



Spring Newsletter 2021

NEWSLETTER

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

A warm welcome from our new Chair, *Julie Goldsmith*

Friends! I hope this finds you well.

My name is Julie Goldsmith and for those who don't know me I am the recently appointed Chair of the Friends, having taken over from Judith Thomas at last November's AGM. Any other year I would have had plenty of opportunity to get to know more of you at the Christmas party and our usual talks and outings but sadly that is denied us. Perhaps before the year is out we shall be able to meet again. Certainly we keep making plans in the hope that one day soon we don't have to cancel or re-arrange them.

(For those interested in knowing more about me, there was a piece on me in the newsletter just last spring)

The Mercer is fast approaching the 30th anniversary of its opening (April 29th) but it has to remain closed until the middle of May at the earliest. Another missed cause for celebration! I am aware that many of you managed to see the latest exhibition *From Darkness to Light* before lockdown 3.0. It was good to be back in the gallery albeit briefly and a joy to see more of our splendid permanent collection. A fitting reminder of the great contribution that the Friends have made to Harrogate's very fine art collection.

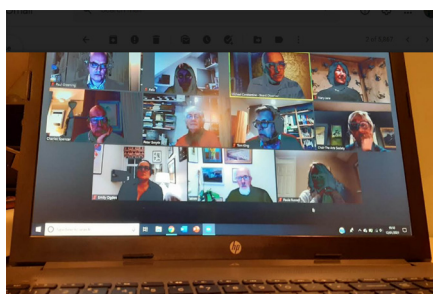
Once again, we'll let you know when the gallery opens again and really do recommend that you book your visit. The team at the gallery have created a very safe environment and will no doubt give you their usual warm welcome.



On behalf of the committee may I convey our thanks to you for your continued support of the Mercer in quiet and mostly uneventful times. Whilst not possible for everyone to join in we are now trialling some Zoom based events as that is the only platform open to us to connect with you. Published in this newsletter is our latest set of diary dates. Bookings for the March talk are now open. Numbers are limited so it is advisable to book early.

Vaccinated and out of lockdown we are hoping that our first physical outing will be at the end of June. Rest assured that if we are able to go ahead we shall follow any guidelines, putting your safety first.

Optimistically yours,
Julie Goldsmith



Committee meetings go ahead via zoom

News from the Gallery



At time of print, the provisional date for re-opening the Gallery is Thursday 20 May. The current exhibition, *From Darkness to Light* will be showing and booking may still be required.

If you haven't already visited, this exhibition features works from the permanent collection to reflect how we might feel through this changing season.

It is arranged in three themed sections, starting with "darkness", works encapsulating night scenes, dark woodlands, rainy days and nights. Artworks that feature both dark and light elements then act as a bridge towards the final light section, into the light and warmth of summery landscapes, scenes of celebrations and hints of holidays, colourful abstracts and landscapes featuring rainbows in a nod to the evocative symbol that this has become over the past few months.

Picture Club of the Month

“Harrogate Tales” launches Picture of the Month Club online

First Tuesday of the month 6.00 to 6.45pm

What a delightful and fascinating time we all had at our very first Picture of the Month Club on 2nd March. Lucy Scott, Operations Manager of Harrogate Museums introduced us to the work of Serena Partridge. For all of us there, I think, this was our first introduction to Serena’s work, even though she had been an Artist in Residence with Harrogate Museums in 2009/2010.

“Harrogate Tales” are pieces that Serena had created during her time at the Mercer. One can see that the Residency brought together beautifully the worlds of Art and Heritage. Serena had spent a lot of time researching the Museum archives, the costume collection, as well as old postcards, guide books and newspapers. She was particularly struck by a quotation from Dickens: “Harrogate is the queerest place with the strangest people in it, leading the oddest lives of dancing, newspaper reading and dining.”

Her main reference for the works Lucy showed us was the work of George Shove, who during the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 designed various fashionable gloves for the ladies of the era to wear. They were beautifully crafted and embroidered with designs of landmarks and routes around London. Perhaps the more elegant pre-cursors of the inevitable T-shirt today!

