

May Catt the New Curator at the Mercer Art Gallery

I started working in my new job as curator here in June. I arrived just as the exhibitions were about to change over so I jumped in at the deep end! I have also been busy getting to know the sites and the people who work here, learning more about how they operate. We've also been planning some exciting changes to the Pump Room Museum for 2017.

I love audiences and connecting people to museums and galleries, without ever compromising on quality. I have worked in museums for over twenty years, most recently at Barnsley Museums Service. Before that I worked as a freelancer for various sites, including Harewood House, National Museums Liverpool and Mansfield Museum.

I live in Newton on Ouse with my daughter Sophie who is eleven. I love things like the North Yorkshire Moors, dresses and black cats!

Please come and say hello when you are next in the Mercer Art Gallery.

Joan Robertson, Committee Member

When I joined the Mercer committee in 2007 little did I know how much pleasure it would give me. The social sub-committee plan all the events to fund raise for the gallery. The day trips, overnight stays, lectures in the gallery and the summer and Christmas parties all come under the auspices of the social committee. From the accolades we have received over the years we must be doing something right. I enjoy researching places to visit, doing the recces and being in close touch with the curators and organisers of art galleries who are always delighted to host our "Friends". It is a red letter day when our funds are able to purchase a piece of art for the gallery and the "Friends" can be justly proud of seeing something new on display which has been purchased with our help.

Finally the warm welcome I received when I joined nine years ago has enabled me to make lasting friendships which I shall treasure. We do need new committee members and I would urge anyone who would be interested in coming forward be it in a small or large volunteer role to do so, you will never regret it.



Do you have an interest in the arts?
Do you enjoy meeting people in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere?
Would exclusive private previews and gallery events such as talks by exhibiting artists be of interest to you?
Would you find visits to historic buildings, museums and art galleries interesting?

Then please come and join us. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to new members who would like to join the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery.

The Friends' brochure and application form are available at the Mercer Art Gallery or alternatively you can contact our Membership Secretary:

Christine Brown on 01423 504079 cb@brown73.co.uk

The annual subscription fees are:

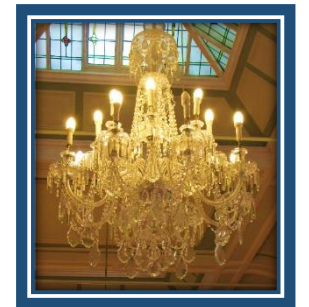
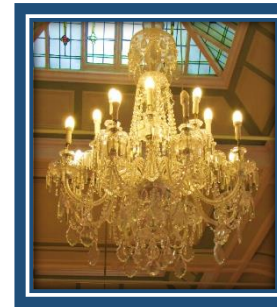
Single membership £15.00, Joint membership £30.00, Life membership £250.00

Upcoming dates for your diary!

Wednesday 9th November: **The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery AGM**

Wednesday 7th December: **The Friends' Christmas Party**

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery Newsletter



New Acquisition for the Mercer Art Gallery Collection



Beckett Road Doncaster, With Trolley Bus, 1955. (oil on board 61x92cm)

John Duncalfe is 'delighted to be gifting this early oil painting by the Yorkshire born artist, Sonia Lawson to the Harrogate Mercer Art Gallery' after the most successful Sonia Lawson Retrospective Exhibition at the Mercer Art Gallery (November 2015 - February 2016). Sonia Lawson is one of the country's most senior Royal Academicians. Born in 1934 into a family of well-known artist parents, Fred Lawson and Muriel Metcalfe, the family lived for many years at the lovely Dales village of Castle Bolton. Sonia started to paint at an early age and with her paint box she accompanied her father Fred Lawson, into the surrounding countryside.

Sonia Lawson went on to study at Doncaster, Sussex and the Royal Academy of Art, London, her works are in many major public collections including the Imperial War Museum.

John Duncalfe is a Custodian Trustee of the Harrogate Arts and Mercer Gallery Development Trust

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery Summer Party

This year the summer party was held at the splendid Old Sleningford Hall near Ripon.

After going through Mickley we eventually turned into the long narrow lane which leads to the Hall. After a little while we were amazed when suddenly this wonderful building appeared bathed in sunlight in tranquil surroundings. Mary Jane, Joss and I arrived at about 5.00pm and we were warmly welcomed by Jane and Tom Ramsden with a nice cup of tea and biscuits. The interior of the house is very spacious and superbly decorated with lovely furnishings and has light coloured stone floors throughout. The courtyard was delightful with the brickwork washed in a soft creamy yellow tint, creating a continental feel with climbing plants, flowers and bushes and an attractive infinity pool in the centre. The sixty guests started arriving in good time and it quickly got into party mode. We arranged the drinks in one corner which together with the preparation room for the canapes and access to the Aga for warming the mini quiches meant the friends and new members could mingle and were kept well replenished.

