



Autumn Newsletter 2021

NEWSLETTER

Supporting the Mercer Art Gallery by assisting in the acquisition & exhibition of works of art for the benefit of the public

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter

Friends! We hope this newsletter finds you well and we thank you for your continued support. We have had a busy few months trying to get back to a kind of normality by running trips. We do hope we can continue to do so going forward and look forward to seeing as many as feel comfortable and that numbers will allow, at the Christmas party (invitation at the back of this newsletter). We hope to see more of you all in the New Year, fingers crossed!

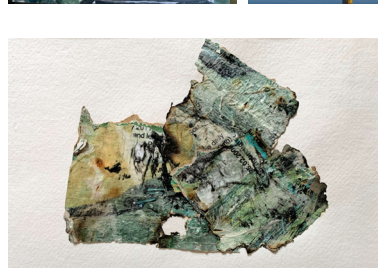
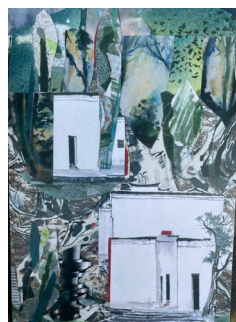
Just a reminder...Don't forget to pick up your complimentary copy of the Friends' History from the Gallery and your free exhibition catalogue for the current exhibition in the North Gallery - Distillation by Balbinder Broadbent. Enjoy!

React2: Our Planet, Our Home.

Our second online exhibition is currently live and will remain on line until the end of November. Please take a look via our website and vote for your favourite submission. Closing date for voting is the 7th November.

We have 54 pieces on display under the categories: Climate change, Creations using recycled materials and Our natural world. Examples of the work are shown below.

Visit www.friendsofthemerccerartgallery.co.uk to view all entries.



Dates for your Diary

Tuesday, November 9th

Annual General Meeting
Mercer Gallery

Wednesday 1st December

Art in Action
Self-drive outing to open arts and craft studios in Pateley Bridge followed by optional lunch at the Sportsman's Arms.

Wednesday, December 8th

Christmas Party 6.30- 8.30 pm
Mercer Gallery

Coming up....date tbc

Curators Talk (Karen Southworth) on Dive In exhibition.

Tuesday April 26th 2022

Day trip to Doddington Hall and the Portland Collection at Welbeck

Wednesday June 15th-Thursdays June 16th

Spires N' Squires
Two day trip to include Boughton House, Fotheringhay Church, Peterborough Cathedral and Burghley House. Overnight stay at Rutland Water.



Day Trip: Manchester Allsorts

29th June 2021

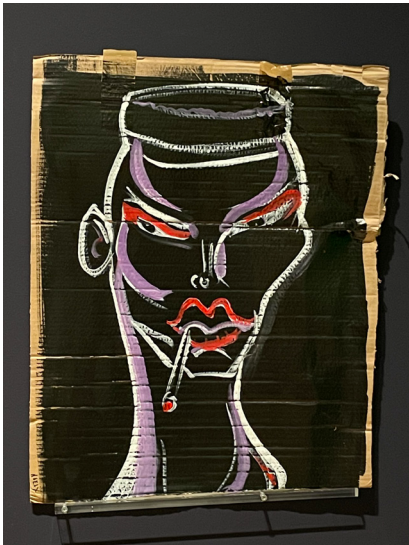
Our first outing of the year began with 30 plus Friends on a beautiful summer morning setting off to Manchester to visit the Art Gallery and the new RHS Garden near Salford which opened in May.

We spent the morning in the Art Gallery which was opened exclusively for us.

