



Newsletter

No 29 Winter 2008

From the Chair

I can't believe I'm writing "winter" at the top of this newsletter when summer (what there was of it) seems to have come and gone so quickly. Thanks to all of you who sent such positive feedback about the newsletter last issue – it's really important to know what members think about what we're doing. Hopefully you'll find some interesting features in this issue, including a very special offer from the Public Catalogue Foundation on page 9 – don't miss it!

Matthew Jarron

New SSAH Grant Scheme

This year we launched a scheme offering research support grants from £50 to £300 to assist with research costs and travel expenses. Applications are continuing to arrive and here is another report from one of the recipients on how the money has been spent.

Clemena Antonova

The Research Support Grant (£170) that I received from the Scottish Society for Art History was used towards research on a medieval Italian triptych by Grifo di Tancredi at the National Gallery of Scotland. The intended outcome of this research will be an article entitled "Grifo di Tancredi's Triptych at the National Gallery of Scotland: On the Nature of Italo-Byzantine Art". The triptych (c.1290-1300) was part of Lord Lindsay's collection. In 2000 the National Gallery of Scotland organised an exhibition on Lord Lindsay, the famous Scottish collector of Italian primitives, which drew attention, among other things,

to Lindsay's appreciation of Byzantine art (see the catalogue 'A Poet in Paradise': *Lord Lindsay and Christian Art*). My research relates to this topic, as it is concerned with the Byzantine underpinnings and their transformation by a little known Italian painter, who was almost an exact contemporary of Cimabue. The triptych consists of a central panel showing *The Death of St. Ephraim and Scenes from the Lives of the Thebaid Saints*, while the wings treat of six scenes of the Passion of Christ. There is a stylistic and iconographical discrepancy between the two parts – i.e. central panel and wings – which has led authors to question if they are by the same hand. I would like to consider the possibility that this discrepancy points to different stages of Italian reception to Byzantine art, which co-existed in the late thirteenth century. Grifo's choice of iconographical motifs, their stylistic treatment and the manipulation of pictorial space can help explain the exact nature of the Italo-Byzantine style (or the *maniera greca*), a much used, but rather vague, term.

The grant enabled me to go to Edinburgh (from Oxford) and to spend two days there. I went to see the triptych once on my own and once with Prof. Martin Kemp, my former supervisor at Oxford, who gave me some useful directions for my work. I hope to be ready with my text shortly, and am very grateful to the Scottish Society for Art History for this opportunity!

For further information on the SSAH grant scheme, contact:

Daniel F. Herrmann

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

75 Belford Road, Edinburgh EH4 3DR

dherrmann@nationalgalleries.org

SSAH Events

Et in Arcadia Ergo...

Nicola Ireland reviews the SSAH Sculpture Tour at the Dean Gallery and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

The weather was kind to us for our tour on the 19th April with plenty of spring sunshine and a bracing breeze that created delightful ripples upon the water of Charles Jencks's *Landform*. The tour was led by Daniel Herrmann, Curator of the Paolozzi Collection and SSAH committee member and Dr Patricia Andrew, an art historian who specialises in landscape painting and garden history. The focus was on the placement of sculptures within their surrounding environment and the challenges of conservation outside the controlled environment of the art gallery.

Daniel Herrmann started by providing a brief background to the grounds at the Dean Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art emphasising their former institutional associations. He discussed the oldest piece of sculpture in the grounds, *La Vierge d'Alsace* (1919-21) by Emile-Antoine Bourdelle at the Dean Gallery before we moved further up the path to examine Richard Long's *Macduff Circle* (2002). This latter piece provoked an intense discussion on the maintenance of artworks within natural settings in the face of nature's proclivity to colonise and how often this reclamation of ephemeral artworks by nature can be an inherent part of their concept. Dr Patricia Andrew then discussed Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Six Definitions* (2001) and highlighted the conscious and delicious irony of Finlay's evocations of Arcadian ideals and the juxtaposition of *Six Definitions* with the rather prosaic space of the car park. The Finlay plaques by the allotments at the entrance of the Dean Gallery were also examined before we crossed over the road to the Gallery of Modern Art where Daniel Herrmann focused on Rachel Whiteread's *Untitled (Pair)* (1999). Nowhere is the challenge of preserving external sculpture in our wet, northern climate more evident than in this piece which relies on clinical and pristine surfaces to carry its meaning and its associations with mortuary slabs. Dr Patricia Andrew then concluded the tour at Charles Jencks's *Landform* (2001) where the concepts behind this structure were discussed along with the issues of the maintenance of an artwork whose impact is in part due to order and structure having been imposed upon the organic.

Whilst looking at Rachel Whiteread's sculpture, Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ergo* had been evoked in connection with this piece – the imprint of death within verdant and idyllic surroundings. To a certain extent this concept of decay in Arcadia could be seen to be a metaphor for the way in which we strive to prevent the

deterioration of artworks and to instil permanence into man-made structures in the face of the eroding forces of nature and time.

