

Chairman's Column

In the Friends' mission statement we emphasised our commitment to enriching the visitor experience. The introduction of weekly guided tours of the RWA building and main exhibitions in Spring 2011 has demonstrated how this can be achieved and encouraged us to consider methods that are appropriate to individuals and groups of visitors. We received positive feedback from local people who were entering the building for the first time; families on a weekend break in Bristol and Friends who were delighted to hear about exhibitors in the Open Photographic exhibition or to discuss the early and recent history of the RWA. This

pilot scheme involved a core group of Friends who enjoyed discovering historical data and the links between RWA architects, artists and craftsmen with other buildings or interiors in Bristol and beyond. We were grateful to Peter Ford RWA, Chairman of the Selectors, who gave us a comprehensive briefing and tour of the exhibition. This enabled us to complement the programmed Gallery Tours by Selectors. We were able to answer general questions posed by visitors and to highlight a selection of exhibits to illustrate the multimedia nature of the second RWA Open Photographic exhibition. People who joined the tours sometimes included professional

photographers and exhibitors who were pleased to discuss technical issues with us or to question why certain works had been selected! Visitors appreciate being welcomed by a Friend who can direct them and answer their queries.

We are keen to start an Art Talk Club in the autumn, which would meet monthly to discuss selected art themes or techniques. It should appeal to artists, historians, collectors and those of us who just like art and want to know more or to share our knowledge or expertise. Do let me know if you are interested.

I hope to meet many of you at our Midsummer Social Event on the 30th June 2011.

Maureen Fraser – Chairman

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Images © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford



Friends visit to Oxford

On Saturday March 12th the Friends visited the newly enlarged and rejuvenated Ashmolean Museum.

Founded in 1683, the Ashmolean is Britain's first public museum and home to the University of Oxford's world-class collections of art and archaeology.

We saw 'Lucien Pissarro in England: the Eragny Press 1895-1914', celebrating the work of, Lucien Pissarro with work by his father, Camille; 'British Drawings in the age of the Eragny Press' and 'Images and the State: Graphics in China in the 1960s and '70s,' including posters, papercuts, woven silk and ephemeral items.

We also enjoyed the Islamic Art Collection, the Japanese room which

includes some small, intricate ivory and wooden sculptures, Rembrandt and Van Dyck in the Netherlands Room, plus a wide ranging collection of Western art from 1800 to the present day.

Some people visited the Museum of Modern Art, the Bodleian Library, the History of Science Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Botanic Gardens

Barbara Henderson

1 Camille Pissarro (1830-1903)
Bath Road, London, 1897
Oil on canvas 54 x 65 cm

2 Camille Pissarro (1830-1903)
Portrait of Lucien Pissarro
Pastel, 55.2 x 37.6 cm



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Digging a hole under the iron security fence, like a dog, gave me just enough room to lay on my back, get my head under and drag myself into the grounds, avoiding the security guard



Friends Prize Winner

Lynne Collins won the Friends Prize at the RWA Open Photography Exhibition in 2011. Here she talks about her winning work 'The Edge of Perception'.

"My work examines the unseen, unsightly industrial landscapes, abandoned, decaying buildings and the contemporary life styles which discard or disregard them. I am predominantly influenced by environmental and political issues, together with television and film imagery.

For the series of work titled 'The edge of Perception' I have brought together two images, one of a woodland, the other an abandoned Victorian mental asylum called Cane Hill in Surrey. I am offering the possibility for nature to rejuvenate such forgotten places. This series was created by a desire to take people to environments that exist in my mind.

A derelict decaying mental institution is transformed into a place of surreal beauty with carefully chosen woodland scenes. The images are meant to confuse, but within the cradle of this work lies my need to make us question what we are doing to our natural environment by such abandonment and waste. Cane Hill lay wasting for 25 years before being demolished.

The mature woodland trees are representational of the forces of nature and I have used their strength and age to create a narrative filled with hope for the future. Hope that nature will be able to survive societies treatment of the land under the threat of such dreadful waste and constantly growing urbanization.