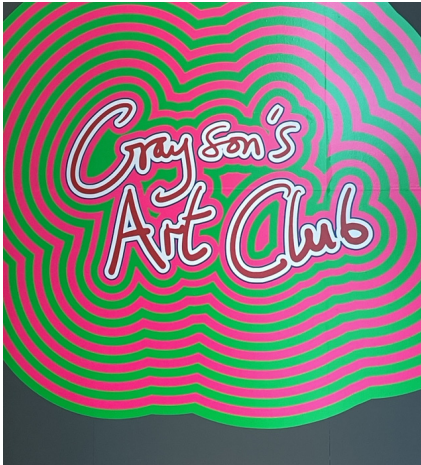
The highlight was an Exhibition by Grayson Perry which was originally filmed for television during the height of the Covid pandemic last year, called Grayson's Art Club. Each week he was joined by a celebrity guest who submitted an artwork as did a number of professional artists. Grayson and his wife Philippa put in some of their own work plus , most importantly, he asked the British public to get involved and send him their artwork in the form of painting, ceramics, tapestry etc. Every week he set a theme; Portraits, Animals, View from my Window, Home, Britain and Fantasy. Almost 10,000 sent in work and some were selected to put in the Exhibition. The Exhibition is a triumph, it brings back and sums up everything we have been through. We had ample time to visit some of the other galleries, one of them showing paintings by L.S. Lowry and his tutor Vallette. One can see the influence by Vallette on his pupil Lowry. We enjoyed a most delicious lunch in-house before out short journey to Salford.

We spent the afternoon at the newly opened RHS Bridgewater garden in Salford. It is located on the site of the estate of Worsley New Hall. The Hall was demolished in the 1940's but in its heyday was a notable residence with magnificent gardens. The RHS began work to create a world-class garden in 2017 working with the history of the site and re-imagining the landscape. Although the garden was intended to open last year, Covid intervened! As we visited only a month after the formal opening we were treated to the most spectacular show of world class horticulture. These are early days and one can see how the gardens will matter over the years bringing beauty to millions of visitors.

We were fortified on our journey home in our comfortable coach by drinks and nibbles kindly provided by our social committee members. Since that wonderful day I have thought how much our trip brought back to me what we have had to endure over the last 18 months or so. Thank you Julie, Andrew and Christine W in organising such a treat.



written by Joan Robertson





First Talk in the Connections Series

Harold Gilman (1876 – 1919) given by Neil Walker on March 25th 2021

Our Connections series of talks is planned to link pictures in our collection with moments and movements in art history. For this one, which was held via Zoom, we were lucky to have Neil Walker, Head of Visual Arts at the Lakeside Arts faculty of Nottingham University to talk about Harold Gilman, a key member of the Camden Town Group. The connection was with our well-loved picture of the New Bedford Music Hall, by Sickert, whose oeuvre defined the Group.

Neil Walker gave us an outline of the Group's brief history – three exhibitions 1911 – 1912. Just as the New English Art Club was supposed to be radical in the 1880s, artists interested in exploring new ideas after the turn of the century and the first of Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibitions, which appalled the NEAC, started their own informal group. This was named after Fitzroy Street, a run-down area north of the Euston Road where many artists found cheap lodgings and studios. Their leading light was Sickert. He had rejected the conventional painting themes – landscape (usually pastoral) historical/mythological/biblical and portraits (usually of prosperous patrons in their best clothes). He wanted to paint urban working-class scenes – scruffy nudes in squalid rooms, street scenes and music halls. Fitzroy Street artists formed a loose cooperative and used No. 19 to host "At Homes" where they showed their works, often priced very reasonably to invited likely buyers. We were shown works by several of these artists, mostly young men exploring the new trends. Harold Gilman was one of these, having met others at the Slade School.

By early 1911, the artists had decided they needed a formal organisation, and to arrange their own public exhibitions. So they became the Camden Town group, with 16 elected and invited members (no women). Gilman was a key member. Very soon though, he became less interested in the typical Camden Town palette of dark colours and a smudgy painting technique. He looked at Van Gogh's use of strong light and bright colours. Gilman didn't have to move to the south of France to start experimenting and Neil Walker showed us how his style developed, become more colourful and clearcut, although he often built up his oils with impasto.