Hand, Heart & Soul

Gillian Peebles describes Elizabeth Cumming's tour for members of the arts and crafts exhibition at Aberdeen Art Gallery.

Elizabeth Cumming's *Hand, Heart and Soul* – book and exhibition – is self-evidently a labour of love. The Scottish Arts and Crafts movement is, literally, in her blood – she is a direct descendant of William Skeoch Cumming artist designer who founded Edinburgh's Dovecot Studio in 1912. She herself is probably best known for championing the work of Phoebe Anna Traquair. On 26th July SSAH members were privileged to join Elizabeth for a tour of the Aberdeen leg of the exhibition. On one of the sunniest weekends of the summer, Aberdeen seemed positively continental and the gallery glowing in the final throes of re-hang and improvement.

At Edinburgh City Art Centre last summer, the exhibition was grand, exhaustive but never exhausting and seemed perfect for the space. The smaller Aberdeen version was equally so but allowed different stars to shine. Where Edinburgh had space for several specially made films of Arts and Crafts houses, Aberdeen showed just one but it was juxtaposed neatly beside furniture and ornaments appropriate to the property. One of our number recognised the bedstead! The show included examples of furniture, textiles, metalwork and glass. Designs for public spaces were contrasted with the very personal and domestic. Well-known artists and craftsman like Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Robert Lorimer shared billing with those lesser known but well deserving of attention. A particular star of the show, and a revelation for those of us not from Aberdeen, was the local artist and jeweller James Cromar Watt who crafted superb and intimate jewellery. The more intimate display at Aberdeen allowed for detailed consideration of the works on paper, the embroideries and domestic artefacts. A second viewing of the exhibition highlighted the sense of a style whose time has come.

Elizabeth Cumming has the gift of wearing her learning lightly and communicating her enthusiasm for the subject at just the right level for each audience. The material felt fresh and interesting, and it is to be hoped that this wonderful and highly successful exhibition will encourage people back to the book.

(Hand, Heart and Soul – The Arts and Crafts Movement in Scotland by Elizabeth Cumming is published by Birlinn (ISBN 9781841586106) paperback - £16.99)

Conferences & Seminars

Mapping Sculpture Seminar

7th November 2008, Hunterian Art Gallery

Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951 is the first comprehensive study of sculptors, related businesses and trades investigated in the context of creative collaborations, art infrastructures, professional networks and cultural geographies. By presenting the results of the research through an online database, published articles and exhibitions at the Victoria & Albert Museum and Henry Moore Institute, the project will broaden the way the medium is seen and understood and contribute new methods of approaching art practice.

The University of Glasgow will host the first of three annual project seminars showcasing new and unpublished research from the Mapping Sculpture 1851-1951 project on 7th November 2008 at the Hunterian Art Gallery Lecture Theatre from 1.30-5pm. This year's seminar includes papers by four members of the research team, these will be followed by an open discussion:

Introduction - *Professor Alison Yarrington, Glasgow University*

Session One, Chair: *Marjorie Trusted FSA, Senior Curator of Sculpture, Victoria & Albert Museum*

Elmarie Nagle, Research Assistant, Ireland

From the carving of altars and pulpits to statuary in stone: a Case Study of Earley and Company, Dublin, Church Decorators

Owen Brown, Research Assistant, Wales

Bronze, Marble, Plaster and Coal Dust: the development of sculptural practice in Wales 1850-1950

Session Two, Chair: *Dr Jon Wood, Henry Moore Institute*
Dr Nancy Ireson, Research Assistant, London

Collaboration and Controversy: George Frampton and Art Society Politics in London

Rhona Warwick, Research Assistant, Scotland

Lions and Unicorns: Mapping the cultural geographies of Edinburgh through the career of Phyllis Bone

Ann Compton, Project Director, Glasgow University:
Report and overview of the project's initial research findings followed by an open discussion.

The event is free, but please RSVP (or send any enquiries) to: Robyne Calvert Miles, Project Administrative Assistant: r.miles@arthist.arts.gla.ac.uk
For more information about the Mapping Sculpture Project, please visit:

<http://www.arthist.arts.gla.ac.uk/Research/Mapping%20Sculpture/index.htm>

Material Matters: Materiality in Contemporary Art

20th November 2008, Edinburgh College of Art



Glen Onwin *The One to the One. organic/inorganic (detail)*

From the site generated installation: *As Above so Below*

© Glen Onwin

How do you make, preserve and interpret contemporary art made with non-traditional materials? What are the challenges and how are they overcome by artists, conservators and curators? What are the implications and opportunities for art education in Scotland? These are the issues that will be discussed at a symposium organised by the Modern Materials in Collections: Scotland (MMiC:S) working group in collaboration with VARIE (Visual Arts Research Institute Edinburgh) Icon Scotland Group and ECA. The symposium will take place at Edinburgh College of Art on 20th November 2008.

