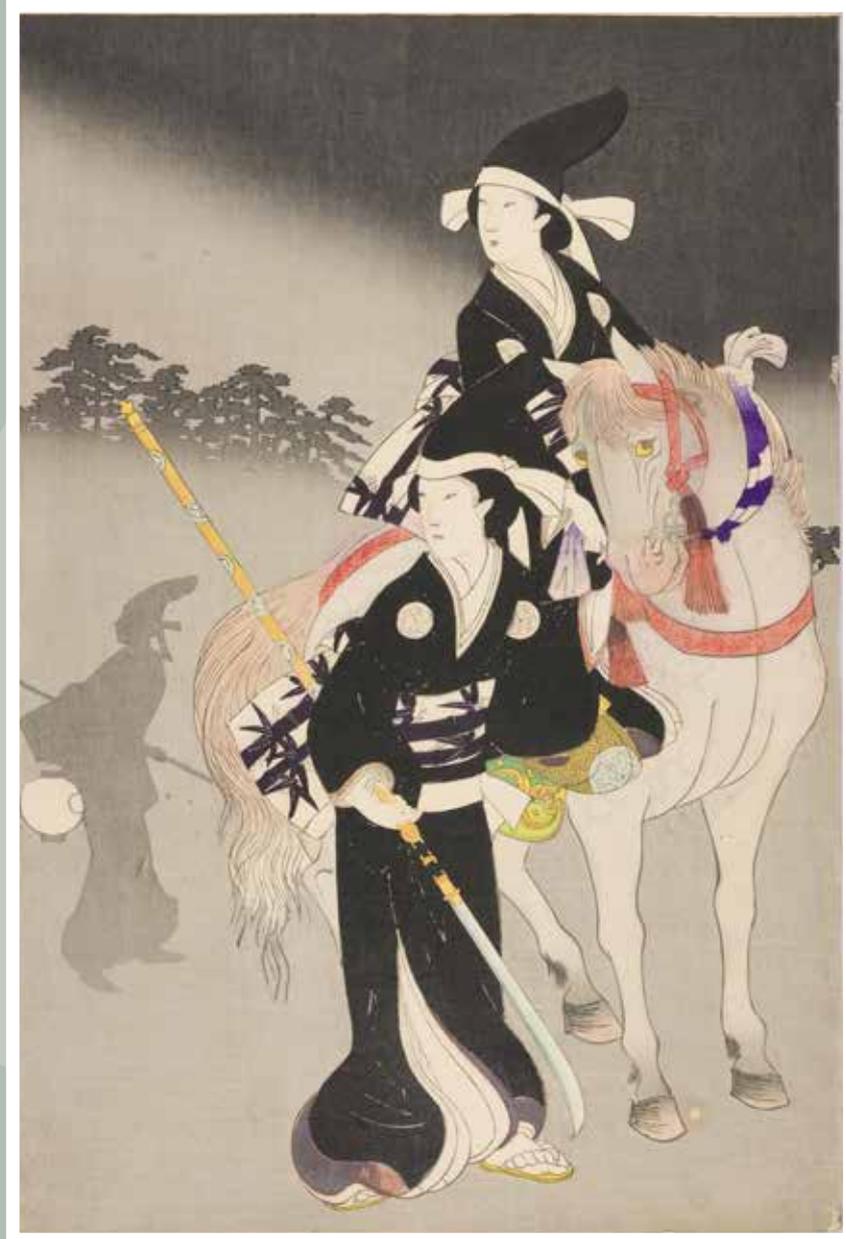
Richard Bailey

Editors of the Annual Report

Charles Martindale, Anne McLean;

Designed by Appletree Design Solutions Ltd;

printed by Fulprint.



Hashimoto Chikanobu (1838–1912), *Evacuation of Chiyoda Palace*, 1896 (detail)



Friends of York Art Gallery

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