Unusually he chose trips to Scandinavia and painted country scenes there which were a far cry from Camden Town. Ill health exempted him from active service in WW1, and he spent much of those years teaching. His paintings often showed interiors with colourful backgrounds of striped or floral wallpapers and many ornaments – similar to some of the ideas used by Matisse in his interiors. As Gilman's style diverged from many of its members, so the

Camden Town Group dwindled away and even more radical splinter groups grew up.

Harold Gilman died in his early forties, in the great flu epidemic of 1919, and Neil Walker felt that he might have become an even more important and exciting artist if he had lived to develop further.

This was a very well-planned and well-illustrated talk about a striking artist who was one of the guiding lights of a radical movement. Incidentally, York City Art Gallery has a good collection of the Camden Town era, though they may not often be on show.

My interest in this period was heightened as my father, Henry Lamb, was one of the original 16 members of the Camden Town group and exhibited with them. But he, not long escaped from his conventional professional family in Manchester, was very much influenced by Augustus John at that time, and went to study in Paris, then to work in Brittany. His pre-WW1 paintings were often romantic, even Symbolist, and he left the sphere of Fitzroy Street. He produced some great WW1 paintings (one of which you should see in Manchester when you visit) and later settled to domestic life in Wiltshire, painting portraits and country genre scenes, and became in turn a respectable member of the art establishment, a R.A. and a trustee of the Portrait Gallery.

written by Felicia Palmer.



Day Trip - Hovingham Hall

It was a dry and reasonably bright September day that dawned for the trip to Hovingham Hall and the James Herriot Centre in Thirsk. Setting off from Harrogate and Ripon, we made our way in a comfortable coach towards Sutton Bank. What at first appeared to be an irritation - Sutton Bank was closed, became a definite plus as we had a lovely tour amongst the beautiful lush countryside, bathed in the golden light of the autumnal sun. John, our coach driver, certainly knew his stuff, taking us along the beautiful and scenic unspoiled lanes of Coxwold and Ampleforth to get us back on track.



Our first stop was Hovingham Hall, where we were met by Claire Fletcher the Estate Administrator and the ladies who were going to give us the guided tour of the house. Coffee and biscuits awaited us before we proceeded with the tour, which unbeknown to us at the time, Lady Worsley had helped to serve.

The house was very interesting to say the least, with the front entrance being through an archway from the main village street. We then went through a vast lofty room which used to be the Riding School flanked on either side by the stables, converted long ago into reception rooms as the smell permeated into the main reception and living rooms above. We saw some very fine furniture and paintings, including a Poussin and well preserved Belgian tapestries on some of the walls. There were lovely views from the front of the house to the cricket ground, and parkland beyond. The fourth Sir William Worsley captained Yorkshire in the 1928 and 29. Mention must be given to the guides for their incredible memories and attention to detail. The Worsleys are a very old family and how they remembered which Robert, Thomas or William was doing what and when, I can't imagine.

After a very good lunch at the Worsley Arms we then made our way to Thirsk where we spent a very pleasant couple of hours visiting the James Herriot Centre, very topical as there is a new series currently showing on television. The Centre used to be the home and surgery of James Alf White aka James Herriot and great effort has been made to show how veterinary medicine was practiced in the 1940's as well as giving a flavour of how the inhabitants of the house lived during those times. A room showing how the series was filmed was also incorporated into the museum displaying the lights, recording and sound equipment. There was even a room where a would-be vet could practice calf delivery skills with the back end of the cow strategically placed, giving access to the appropriate region!

On the coach going back to Ripon and Harrogate we were treated to a glass of wine which has become one of the Friend's welcome traditions, a nice ending to a very enjoyable day.

Thanks must be given to Christine Wray on her first foray into organising away days and trips. Everything went beautifully and according to plan. Well done.

written by Christine Groundwater

New Acquisition

In the North Gallery, 'Distillation', the solo exhibition of new work by Harrogate artist Balbinder Broadbent, is currently showing.