Founded in 2006, MMiC:S promotes the collecting of modern materials and helps to build confidence, skills and best practice for the acquisition, display and preservation of contemporary objects and art. Following the success of last year's symposium on plastics in collections, this year's annual event will

bring together those who make art and those who look after it to discuss materiality in contemporary art.

The morning will be given over to papers, with topics including the semantics of materials, the neglect of materiality in traditional art history, conservation challenges posed by non-traditional materials and the artistic production process. In the afternoon a number of break-out sessions will give an opportunity to explore some of these issues in more detail. Speakers confirmed for the symposium are: Daniel Herrmann and Jacqueline Ridge of National Galleries Scotland, Dr Petra Lange-Berndt of University College of London, Dr Erma Hermens and Rebecca Erdal of Glasgow University, Will Maclean MBE RSA and Glen Onwin RSA. The event will be recorded and we intend to make the presentations available to a wider audience.

Registration is available at £20 or £10 for students. To find out about the programme, view abstracts of presentations and to register, visit <http://mmics.wordpress.com>

Acquisitions

Art and Industry

By **Helen Smailes**, Senior Curator of British Art, National Galleries of Scotland

Despite the exceptional demands of fund-raising to secure Titian's *Diana and Actaeon* for the nation – a total of £50,000,000 to be pledged by 31 December 2008 and an annual purchase grant for the National Galleries of Scotland of £1,260,000 – the National Gallery of Scotland has had a bonanza of new Scottish acquisitions over this summer. On 29th August, with the aid of the Cowan Smith Bequest Fund, the Gallery purchased at Bonham's Scottish sale *The Penny Wedding* by Wilkie's near-contemporary Alexander Carse (c1790-1843). Apart from the first of two known versions of *The Village Ba' Game* (McManus Galleries & Museum, Dundee), this is by far the most important Carse in any British public collection and had previously been on continuous loan to the Gallery since 1972. First exhibited in London in 1819, when Wilkie launched his own painting of the same subject, Carse's picture celebrates the Scottish custom of the 'penny wedding' whereby guests defrayed the costs of

the wedding meal and any surplus was used to set up the couple in their new home.



Alexander Carse, *The Penny Wedding*, c.1819. Copyright National Galleries of Scotland.

Collectively, the National Gallery and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery possess the most comprehensive and definitive holdings of the work of David Allan of Alloa (1744-96) in all media. This autumn, after a complex two-year transaction, H M Government accepted in Lieu of Inheritance Tax and allocated to the National Gallery of Scotland Allan's fascinating series of four cabinet-sized oils illustrating the stages of lead processing at Leadhills in south Lanarkshire. Commissioned by the 3rd Earl of Hopetoun, who emulated his father the 2nd Earl as a patron of Allan and inherited the lucrative Hope mining rights at Leadhills, these little paintings are believed to be the earliest representations by a native Scottish artist of any industrial process in Scotland and to be without any known precedent or comparable sequel in Scottish painting. They were probably painted during the 1780s or mid 1790s – when Allan made several drawings of Moffat (in a privately owned album on loan to Gallery) – and may well have been destined for Moffat House rather than Hopetoun House near South Queensferry. Hopetoun itself had been partially, if not largely, financed from the profits of the mining rights at Leadhills which the Hopes had secured in 1638. Now a hotel and still the grandest townhouse in the former spa resort of Moffat, Moffat House had been built by John Adam for the 2nd Earl of Hopetoun during the 1760s and served as the family's administrative headquarters for the nearby Hope and Annandale estates and the Leadhills mines.

The intimate scale and illustrative conception of Allan's paintings are closely affiliated to an English documentary-cum-picturesque pictorial tradition which apparently reached the isolated locality of

Leadhills and Wanlockhead by 1751. That year Paul Sandby, the topographical artist and official draughtsman to the military survey of Scotland after the Forty-Five Jacobite Rising, made a detour during a sketching excursion to the Queensberry estate at Drumlanrig at the invitation of the Scottish naval tactician and etcher, John Clerk of Eldin. One of the resulting drawings is in the Yale Center for British Art. Clerk himself was to execute a remarkable drawing (Dumfries Museum) of the mining settlement at Wanlockhead in 1775. Although privately commissioned and in the Hope collection until 1964, Allan's own paintings are ideally suited to reproduction and potential commercial exploitation through engraving – conceivably in the medium of aquatint in which Allan himself was proficient. As yet undocumented and undated, despite two years of intensive curatorial investigation, the Gallery's latest acquisitions could well stimulate a whole new enterprise in cross-disciplinary research into art and industry in Scotland – a subject ripe for exploration since the pioneering exhibition *Signs of the Times: Art and Industry in Scotland 1750-1985* (Collins Gallery, University of Strathclyde, and Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, 1986).



David Allan, *Lead Processing at Leadhills: Smelting the Ore*, 1780s. Copyright, National Galleries of Scotland.