Serena works using repurposed leather, as well as old silk and leather threads and even human hair. For “Harrogate Tales” she produced exquisitely crafted leather gloves but on a miniature scale.

Souvenir Evening Glove c.1888 presents us with Regency Harrogate and its famous hotels and entertainment venues. Rather cleverly the button hole was cut to the shape of the old race course on the Stray. Souvenir Day Glove c.1888 gives us Victorian Harrogate and images of the spas and wells, along with miniature maps of popular routes for walking.

Wedding Glove tells the story of Harrogate’s John Metcalfe, “Blind Jack” and his marriage. Hence the brail embroideries on this glove. Nearer our own time the Gauntlet Glove tells the story of Agatha Christie’s famous disappearance from the Old Swan Hotel as told by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Our time together began at 6.00PM with saying hello to the others in the ‘room’. Julie Goldsmith was our compere and so introduced Lucy as our speaker. After a 15 minute or so presentation by Lucy, Julie opened the room up for questions and discussion in an orderly and helpful fashion, wrapping up on schedule at 6.45PM.

To end on a cautionary note: space for these Picture Club chats is limited to 20, simply to make the Q and A section more manageable and also so that we all can see one another on one page or screen. Sadly there were some no-shows and here spaces could have gone to those who were on the waiting list. So if we book and then find we cannot attend, please let Paul Greening know ahead of time so he can then kindly re-assign the space.

This is a trial run of three months. The first participants gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up to continuing!

written by Andrew Sloane.



New Committee Member

Hello, my name is Perveen Aslam, and I moved from Oxford to Harrogate nine years ago. After many years working as a Systems Analyst I retrained as a primary school teacher when we moved to Harrogate and I currently work in a local primary school. I have two children who are both in High School.

I am an avid potter and have been taking ceramic lessons for a couple of years. I have always been inspired by visiting art galleries and appreciate their importance as a unique space to enjoy different perspectives on the world. Therefore, I was very pleased to join the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery Committee and I look forward to being part of the team.



Dates for Your Diary

Thursday, March 25th at 18:00

- **Harold Gilman: Beyond Camden Town (ZOOM talk)**

We are launching a series of talks, **Connections**, on subjects related to pictures in the Mercer collection. Initially, talks will be free of charge for Friends with an opportunity to make an online donation. These will be offered as 'webinars' (limited to 100 Friends) where the substantial part of the time, 6.00 to 6.45pm, will be dedicated to the speaker. There will be a time for hosted questions and answers at the end.

The first of the **Connections** speakers is already known to some of you. Neil Walker is the Head of Visual Arts at Lakeside Arts at Nottingham University and is based at the Djanogly gallery there. Neil was our host on our visit in 2019 to see their fine Bauhaus exhibition. Just after that exhibition Neil was responsible for an exhibition of the work of the Camden Town Artist, Harold Gilman (1876-1919). Neil Walker is therefore well qualified to link some of our own Camden Town Group pictures, principally the lovely *New Bedford Hall*, (oil on canvas) by William Sickert (1860-1942). We also have his *Venetian Woman*, (conté crayon on brown paper).

Using Sickert's work as a preamble, Neil will then look at Harold Gilman and the influence of post-impressionism on him after Camden Town and how the group eventually disbanded or rather morphed also into new directions. So, from Sickert to Gilman and beyond, making broader "connections" for the Mercers' works.

*****BOOKINGS ARE NOW OPEN*****

Please contact Paul Greening to reserve your place. paulgreening@sky.com or tel 07792 978779

Attendance is free but donations are very welcome

www.gofundme.com/f/to-support-the-arts-in-harrogate

Tuesday, 6th April at 18:00

- **Picture Club of the Month (ZOOM presentation and discussion)**

Due to the late planning of this event, details can only be notified to Friends by email. Numbers are strictly limited to 20 devices to ensure an inclusive and social environment. To remind Friends of the format, our presenter will talk about an artwork from the Harrogate collection and then the floor is thrown open for discussion – just like a book club.

