From the Chair

We hope that you are all safe and well during such difficult and unprecedented times. Pre-COVID-19 ways of life almost seem like a distant memory, with the full-scale lockdown of many institutions, including museums and galleries, as part of social distancing measures. We are keen to keep in contact with our members and welcome your thoughts and suggestions about the best ways to do this. We are always interested to hear from you – via email at cr67@st-andrews.ac.uk, Twitter @SSAHHistory, and Facebook – and look forward to seeing you in better times.

Since the last edition of the newsletter, we have hosted two events for our members. Our Study Day for 2020 on the theme of ‘Scotland and North America’ took place at The Hunterian at Kelvin Hall on 1 February 2020. Joined by an international panel of speakers and delegates from across the UK, the Study Day explored the connections between the art history and visual culture of Scotland and North America (USA and Canada), past and present. It was hosted with the support of the Terra Foundation for American Art and The Hunterian, University of Glasgow. Work is already underway for the publication of several papers from the Study Day in the SSAH journal, which will be launched later this year.

Our Annual General Meeting for 2020 took place on 1 March at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. It was accompanied by a talk from Dr Kate Cowcher, Lecturer in Art History at the University of St Andrews, who shared information about her project ‘From Kampala to Campbeltown: Naomi Mitchison and the Argyll Collection’, which was funded by an SSAH Research Support Grant. Dr Aonghus Mackechnie, formerly of Historic Environment Scotland, also gave a presentation, discussing his research on the Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs.

Unfortunately, owing to the pandemic, we have to postpone many of the SSAH’s events that were arranged for the spring to summer period. We hope to be able to share details of these events with you once the lockdown period has passed. Meanwhile, we have a bumper issue of the newsletter to entertain you.

The coming months will be difficult for many of us, and we would like to say thank you for continuing to support us and we will do our best to support you.

Claire Robinson

SSAH Research Support Grants

The Scottish Society for Art History promotes scholarship in the history of Scottish art and art located in Scotland. To facilitate this, the SSAH offers research support grants from £50 to £500 to assist with research costs and travel expenses. Application deadline: 31 October 2020.

Please note we do not fund attendance at conferences, reprographics, hire or purchase of equipment, or subsistence. Applicants must be working at a post-graduate level or above and should either be resident in Scotland, or doing research that necessitates travel to Scotland. Recipients will be given a one-year free membership of the SSAH and will be asked to write a report for the SSAH newsletter, explaining how the grant was used.
Please download the guidance notes for more information. Successful applicants should submit a completed claims form with their receipts. To apply for a research grant, send via e-mail:

- a cover letter
- current curriculum vitae
- a brief project description (300-500 words) specifying how the grant will be used and how it relates to a broader research agenda
- a budget
- the name and e-mail address of one reference

Please email your grant applications to scottishsocietyforarthistory@gmail.com, addressed to the Grants Officer.

Grant Report by Siobhan O’Gorman, College of Arts Postgraduate Teaching Lead, University of Lincoln

Bracken tartan designed by MacEwen for the Edinburgh Festival production of The Highland Fair (1951), by permission of the Scottish Registry of Tartans

The Scottish Registry of Tartans includes Inverness-born artist Molly MacEwen’s Bracken Tartan. MacEwen designed it for The Highland Fair – a version of an 18th century ballad opera presented at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1952 and 1953. As I argue in a chapter forthcoming in the Gate Theatre Research Network’s The Gate Theatre: A Stage of Emancipation (Liverpool: LUP, 2021), tartan is a useful metaphor for understanding the crisscrossing transpositions of artistic practice that fed into, and emanated out of, MacEwen’s highly significant (but under-acknowledged) design career from the 1930s to the 1980s.