In the meantime, the Gallery's collaborative research with National Museums Scotland – as the custodians of a world-class collection of Leadhills minerals – will be reflected in two free celebratory lectures at the National Gallery in the New Year: Brian Jackson, NMS Principal Curator of Mineralogy, on 9th January, and Helen Smailes, Senior Curator of British Art, on 17th February (both 12.45-1.30pm). For further information on these works, contact Helen Smailes on 0131 624 6505/6512 or by email on hsmailles@nationalgalleries.org.

Stirling Station in Glasgow

By **Hugh Stevenson**, Curator of British Art, Glasgow Museums

Glasgow Museums have recently acquired a major oil painting to add to their strong holding of work by the Glasgow Boys, one of the key groupings among the new displays at Kelvingrove. *Stirling Station* by William Kennedy (1859-1918) has been bought from the collection of Andrew McIntosh Patrick with the generous assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Art Fund, the Trustees of the Hamilton Bequest and the Friends of Glasgow Museums.



William Kennedy, *Stirling Station*, 1887/8
Culture and Sport Glasgow (Museums)

Stirling Station ties in closely with the output of the Glasgow Boys during their most vital period in the 1880s. It is rare for examples of this quality and importance to become available for sale.

This is a remarkable picture of contemporary life, which Kennedy painted while staying at Stirling. The choice of subject is unusual for him, as his main preference (some may say fixation) was to paint the soldiers based at the Castle and camped around it.

The admiration the Boys felt for Whistler is abundantly clear in this evening scene, with its overtones of the nocturnes painted by their hero. Kennedy introduces a feeling of movement and excitement in the foreground figures and the dog to contrast with the areas of delicate greys, touched by the evening sun and the glow of the locomotives' fires. Whistler himself would not have painted quite such a scene, but the combination of his influence together with Kennedy's observation of the life around him create a composition at once harmonious and fascinating.

It is rare to find a Scottish artist choosing to paint a railway picture. Turner, Monet and Frith are

the famous names connected with the subject. Others attracted by railway stations included Frank Holl, Herkomer, Tissot, Sydney Starr and Walter Osborne. Kennedy's contribution to the genre, which is widely acclaimed as the high point of his whole career, stands up well in this exalted company.

The painting, in addition to its strong aesthetic appeal, is of great interest to specialist historians in showing Stirling Station buildings and railway rolling stock as they were in 1887. The travelling practices of the time and the clothes worn by different classes are also captured in a valuable historical document.

This is a key work in the history of the Glasgow Boys, both for its unusual subject and the beauty of its execution. As an urban scene it is rare, as an industrial one it is unique. It is unlikely that Kennedy ever recaptured the artistic intensity of this atmospheric masterpiece.

Stirling Station has a long and impressive exhibition history. It was enthusiastically reviewed when first shown at the Glasgow Institute of the Fine Arts in 1888. In 1890 it was at the New English Art Club, where it was part of the pioneering selection by the Glasgow Boys; this led to its inclusion in the specially invited group of Scottish artists showcased at the Munich *Glaspalaste* exhibition later that year, one of the international triumphs of Scottish art. Always recognised as a major work of art, it was in the *Scottish Art* exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1939. Recent showings include two exhibitions entitled *British Impressionism*, one at the Barbican, London, in 1995, the other touring to Japan in 1997.

A major exhibition of The Glasgow Boys takes place at Kelvingrove in 2010, with a second showing at Royal Academy, London. *Stirling Station* will be a key choice in this definitive show, the first to cover the subject in such depth since the Scottish Arts Council's exhibition at Kelvingrove in 1968.

The Discovery at Falmouth

By **Gill Poulter**, Heritage & Exhibitions Director for Dundee Heritage Trust

Dundee Heritage Trust has recently put on display in the Discovery Point museum a watercolour painting of RRS *Discovery* that was acquired relatively recently with the support of The Art Fund and the National Fund for Acquisitions. The painting is of *The Discovery at Falmouth, 1927* by Henry Scott Tuke, an eminent marine artist.

This beautiful and masterly watercolour illustrates an important point in the history of the

Royal Research Ship *Discovery*, her return from the Antarctic after the Discovery Oceanographic Expedition of 1925-27. This internationally significant expedition was planned due to growing concern over the sustainability of southern whale stocks and involved the first maritime research to explore the natural habitat of whales, their numbers and migration patterns. Sir Sidney Harmer (zoologist and Director of the British Museum (Natural History)) called it "the largest and most important scientific expedition that has left our shores since the time of the *Challenger*" (*Geographical Journal*, vol. lxxii, no.31, 1928).

Discovery was chosen for the expedition and was purchased from the Hudson Bay Company, where she had been used as a cargo ship since her return from the 1901-1904 British National Antarctic Expedition. After her purchase she had a refit by Messrs Vospers of Portsmouth to change her back into a scientific research vessel.