Tuesday, 20th April at 18:00

- **St. Ives: From Representation to Abstraction 1890's-1950's.**

Joining us from Cornwall for the second in our series of Connections talks is art historian Catherine Wallace. This Zoom lecture looks at the original art colony of St. Ives which focused on marine and landscape art and how the shift from representation to abstraction occurred in the 1940s and 50s. It introduces artists such as Julius Olsson, Borlase Smart, Leonard Fuller, Alfred Wallis, Ben Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Peter Lanyon, Barns-Graham, Bryan Winter and Barbara Hepworth. The talk will include artwork from the Mercer by Olsson, Wood and Dorothea Sharpe.

More details will be available in early April.

Tuesday, 6th May at 18:00

- **Picture Club of the Month (ZOOM presentation and discussion)**

Details will be available early April.

Tuesday, 29th June (All day visit)

- **Manchester Allsorts.**

We are hoping this will be our first outing since 2019. Originally planned as an all day visit to sample the cultural delights of Manchester, we are having to rethink the schedule due to uncertainty about venue opening and government guidelines. We are however confident that we shall visit the Manchester Art Gallery to feast on the highlights of the collection. Following lunch at the Gallery we shall sally forth to pastures new.

- **Summer Party**

All we can say at this stage is that we hope to have one!

Tuesday 21st September to Thursday 23rd September

- **Spires and very posh Squires.**

For this year's Friends' trip, we are quietly confident that we shall be venturing to the ancient Royal Forest of Rockingham in Middle England. Details have yet to be re-confirmed but private tours will include Boughton House, the English Versailles' and Burghley House near Stamford. As our Friends expect, this all-inclusive trip will include variety and surprises.

Tuesday, November 9th

- **Annual General Meeting**

Venue to be decided

Wednesday, December 8th (provisional)

- **Christmas Party 6.30- 8.30 pm**

Talk by Jack Ogden

All that Glitters is not Old

Jack Ogden brought more than a little brightness into our world with his talk, on Zoom by webinar, about fake gold on 8 December, following up on his highly popular talk on diamonds earlier in the year.

With the help of numerous illustrations, Jack gave us a fascinating insight into how it is possible to distinguish between the truly antique and the not so old, even with such an imperishable substance as gold, using guides like style, technology of manufacture, composition and signs of age. Covering a wide range of items – whether purporting to be from Ancient Egypt or the Middle Ages for example - his talk showed his deep expertise and knowledge which he shared with humour and grace. Particularly memorable was his observation, on a fake Greek Aphrodite piece, that the sexier an item is, the more likely it is to be fake. And his observation that the escalating struggle between fakers and experts was like an arms race.

As an experiment with modern technology, the webinar felt like a success – though tinged with a more than a little regret that we couldn't meet up face to face.

written by Paul Greening

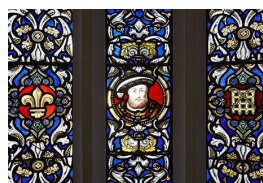
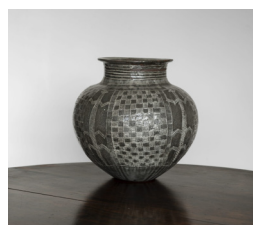
Editor's choice...

Perhaps these online talks may be of interest to you?

Pioneering Women

www.oxfordceramics.com/exhibitions/

This is an online exhibition by Oxford Ceramics Gallery featuring over 40 works by 10 pioneering female artists. The exhibition celebrates the significant contribution this group of artists has made to the development of contemporary ceramics, with a focus on the ceramic vessel form. Runs until 27th March.



Tudor Magnificence talk

24th March Book online

www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/whats-on

Prepare to be transported to a world of opulence and sixteenth century bling, as Joint Chief Curator Lucy Worsley, along with Professor Glenn Richardson from St Mary's University and fellow Historic Royal Palaces curators Dr Alden Gregory and Brett Dolman, bring to life the magnificence of the Tudor court. Featuring a sneak preview of Hampton Court Palace's upcoming exhibition Gold and Glory.

Discollecting the Pitt Rivers Museum

24th March Book online

www.prm.ox.ac.uk/radical-hope

At the Pitt Rivers Museum they want to use the philosophical and psychological concept of Radical Hope to reimagine what the future might be for museums like PRM that have deep roots in coloniality.