MacEwen’s work encompassed theatre and textile design in addition to design work for large-scale exhibitions. She made an important contribution to the performance of Scottish identities on a range of international platforms throughout that period. However, I suggest in the publication cited above that gender inequalities, combined with the collaborative nature of MacEwen’s design roles, may have led to her labour being neglected in relevant published histories of design and theatre. A grant from SSAH has aided me in extending research I conducted previously on MacEwen’s designs in Ireland, using The Dublin Gate Theatre Papers at Charles Deering McCormick Library, Northwestern University (funded by the Irish Research Council). The SSAH grant helped me explore MacEwen’s designs across a range of Scottish contexts and events by consulting materials held at the Scottish Theatre Archive in Glasgow. This will hopefully go some way towards addressing historical omissions regarding MacEwen. Some of this funded research in Scotland will be published in the chapter cited above, entitled: Tartan Transpositions: Materializing Europe, Ireland and Scotland in the Designs of Molly MacEwen.

MacEwen’s career as a stage designer began at Dublin’s Gate Theatre, under the mentorship of Micheál MacLiammóir. According to a 1978 Irish Times article on MacEwen, she ‘studied art in Edinburgh and London, and worked as a designer in Windsor,’ before beginning her apprenticeship at the Gate in the mid-1930s. Her name first appears in the Irish Times in August 1938 for designing Hollywood Pirate (translated from Marcel Achard’s Le Corsaire). The theatre review reports that MacEwen had already done ‘a great deal of designing for the Empire Exhibition,’ held at Bellahouston Park in Glasgow to celebrate Scotland in the context of British Empire economies.

MacEwen left Dublin in 1947 to work for the Citizens Theatre in Glasgow, the Gateway in Edinburgh, and the Edinburgh International Festival. For the latter, she designed a major heraldic revival of Scottish cultural heritage in 1948: Robert Kemp’s abridged version of Sir David Lyndsay’s morality play Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaites (1540), performed at...
the Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh. MacEwen's costume designs for The Thrie Estaites reveal attention to movement and crowd patterning, suggesting close collaboration with director Tyrone Guthrie.

Production shots show that costumes, in conjunction with red and brown scenery, imbued The Thrie Estaites with a reddish monochrome – although MacEwen also used other colours to attractive effect. These costumes and furnishings worked well with the spatial design, as well as Cedric Thorpe Davie’s music, to create a theatrical extravaganza that was the highlight of the festival. This scenography was a collective achievement, and key to the cultural revivalism of the production – for which Kemp maintained the Lowland Middle Scots dialogue of the original. Here, scenographic spectacle allowed the production to convey meaning to large audiences who spoke a different mother tongue.

Fabric swatches indicating a blend of different materials and textures are attached to several MacEwen costume designs, which also often incorporate tartan. The familiar, reassuring surfaces of tartan belie detailed intersections of diverse contributing threads. Similarly, the familiar, reassuring surfaces of theatre history obscure the intricacies of collaborative relationships – particularly the offerings of important women artists such as MacEwen – that await further disentangling.

MacEwen designed revivals of The Thrie Estaites, in addition to other productions of indigenous Scottish work, for the Edinburgh Festival from the late 1940s to the late 1950s. Her contemporaneous work at Glasgow’s Citizens Theatre regularly involved designing pantomimes and other devised popular performances, and – to a lesser extent – canonical classics. The Molly MacEwen Collection at the Scottish Theatre Archive contains a wealth of period costume designs; many are richly detailed and carefully annotated. Some, however, are undated and unlabelled: who these characters were, and what theatrical worlds they inhabited, remains to be uncovered.
Feature Articles

16th century lessons to live by from the ‘Palace’ at Culross
By Antonia Laurence-Allen, Regional Curator, National Trust for Scotland

On the ceiling in a 16th century house in Fife are sixteen allegorical scenes that contain life lessons and moral codes. The decorative scheme was designed to be contemplated and the room was up on the top floor, away from the bustle of daily life below. They contain meanings that resonate today and remind us that, no matter what life throws at humanity, some things will always remain the same.