Henry Scott Tuke, *The Discovery at Falmouth, 1927*.
Courtesy of Dundee Heritage Trust, Discovery Point

What luck that when the *Discovery* berthed in Falmouth on 29th September 1927 it happened to be

the hometown of a famous Royal Academician, an enthusiastic and skilful painter of sailing ships. Henry Scott Tuke RA RSW (1858-1929) was born in Yorkshire in 1858 and was educated at the Slade School of Art, London under Alphonse Legros and Sir Edward Poynter. Whilst studying at the Slade in 1877 Tuke won a scholarship which enabled him to study at the atelier of Jean Paul Laurens in Paris. Here he met, amongst others, John Singer Sargent, Oscar Wilde and most significantly, Jules Bastien Lepage. Tuke was impressed by Lepage's *en plein air* painting and influenced by his broad and square brush technique. In 1883, after travelling and studying in Europe, he settled in Newlyn, where he associated with artists such as TC Gotch and Stanhope Forbes, and was a founder-member of the Newlyn School. Newlyn paintings combined working directly from the subject, and where appropriate in the open air (Plein-airism), with subject matter drawn from rural life, particularly the life of the fishermen. Today paintings by this school are extremely popular. By 1885 Tuke had moved from Newlyn and settled in Falmouth where he bought an old brigantine, the *Julie de Nantes*, which for many years formed a floating studio. Falmouth remained his home until his death in 1929.

During Tuke's life he was well known for his society portraits and his paintings of the male nude but a major element in his work was always the sailing ship. He executed paintings in a variety of mediums. He was regarded as an accomplished watercolourist and in 1911 Tuke became a member of the Royal Watercolour Society. By this point he was already an associate member of the Royal Academy (since 1900) and was subsequently made a full member in 1914. His work is found in many public collections throughout Britain including Falmouth, Plymouth, Truro, Bristol, Leeds, Nottingham and various national institutions in London, including the Tate and the Royal Academy of Art.

Dundee Heritage Trust is endeavouring to increase its collections relating to the history of the *Discovery*, her various expeditions and the men who served on her so the acquisition of this work was very welcome. The painting has extra special resonance in that it was owned by Sir Alister Hardy, leader of the Oceanographic Expedition.

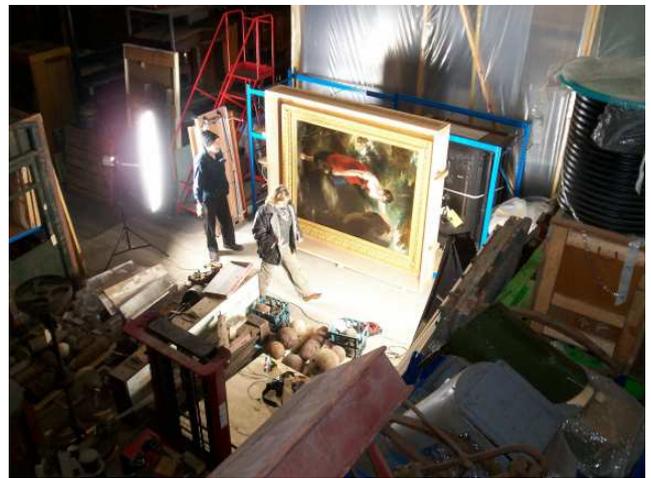
Features

The Public Catalogue Foundation

Andrew Ellis, director of the PCF, describes the ambitious work of this national project.

The Public Catalogue Foundation has reached Scotland. We have been thrilled by the warm welcome and are excited by the work ahead of us. Our first catalogue, which will be one of three in Glasgow, is now underway. Further catalogues will be started in the New Year in the Grampian and Tayside regions. In total we believe that there will be some 13 catalogues covering some 30,000 paintings. It is even possible that these catalogues might be completed before we finish our work in England!

For those readers who are not aware of the Public Catalogue Foundation, we are a registered charity based in London. Our purpose is to make a photographic record of all oil paintings (plus temperas and acrylics) in public ownership across the United Kingdom. We are making this record available to readers through a series of affordable county-by-county volumes. We will also be making the whole project available online through a free to access website.



Our generous definition of public ownership includes paintings in our national museums, regional museums, independent museums, universities, hospitals, the National Trust, the National Trust for Scotland, English Heritage, Historic Scotland, council buildings, council libraries and police stations. Paintings that are on view and those in store are covered, and include works hanging on the walls of councillors' offices, behind librarians' desks, in obstetrics wards and in university common rooms.

The catalogues have contained a painting screwed through its centre to the wall of a Cornish fire station, works hanging in a West Sussex crematorium and a canvas scarred by shrapnel from a German naval attack on Scarborough during the First World War.