Gaining permission to enter these asylum buildings was always out of the question for health and safety reasons.

Exposed asbestos and structural deterioration posed great danger. I didn't let that or the heavily guarded security fence stop me. Digging a hole under the iron security fence, like a dog, gave me just enough room to lay on my back, get my head under and drag myself into the grounds, avoiding the security guard. Equipment had to be kept to a camera and tripod.

These buildings were in an extremely, dangerous state of decay. Sagging wallpaper was slowly peeling from the walls. Water dripped through the ceilings. Rotten floor boards were strewn with detritus and sank when walked on. For me, the process of natural decay produces amazing scenes of colour change on painted surfaces with each wall becoming a wonderful and natural abstract painting in its own right.

The woodland images were carefully sourced to topographically fit the interior space and shot mainly in twilight to reflect the same tones and limited natural light found in the interiors. It can take weeks to find the right area of woodland for a particular interior, where even ground coverage has to have similar colouring to that of the interior floor.

Blending work of the two images was carried out in Photoshop using digital tools in the same way as traditional artist tools to cut round individual leaves of all trees even blades of grass to eliminate sky and unwanted background elements. This alone takes several days for each image. In all it can take months to fully complete one of these images.

After researching the many awful treatments carried out on the patients in this asylum in the Victorian period and even as late as the 1950s, I felt the need to dedicate these images to those people that spent virtually their entire lives institutionalised for being nothing more than a free spirit."

Lynne Collins

A letter from Newlyn

Cornwall is gearing up for the summer months with the art scene gathering pace, with a vast choice of exhibitions, poetry readings and music events filling the calendar. I went along to the Private View of a new exhibition 'The Talented Garstins' at the Penlee House Art Gallery and Museum in Penzance. It is the first time that the family's art has been exhibited together.

Norman Garstin was born in Ireland but moved to Newlyn in 1886 before finally settling in Penzance in 1889. Before his career as an artist Norman Garstin was an engineer, then an architect and later a diamond prospector before studying art in both Paris and Antwerp. In 1883, while still a student, he met Louisa Jones (known as Dochie), the daughter of a widow whose portrait he had been commissioned to paint. They married in 1886 and journeyed to Newlyn, and joined the expanding art colony. They went on to have three children - Crosbie (born 1887), Denis (born 1890) and Alethea (born 1894), each of whom proved to have remarkable creative talent.

Their first son Crosbie drowned in a boating accident in 1930 aged just 43. Prior to that, he displayed enormous creativity as a writer of poems, articles and novels, notably his Penhale trilogy. Second son Denis also displayed a similar literary talent, writing a book about his experience in the trenches entitled 'The Shilling Soldiers', published in 1918 to great acclaim. But his career was cut short as he was killed at war, in an action and was posthumously awarded the MC and DSO along with two Russian medals.

Unlike her brothers, Alethea lived a long and fruitful artistic life reaching the age of 84 where she died in the village

of Zennor in Cornwall. It is believed that Alethea was mainly taught by her father. She later became influenced by the Fauvist painters, usually working on a small scale with just a limited palette. She nearly always painted 'en plein air' and in 1978, Patrick Heron, the painter, writer and designer who was based in St Ives, described her work "as good as Vuillard", with her confident handling of paint and lively compositions. He went on to describe her as "England's leading Impressionist".

Over 50 of Norman Garstin's paintings are on display, including works on loan from The Tate, plus around 60 works by Alethea. There are also many artefacts and photographs relating to Crosbie and Denis. One of my favourite paintings and arguably the most famous painting held at the Gallery is 'The Rain it Raineth Every Day'. This atmospheric rainy day portrayal of Penzance promenade painted by Norman Garstin is a still very recognizable feature of the landscape today and remains the only promenade in Cornwall.

Dipping into many of the cultural activities of the area I recently joined 'The Look Group'. The Look Group Network is a new and pioneering project taking place across Cornwall. Based on the idea of a book group, the 'Look Groups' project is currently a network of 21 groups throughout the Cornish region who each meet regularly to talk about art, artists and ideas.