Built on coal and salt, this house was owned by a wealthy merchant, Sir George Bruce (knighted in 1611). Although now known as Culross palace, Bruce was not royalty. He was an entrepreneur who turned Culross Abbey’s coal pit into the most productive under water mine in Scotland. He used the worst of the coal to heat sea water and create salt, a precious commodity used for preserving food. Bruce built the house close to the port to support both his family and business.

Why paint the ceilings? 16th century fashions in Scotland were influenced by countries in Northern Europe who were key trading partners. Spices, rich textiles, carved wooden furniture are all items that came from ports in the Netherlands. Ceiling paintings became fashionable in Scotland because of two things: imported light wood from Scandinavia and Dutch design books like Hans Vredeman de Vries’ Architecturae Formae (1560). It is thought the vaulted alcoves are made from upturned rowing boat hulls, sawn in half.

What are the scenes? Adapted into Scots, most of these scenes were taken from the first emblem book to be written by an English poet (Geffrey Whitney, whose 1586 book was entitled A Choice of Emblemes). The allegories are visual lessons – or moral guides – written in Latin at the top of the picture and in Scots at the bottom. They range from ‘build a strong house’ to ‘look after your parents’ and ‘time brings all things to an end’.

Here are just a few of the scenes:

Omnis caro foenum (‘all flesh is grass’) shows the goddess, Flora, seated and holding a vase with a bouquet of flowers. On her right is what looks like a palm tree, but it is more likely to be a bundle of hay.

Underneath, the couplet reads:
All flesche is grasse and withereth lyk the haye
And warneth us how weill to live but not how long to waye

The biblical reference to ‘all flesh is grass’ reminds the reader of the fragility of life as we age and ‘wither like the hay’. Don’t wait to live a good life, the verse reminds us, for you do not know how long you have in this world.

Pietas Filiorum in Parente (‘filial duty to a parent’)

Thair children shal with godliness and pietie procede
to reverence their parents, and help them if they need

A hard one to see as the picture has faded with time. To the left of the woman, there is a shadowy outline of a man carrying someone on his shoulders. This is Aeneas carrying his father Anchsis and it is taken from
Virgil’s epic story of the Trojan War, when Aeneas is saving his family from the burning city of Troy. It is the ultimate metaphor for a child’s moral duty to respect and care for their parents.

**Verbum Emissum non est revocabile** (‘a word once uttered cannot be recalled’)

*And he whose tongue before his wit doth runne*

*Oft speakes too soone and greivs when he hes doon*

A woman points to her mouth and rests her hand on a book – reminding us that we should think before we speak (put wit before words).

**Sirenes** (‘sirens’)

*Men’s pleasures fond, do promeis only joys, Bot he that yeldes, at lengthe him selfe destroyes*

A moral that refers to the Greek mythological sirens which lured sailors to their death. The woman is pictured with a lyre, symbolising the music she sings to capture the men on the ship (which can be seen in the background). The moral of the story is laid out in

**Scots** – beware the pleasures of music, money and jewels, for – ‘he that yields at length’ will be destroyed by gluttony.

**Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram** (‘let not the sun set on your anger’)

*Win foes with love, subduing your rasche desyires Let not the sunn go dune upon your yir*

The main feature is the two men who have thrown down their swords and hug each other – teaching us to solve ‘rash desires’ with love (and to resolve your ‘ire’ [anger] before the sun sets each day). The sun in the top left is painted with a human’s face.

**Securitas** (‘safety’)

*Awake from sleip secure when perrell doth apeir For if beginnings are withstand, the les we neid to feir*

This is one of the few pictures not taken from the English poet, Whitney. It shows a building – that looks very like the crow-stepped gables found in Culross – on fire. The lady to the side rests her head on her hand.
and sleeps. The moral is that we should build good houses as only then will fears of ‘peril’ be allayed.