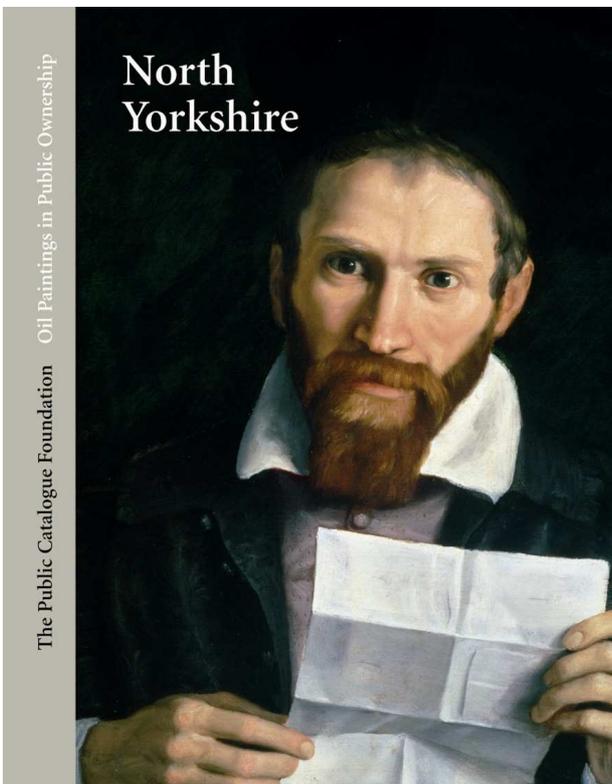
No one knows for certain how many oil paintings there are in public ownership. At the end of this project the Foundation will have a pretty good idea but for now we estimate that there are probably some 200,000. However, counting them is not our focus. Instead, the Foundation's purpose is to provide access to these paintings – paintings we all own but in most cases never see as around 80% of these works are in storage or in civic buildings not open to the public.

Not only are many of these works hidden away but only a small proportion of the nation's paintings have been photographed. Smaller museums and other institutions often have no good quality photographic records at all. At the same time many of the museum records are incomplete. And in some cases council collections and other civic collections have no inventory whatsoever of their paintings. Indeed, across the country only a miniscule number of collections have a fully-illustrated hardcopy or online catalogue of their paintings. Until the Public Catalogue Foundation arrived on the scene even the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Imperial War Museum did not possess one.

Why is this? Certainly it is through no fault of the collections' curators who, as we have discovered, are doing everything in their power to display and catalogue the paintings in their care. Yet, endless cutbacks in staffing and resources have had a pernicious effect on collections' ability to care for their paintings. Compared to the heady days of bountiful bequests and burgeoning acquisition budgets, most museums these days are short of technicians to move paintings (required for rotating collections) and conservators to care for the paintings that are at risk. Perhaps the most disturbing finding is the reduction in the number of curators with fine art expertise.

The catalogues are typically published on a county-by-county basis although we sometimes publish single collection catalogues such as the Imperial War Museum. Every oil painting owned by the public is listed in these catalogues with succinct catalogue data and a colour photograph of almost every single work. These 'matchbox-size' colour reproductions are shown nine to a page. Full-page reproductions occur every nine pages and many collections are preceded by a curatorial foreword. All paintings are reproduced irrespective of quality or condition. Paintings by Corot and Correggio sit alongside Corbould and Cordrey. Paintings with patches of conservation tissue appear next to paintings finished last year. The Foundation makes no judgements whatsoever about the paintings shown, leaving this entirely to the reader.

The Foundation's first catalogue was published in June 2004. 22 catalogues have been published since then showing over 50,000 paintings. Perhaps more interestingly, we now have recorded the works of 15,000 artists, many of whom are totally obscure. Our intention is to complete the cataloguing project in 2012, funding permitting.



The benefits of our work to the collections are substantial and come at no financial cost to them. Not only do our catalogues raise the profile of the

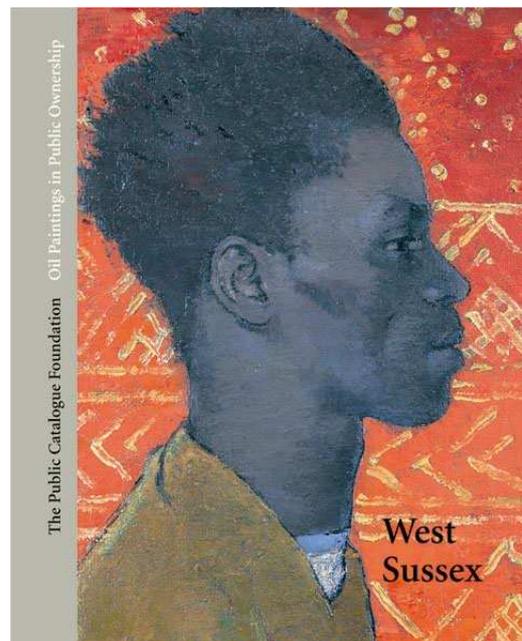
collections and, we hope, improve visitor numbers, but the collections also receive all the digital images photographed by the Foundation together with an electronic copy of the catalogue data totally for free. This allows them to put their paintings on their own website if they so wish. Subject to collection approval, data and images are also passed to the Art Loss Register to improve the paintings' security. Once published online, the catalogues will be the building blocks for future art historical scholarship. This should mean that many of the paintings currently without firm artist attributions (in our Kent catalogue 27% of paintings do not have these) will receive them. Two universities will, we hope, be helping us in our work on this: the University of Glasgow and the University of Oxford.