Tom suggested that it would be a good idea for us to look at the gardens, lake and art school. Many of the new members who came quickly made friends and it was evident that everyone thoroughly enjoyed the new venue and felt most welcome. As the evening drew on and after the raffle, people gradually returned home after a very successful event.

Ann Joslin



Visit to Norton Conyers near Ripon

Norton Conyers is a late medieval Manor house which was further extended in the seventeenth century. Since 2006 the house has undergone extensive restoration.

The Friends of the Mercer left Harrogate on a misty May morning and after a drive through our lovely Yorkshire countryside arrived at the village of Wath for morning coffee. We then proceeded to Norton Conyers where we were warmly welcomed by Sir James and Lady Graham. Sir James gave us an informative history of the house and its many alterations over the centuries and even now they are still making discoveries about its fabric.

Together they gave us a very entertaining account of their ongoing fight with the death watch beetle which seems to have been there since the earliest inhabitants.



We had a guided tour of the house admiring its impressive rooms and interesting contents accompanied by a sparkling commentary of racy anecdotes about the family ancestors portrayed on the walls. Charlotte Bronte visited the house and there is strong evidence she used it as the model for Thornfield Hill in Jane Eyre. The more intrepid of our members climbed up to the attic where it is rumoured a mad woman was incarcerated and there is a hidden staircase leading directly to the attic similar to the one used by Mr Rochester to check on his wife. Afterward we strolled through the beautiful walled garden and several members acquired some plants for their own gardens. We had an excellent lunch at the Golden Fleece in Thirsk and then walked round the corner to the Zillah Bell Gallery to see a stunning exhibition of contemporary prints. Another lovely and interesting day out with the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery.

Judith Jarvis

Hide and Seek

Eileen Cooper RA

24th September to 15th January 2017

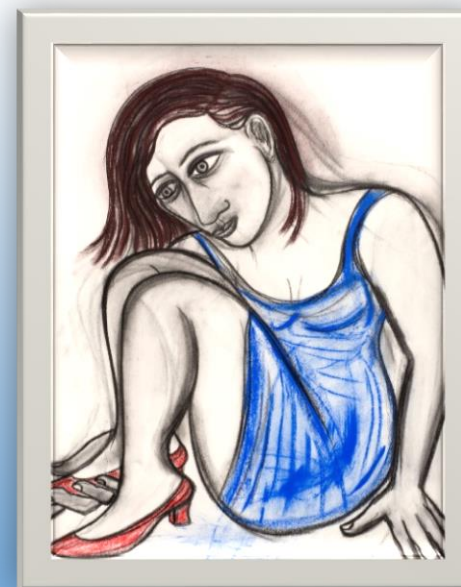
A major Autumn exhibition at The Mercer Art Gallery will feature drawings by Eileen Cooper RA, the first women Keeper of the Royal Academy of Arts, London since 1768. Having enjoyed wide spread acclaim including admission to the Royal Academy of Arts Cooper is best known for her richly coloured and expressive paintings and prints, Hide and Seek will present rarely-seen drawings made in a variety of media including charcoal, pencil, pastel and ink.

This is a superb opportunity to view a larger selection of poetic, bold and figurative drawings by Eileen Cooper spanning almost forty years of her career. This outstanding body of work illustrates how Cooper's distinctive imagery has developed exploring subjects such as sexuality, birth, family, fecundity and creativity. Sometimes described as a magic realist, Eileen Cooper brings an unapologetically female perspective to her subject-matter.

Organised in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Arts the exhibition is another major achievement for the Mercer, which has a reputation for promoting the work of female artists.

During the exhibition Eileen Cooper will be talking about her work at the Mercer Art Gallery on Monday 17 October 2016 at 2pm.

Tickets £7. to book call 01423 556188



Landmarks

Liza Dracup

17th September to 8th January 2017

Following her successful commission for the Mercer Art Gallery in 2011 as part of the Atkinson Grimshaw Painter of Moonlight exhibition we are pleased to welcome back Liza Dracup.



A North of England based contemporary photographer. In her exhibition Landmarks, she has turned her attention to photographic material in the Harrogate Fine Art collection. Dracup was given access to the Mercer Art Gallery's collection of Victorian photographs and invited to respond to them in her own way.

Landmarks features some well loved and familiar Yorkshire locations: Hackfall Woods, The Strid Wood at Bolton Abbey, the spectacular railway bridge crossing the River Nidd at Knaresborough and Ilkley Moor.

Long exposures, such as her photograph of the railway bridge crossing the river Nidd at Knaresborough, give the effect of layering and the natural side lighting also adds a sense of theatrical drama. Her pictures of Ilkley Moor at night, where the warming-up sodium street light illuminates the underbranches of a fir tree, picking out each twig in a bright and usually hidden red, reveal patches of colour and light which have a magical quality, allowing you to stumble into a secret place.