Her glorious abstract paintings are familiar to many Friends as she has been a regular exhibitor and prize winner at the Harrogate Open. We therefore felt it opportune for the Friends to purchase one of the paintings for the Harrogate permanent collection.

The piece that has been selected is called "in the Bazaars of Hyderabad."

This artwork was inspired by the poem of the same name by Sarojini Naidu (text opposite) and reading it alongside the artwork gives a real depth to the piece. It describes the busy market and the items being sold. The colours, conversations and the bustle all come to life.

Naidu, known as "The Nightingale of India," was a child prodigy, Indian independence activist and poet. She was responsible for awakening the women of India and after independence she became the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. She was the first woman governor in India.

Not only did the Committee members who chose this piece love it, but they also felt this strong female connection ensured it would sit comfortably within the collection.

If you haven't been to see the exhibition yet, we recommend you do so!

written by Catherine Wright



Balbinder Broadbent in the Gallery



In the Bazaars of Hyderabad

In the Bazaars of Hyderabad

*What do you sell O ye merchants ?
Richly your wares are displayed.
Turbans of crimson and silver,
Tunics of purple brocade,
Mirrors with panels of amber,
Daggers with handles of jade.*

*What do you weigh, O ye vendors?
Saffron and lentil and rice.
What do you grind, O ye maidens?*

*Sandalwood, henna, and spice.
What do you call , O ye pedlars?
Chessmen and ivory dice.*

*What do you make,O ye goldsmiths?
Wristlet and anklet and ring,
Bells for the feet of blue pigeons
Frail as a dragon-fly's wing,
Girdles of gold for dancers,
Scabbards of gold for the king.*

*What do you cry,O ye fruitmen?
Citron, pomegranate, and plum.
What do you play ,O musicians?
Cithar, sarangi and drum.
what do you chant, O magicians?
Spells for aeons to come.*

*What do you weave, O ye flower-girls
With tassels of azure and red?
Crowns for the brow of a bridegroom,
Chaplets to garland his bed.
Sheets of white blossoms new-gar-
nered
To perfume the sleep of the dead.*

by Sarojini Naidu

Outreach work

We awarded Harrogate High School an outreach grant to provide support for their creative summer school programme. The school trust, NSAT (Northern Star Academies Trust) commissioned four artists from the 154 Collective to work with students and the grant the Friends awarded was used to buy materials and to enable the creation of an art installation in the Learning Resource Centre.

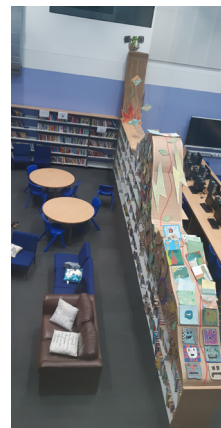
The sculpture developed from the exploration of the theme “Wonder.” Students worked with a storyteller, artist, poet and musician to develop ideas and concepts all of which culminated in a touch-sensitive sculpture using the students’ poetry, art work and sound recordings.

One hundred and twenty-four students were involved in this project and it has created a real focus to the area and is definitely a conversation piece!

One student, age 11 said “It was so cool to get to work with real artists and create something so big and different in the centre of our school for everyone to see. I didn’t think I liked art but I loved doing this!”

The year 7 and 8 students really gained a lot from the experience and the artwork has really made the central space come alive for the whole school. The space is buzzing with creativity now and the school much appreciates the support of the Friends.

*written by Catherine Wright
on behalf of Northern Star Academies Trust.*



Committee Member



My name is Ann Beeby I came to live in Harrogate early in 2015, moving across from Cumbria, and I really enjoy living here. I was invited to consider joining the Friends of the Mercer Gallery committee early in the year and have been coopted to the main committee since March. and feel that the diverse skills I have learnt during the last ten years volunteering with a volunteer run the-

atre in Cumbria and project managing the Japanese Garden Restoration in Valley Gardens between September 2016 and October 2018 could all be useful.