But probably the single largest benefit to the nation will be the revelation – particularly when the whole project goes online – that spread across a vast range of institutions from Cornwall to the Shetland Isles there is one single UK collection of extraordinary size and variety. It should destroy for once and for all the myth that great art can only be found in the national museums in London. Instead, Monets can be found in public collections in Southampton, Aberdeen, Walsall and Swansea; Gauguin in Newcastle; Constable in Kilmarnock; Van Dycks in Canterbury and York; Gainsboroughs in Exeter, Bristol, Bradford and Ipswich; El Greco in Barnard Castle; Warhol in Wolverhampton; and so on. An important collection of German Expressionist works hangs in Leicester New Walk Gallery and Museum. One of the finest collections of modern Latin American art outside the Americas can be found in the University of Essex.



The Public Catalogue Foundation is a small organisation with only six full-time staff and a team of experienced freelance county researchers and fine art photographers. We are funded principally by the generous support of individuals, companies, and charitable trusts. Support from the public sector – mainly County Councils and selected English Museum Hubs – only constitutes 20% of our committed funding.

We are still looking for Coordinators to help create the regional Scottish catalogues over the next 2-3 years. If you are interested, please contact Katey Goodwin at katey.goodwin@thepcf.org.uk. On the other hand if you are interested in providing financial support for our work please contact me at andy.ellis@thepcf.org.uk.



Special Offer!

The PCF have generously arranged a special offer on purchases of existing catalogues for SSAH members. The normal price of catalogues is £35 for the hardback (plus £5 p&p) and £20 for the soft back (plus £5 p&p). Until Christmas SSAH members can buy hardback catalogues at £16 (plus £4 p&p) and soft back catalogues at £12 (plus £4 p&p).

To take advantage of this unique offer, call 01235 465577 and quote "SSAH offer". You can see the full list of published catalogues on the PCF website at www.thepcf.org.uk

The catalogues are beautifully produced, exceptionally good value and to quote the Editor of Apollo Magazine, "...unputdownably browsable...".

A Lighter Touch: Selected Watercolours from the RSA Permanent Collections

To mark a new exhibition opening at the Royal Scottish Academy in January, **Nicola Ireland**, assistant curator, tells us more about the RSA's unique collection of watercolours.

In 1885 the Royal Scottish Academy did something that was perceived as a significant break with tradition: it staged an exhibition devoted to watercolour painting stating in the preface to the catalogue its awareness of "The attention which during the last quarter of a century has been directed to Water-Colour Art and the increasing number of Artists who practise it." Watercolours had been exhibited by the academy since its first annual exhibition in 1827. The traditional association of the medium with 'feminine' art and often the art of the amateur is however reflected in the proportionally higher numbers of female artists listed in the 'Water Colour Paintings, Miniatures &c.' section of the early annual exhibition catalogues and even as late as 1885 when Sir Joseph Noel Paton suggested that the RSA should invite the Princess Louise to contribute to the watercolour exhibition. Watercolours also tended to be hung in smaller rooms in the annual exhibitions than oil paintings, which were invariably placed in larger spaces such as 'The Great Room'. Works in watercolour were often grouped with drawings and other works on paper although due to their light-sensitive nature there were also sound conservation reasons for hanging them in certain spaces where they would be less exposed to natural and artificial light. The generally smaller scale of watercolours compared to oil paintings also meant that they tended to be better suited to more intimate spaces.

Although the RSA was keen for the 1885 watercolour exhibition to become an annual event only one further exhibition of its kind was staged in 1887. The cartoonist and watercolour artist George R Halket in a letter to *The Scotsman* of 20th July 1885 suggested that the public response to the initiative had been decidedly lukewarm "so far as one may judge from several visits, the public have not yet responded in any adequate degree to the invitation thus given to them by the Academy" despite the enthusiastic espousal of the medium by many Scottish artists "the current Scottish school of water-colour... is full of richest promise." The academy's desire to promote the art of watercolour painting in Scotland and to accord it greater exhibition space although admirable was a little belated and had been pre-empted some eight years earlier in Glasgow with the establishment

of the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolours, a number of the founding members of which were Royal Scottish Academicians including its Vice-President Sam Bough who worked prolifically and with particular flair in the medium which the society sought to nurture.