It is supported by the Learning Team at Tate St Ives and the groups enjoy access to the Tate collection, the exhibition programme at Tate St Ives and use of Council owned venues. We meet monthly in the main Penzance Library and last month's topic was 'Tribal Art'. This made an extremely informative and lively meeting, with each member bringing (in some cases costumes) images, texts and fascinating facts about an area of art not always in the foreground of discussions. Next month's topic is 'Female Impressionists'.

Carolyn Stubbs



Images © Penlee House Gallery & Museum

- 1 Alethea Garstin (1894 - 1978) Little Farm Place, Oil on board
- 2 Norman Garstin (1847 - 1926) The Rain it Raineth Every Day, 1889 Oil on canvas
- 3 Alethea Garstin (1894 - 1978) Caribbean Scene with Dogs

Meet & Greet

If you would like to know more about meeting and greeting visitors at the RWA then please contact Mary Drown:

e: Mary.Drown@blueyonder.co.uk
t: 01454 414 433

Twentieth Century Art

The Friends Lecture on Saturday 26 February was given by the popular speaker Anthony Slinn. Dr Philip Pothén considers the issues.

The twentieth century in ten paintings, one per decade. Anthony Slinn took on the task with relish. Now, he suggested, we had sufficient distance to appreciate the century's art as a whole. This was not to be a personal choice.

All sources pointed to the revolutionary 'Les Demoiselles D'Avignon' by Picasso. The choice of Duchamp's 'Bicycle Wheel' for the second was also unsurprising although there was the first hint of the difficulties inherent in Slinn's undertaking: Duchamp's readymades, while important to twentieth-century art, were questionable, because they could be reproduced. The originals were destroyed at their first showing. This was one of Duchamp's points, but here was the first hint that we were to be treated to a more individual interpretation.

Monet's 'Waterlilies' in the Orangerie, Paris, was the choice for the 1920s. The suggestion was that Jackson Pollock's

Action Painting of three decades later had led to a reevaluation of Monet's work. It took thirty years to truly understand a painting's significance, suggested Slinn - how would he would tackle the end of the century?

Coventry Cathedral stood out for the 1950s, for post-War rebirth and the art by Sutherland, Piper, Hutton, Frink and others. We were being drawn into a particularly British - or even English - interpretation of twentieth century art, the anecdotes of Slinn's time at the Slade kept us entertained. The choice of Liechtenstein's 'Wham!' for the 1960s - a second choice to Blake's Sergeant Pepper cover - reintroduced the broader movements of Western art, an interlude - Freud took centre stage in the 1970s.

Likes and dislikes were now coming fast. Pop Art, Action Painting, Riley, Bacon, Emin, Hurst, conceptual art in general, were all suspect. Professing himself to be "struggling" with the fragmentary nature of art from the 1960s onwards it hardly came as a surprise, but still seemed barely credible, that Slinn chose works of his own for both the 1980s and 1990s - 'My chair' and 'House of paintings' respectively.

It was difficult to decide whether this was a charming idiosyncrasy, an unforgivable solecism, a lapse of imagination, or simply a rather limp and sorry conclusion.

Dr Philip Pothén

Rupert Willoughby took us through the provenance of the Bayeux Tapestry and its contents, leading up to and including the Battle of Hastings, complete with (occasionally crude) depiction of life in the upper and lower margins.

The tapestry was embroidered by women in a world dominated by men, and contains only three women among the six hundred plus depictions of the opposite sex.

The origins of the Norman invasion were shown, the value set on oaths taken upon sacred relics, together with William of Normandy's politics, to mobilize his army and conduct a holy war against Harold, king of the Saxons and William's erstwhile knight and vassal.

Inevitably there are scenes which touch the viewer particularly. I like the scene with Harold out riding, behind Guy, each with his hawk on his hand.

June Bruton.

The Friends 'You Chose' Ballot

The Open Photography 2 Exhibition has proved very popular and visitors have voted in large numbers for their favourite piece of work. The votes were spread widely across the show.