My background is in the health service as a Physiotherapist, followed by a change into retail for ten years owning and running small Cookshop with two friends. Prior to moving to Harrogate I spent a few years living in the south Lakes where I was on the Management Committee of a volunteer run theatre doing some fund raising for them in addition to working on the box office and in the bar; all of which was both interesting and enjoyable.

Since moving to Harrogate I have joined the Friends of Valley Gardens

where I am now one of the Trustees. With the Friends I pursued my interest in gardening with the volunteer gardeners. This led to getting involved with the restoration of the Japanese Garden which I project managed in partnership with one other member; together we raised £90,000 and Heritage Lottery funding working closely with both the HBC Parks Department and the Japanese Garden Society.

Although I am still involved with the Valley Garden Trustees and continue to garden there. I do have time available to support The Mercer Gallery through volunteering. The Mercer Gallery is a very special place and exceedingly important to the town. For the past 30 years the Friends have been supporting the gallery and this support will be even more important for the next thirty.

Collections Review

written by Ann Beeby

Following an email to all the Friends of the Mercer asking for interest in volunteering to assist Karen Southworth with the collections review a group of twelve volunteers started work early in October.

A regular review of the total Museum collection which includes the Mercer Art Collection is required by all UK museums for the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme. This is a nationally agreed standard for museums and looks at how the collection is organised, the ability for the public to access the collection and to inspire confidence for public funding. The volunteers are helping to get everything in order for the next review.

To enable this all the volunteers have had a training session on using the national museums database MODES through which all items in the collection can be searched for research projects etc.

So how does an item that you may gift to the museum enter the collection? First Karen will find out as much information about the object as she can from you. How did you acquire it? Is there a link with Harrogate in any way? Do you know where and when and how it was made? This information is put onto an entry form which stays with the object. Next the object is entered into the main Acquisitions Book, a fine hardback volume, and given a number, this number is the main search tool, and is the number it has on the MODES database. The next task is to upload all that information onto MODES and add a photo. Before the item is put safely into the store it is carefully wrapped in archive tissue paper, boxed if appropriate and the exact location in the store is then put onto MODES so it can always be found easily. Well that is the theory, as you can imagine an item is put on display and then doesn't always find its way back into exactly the same place, or part of the process is completed and then the staff run out of time and the item is put into the store awaiting the rest of the process.

The team is working in groups of three or four on shifts from 10.00 till 3.00 on three days a week, each doing a day a week if they are free. So we are making progress and also making discoveries as we go along. Last week the item to enter was a soldiers khaki cap; we knew we had the cap badge somewhere which showed that he was in the West Yorkshire Regiment, his identity card for which the database didn't give much information and a button badge. These items were found in the database so that the cap could be linked with the other items. By diligent searching through the Acquisitions register it was discovered that other items of Army clothing such as a greatcoat had also been donated by the same family some time ago; the result being that within the database these can now be grouped together so that any future search, perhaps by the family or for an exhibition, can identify all the objects and locate them in the store.

We are all finding the work very interesting and are enjoying working as a team; Karen makes us all feel we are stars! It is anticipated that we shall be continuing well into next year as after we have sorted out the backlog of items we move onto the full audit of around 25,000 items...Wish us luck!

Summer Party



After a long lockdown, we were finally permitted to meet in person and hold a summer party, albeit with limited numbers.

It was our first opportunity to give a heartfelt thank you in person to Judith for all her hard work and dedication to the Gallery.

We also said a fond farewell and good luck to Lucy Scott, Operations Manager who has been a great support to the Friends for many years. We wish her well in her new role.



We are delighted to announce that as a mark of respect and thanks, Judith Thomas has now been officially recognised and named as "Founder of the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery." A title she has graciously accepted.



We are very pleased that Ann and Charles Joslin were able to go to Rudding Park for the afternoon tea treat that the Friends gave Ann as a thank you for her years of dedication to the Friends. Here is a lovely picture of them enjoying it!