Patrick Syme, *Flower Piece*, c.1831, Royal Scottish Academy (Diploma Collection)

The very first watercolours to be acquired by the academy for its collections were in the form of diploma works – Patrick Syme's *Flower Piece* and Thomas Hamilton's *Design for the Royal High School*, both received in 1831. These reflect two of the traditional applications of watercolour: as an adjunct to an architectural design (Hamilton's piece is in essence a large-scale tinted drawing) and for the addition of colour to the delineation of botanical specimens. No further watercolour diploma works were received in the 19th century, other than in the form of architectural drawings, and artists such as Waller Hugh Paton despite being highly skilled in the use of watercolour and producing many works in this medium still chose to submit oil paintings as representative samples of their work, albeit in Paton's case based on initial *plein air* sketches. In 1902, monumental landscape watercolours were received as the diploma works of Tom Scott and Robert Buchan Nisbet followed by paintings in the same medium from Henry Wright Kerr in 1924 and Edwin Alexander in 1926. As these artists were watercolour specialists it is fitting that they chose to deposit such works to represent them. However, during the second half of the 20th century, even artists who worked extensively in both oils and watercolours, for example William Gillies and Anne Redpath, still chose to submit oil paintings as their diploma works and

apart from the watercolour specialists James Miller and William Wilson, whose watercolour diploma works were deposited in 1965 and 1971 respectively, no further artworks in this medium were received for the diploma collection until John Mooney's submission in 2005 followed by Kate Whiteford's deposit earlier this year.

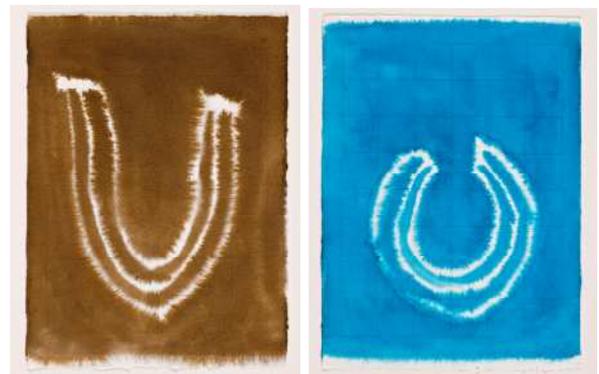


Henry Wright Kerr, *Tranquil Age*, c.1924, Royal Scottish Academy (Diploma Collection)

Over the years the RSA has acquired many important watercolours for its general collection. Significant amongst these are a set of sixty-three watercolour copies of old master paintings by John Frederick Lewis acquired by the academy in 1853 and noted in the RSA annual report of that year as having successfully captured the "colour and chiaroscuro" of the originals – an acknowledgment of the versatility of the medium and the range of effects that could be achieved through skilful handling. In 1856 a set of nine watercolour copies of seminal Italian paintings were received from a young Robert Herdman as a result of his studies in Italy and were added to the RSA's collection of copies, whose principle function was the education of young artists. Generous gifts and bequests during the 19th century enabled the academy to enhance further its holdings of watercolours including examples by such important Scottish artists

and exponents of the medium as David Allan, William Nicholson and Kenneth Macleay and in the 20th century the collection was added to by the academy's judicious purchasing of watercolours from its annual exhibitions. These watercolours form part of the RSA's nationally significant collection of Scottish art and during January 2009 there will be the opportunity to see a number of the works mentioned here as part of the exhibition *A Lighter Touch* at the Royal Scottish Academy. The artworks on display will include topographical pieces, landscapes, still life, figure paintings and portraits and will explore the evolution of the use of the medium by Scottish artists from its precise application for the elaboration of pencil and ink drawings in the late 18th and early 19th centuries towards an increasingly painterly and expressive use at the close of the 19th century and into the 20th century and a realisation of its potential as a tool for abstraction. It is fitting that this exhibition will coincide with the National Galleries' annual display of watercolours by Turner - an artist who did so much to explore the potential and elevate the status of this medium.

The exhibition will run 1st January – 28th February 2009, Royal Scottish Academy, Lower Lobby. Opening hours Monday to Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday (and New Year's Day) 12-5pm.



Kate Whiteford, *From the Red Cabinet*, 2008, Royal Scottish Academy (Diploma Collection), © Kate Whiteford

Committee Members

Chair and Newsletter:

Matthew Jarron (University of Dundee)
Museum Services
University of Dundee
Dundee DD1 4HN

E-mail: m.h.jarron@dundee.ac.uk

Honorary Treasurer:

Sandra McNeil (University of Glasgow and
The Queen's Gallery)

Minutes Secretary and Publicity:

Nicola Ireland (Royal Scottish Academy)

Journal Editor:

Lesley Lindsay (University of Dundee)

Membership:

Maria Devaney (Perth Museum & Art Gallery)

Events:

Shannon Hunter Hurtado (Independent
scholar)
Gillian Peebles (Independent scholar)

Research Grants:

Daniel Herrmann (Scottish National Gallery
of Modern Art)
Shannon Hunter Hurtado (Independent
scholar)

General members:

Anne Dulau (Hunterian Museum and Art
Gallery)
Imogen Gibbon (Scottish National Portrait
Gallery)
Ellen Graves (The Open University)
Luke Gartlan (University of St Andrews)