The winning work was No 102 Mist in the Gorge by Lydia Ness. She has been awarded the £200 prize by the Friends of the RWA plus a year's free membership.

The runners up were:

No 59 Untitled by Luke Mitchell

No 41 Baobab Avenue and Children

by Harry Hook

No 249 Lover by Stephanie Third.

The winner of the Free Prize Draw, randomly selected from those who voted for the winning work, is Hannah Chamberlain of Clifton, Bristol. She will receive a year's free membership of the Friends.

Wendy Mogford



A section of the Bayeux Tapestry, embroidery

Friends Work on Show

Brian Dix will be exhibiting at the Rook Lane Chapel, Frome, from May 7 to 21. He will be sharing the show, called 'Reflecting' with another local artist Myrtle Pizzey who will also be giving a Friends talk and demonstration on the art of the linocut in September.

'Reflecting' shows a cross-section of artistic development over more than four decades

www.myrtlepizzey.co.uk

Brian Dix e: dix103@btinternet.com

www.rooklanearts.org.uk



Brian Dix

Midsummer Magic

On Thursday 30th June the Friends will be holding their next major social event, Midsummer Magic, in the splendid surroundings of the RWA Galleries.

The event follows the popular 'Soirée' hosted last November by the Friends, which attracted over 150 guests and contributed over £1,000 to the RWA Appeal.

The Harrisons will again be performing. There will also be a light supper and Raffle. Guests will have the opportunity of an early viewing of the Jack Vettriano show.

Tickets cost £24 which includes an introductory drink and a light supper and entry to the exhibition and will be available from the RWA. Book early. Once again funds raised will go to improving the RWA building.

Roland Harmer

Visits and Excursions

The Friends programme for 2011 continues. Our excursions are proving popular so it is advisable to book early:

// **July 16**

A visit to Gloucester Cathedral and the Flower Festival in the morning followed by 'Nature in Art', Twigworth and the Michael Porter Exhibition in the afternoon. Details and booking forms are now available at the RWA and from Linda Alvis. Bookings close on the 4th June.

Friends Room Exhibitions

The Friends Room Exhibitions, which showcase the work of artist Friends, are proving very popular. So far in 2011 we have shown work by Marion Roach, Priscilla Sorapure, Barbara Duncan and Sarah Penrose. The Exhibition Group has selected an interesting and varied programme, subject to changes to accommodate possible building work. Entry to the exhibitions is free of charge and all works for sale.

Andie Clay until June 14

Barbara Baber & Rachael

Barraclough June 16 - July 12

Diana Western July 14 - August 9

Robert Harrison

August 11 - September 6

Gillian Hudson

Friends Exhibitions Organiser

Join the Friends

Friends enjoy: **free entry to RWA exhibitions;** **private view invitations** to all exhibitions; a **lecture programme** with professional speakers; **cultural visits and painting trips;** an opportunity to **submit work** to Friends' exhibitions; **preferential rates** with discounts on submissions of work to the Autumn Open Exhibition; **discounts** on artists' materials at Bristol Fine Art and **ART** magazine each quarter. Your membership will help the RWA to serve the region and artistic community by raising funds for the Academy.

title (optional)

first name

surname

title (optional)

first name

surname

address

postcode

telephone

e-mail

types of membership

single annual £25

joint annual £36

individual life £375

joint life £500

student (NUS card max three years) £13

For those living outside the Bath (BA), Bristol (BS), Gloucester (GL) and Swindon (SN) postcode areas we offer these rates:

country single annual £20

country joint annual £30

total

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We can claim an extra 28p from the Inland Revenue for every £1.00 you give us - if you are a UK taxpayer. I am eligible as a UK taxpayer and consent to the Friends of the RWA claiming Gift Aid on subscriptions or donations I make. You can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying the Friends of the RWA in writing. You must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the amount recoverable on your total gift aid donations. Should your circumstances change and you no longer pay sufficient tax, you should cancel your declaration.

signature

date

Please make cheques payable to: Friends of the RWA and return this section to: The Membership Secretary, Friends of the Royal West of England Academy Queens Road, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1PX

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