Religion and trade feature in these scenes, which were custom-made for Bruce and fitting for his lifestyle and his location. Legend has it that St Mungo – the Patron Saint of Glasgow – was born in Culross in the 6th century. A Cistercian abbey was founded in the early 13th century, and, for the following 300 years, the monks of Culross mined the seams of coal in the area. This was the mine that was taken on by George Bruce in the late 1500s. In 1490 Culross was granted a charter by the Cistercian Abbey, making it a Burgh of Barony. This gave the town the right to have a fair and market and control over trading in the local community.

These paintings are over 400 years old (installed between 1597-1611) yet still remind us what is important - our health, our entrepreneurial spirit and our human relationships.

Digital art during lockdown
By Alice Strang, Art Historian and Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

Since the closure of public and private galleries in late March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing the visual arts has moved almost entirely online. Displays and exhibitions brought to an abrupt end are being ‘translated’ on to websites and into social media posts. The parts of collections already digitised are being exploited more than ever before, whilst the educational aims of public institutions have been adapted to the digital provision of home-schooling activities, virtual quizzes and other initiatives.

Perhaps the first such enterprise to really catch the public’s imagination was the *tussen kunst en quarantaine* or ‘between art and quarantine’ museum challenge which launched on Instagram in March (@tussenkunstenquarantaine). People living under lockdown are encouraged to choose a work of art, recreate it using items found around the house and to post photographs of the result. Many museums, such as the J. Paul Getty Museum, have gone on to adapt the *tussen kunst en quarantaine* challenge for their own collections.

Mabel Pryde Nicholson’s *The Red Jersey* in Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums’ Collection provided a home-school history of art and art lesson combined into one in the Strang household. Thanks to an appropriately-sized son, red fleece, grey blanket and a couple of cushions stuffed inside grey jumpers, we were able to bring the painting to life in three dimensions, before capturing it as a digital photograph. This brought about a new awareness of what it means to be an artist’s model, how lighting effects are created and to think about the position from which the artist approaches their subject.

Mabel Pryde Nicholson, *The Red Jersey* (showing the artist’s son), c.1912. Image © Aberdeen City Council (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections)

Thomas Strang, aged 11, recreating *The Red Jersey* as part of the popular ‘between art and quarantine’ museum challenge, photographed by Alice Strang
Virtual tours of exhibitions, including *Andy Warhol* at Tate Modern, which had to close just five days after it had opened, were soon put together and released on video channels such as YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjgAd6Z-dd0&feature=emb_title). They allow digital visitors at least a sense of what is installed and unseen behind closed doors. As part of an international tour, it is not clear whether it will be possible to see the actual exhibition before it has to leave the UK.

Curating in digital form began to emerge, for example in response to the postponement of the *Artemisia* exhibition that had been due to open at the National Gallery in London in April. Its co-curator, Jesse M. Locker, Professor of Art History at Portland State University (@JesseMLocker on Twitter) began a series of 40 twitter posts of all her known and attributed works, along with the announcement that his book, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Language of Painting* had been published as an e-book by Yale University Press.

Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums
Zoom background initiative

A time of national crisis means we are all joined in communal experience, not least living under the lockdown guidelines. The role of art, by necessity in digital form, in helping to come to terms with a new reality and to boost morale has become increasingly apparent. For example, whilst those that can are working from home, video meetings have become the new normal. In response, Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums has released images from their collection that can be used as backgrounds, adding a cultural dimension to even the most boring of proceedings (see https://www.aagm.co.uk/Zoom-Backgrounds).

Curation has moved from the creation of a physical selection of works to be experienced at first hand, to the choice of a single image which can be digested at speed, understood on a small scale, explained within 280 characters on Twitter and withstand the random cropping of that social network. Brightly coloured, graphic images are most effective, ruling out plenty of art history. Suggestions for home entertainment for example, from depictions of reading, to playing board games and sewing, serve a purpose, as does the escapism provided in masterpieces of sheer beauty including William Nicholson’s *The Brown Crow*. Realism tinged with nostalgia, and a focus on the domestic and outdoors, are all proving popular with followers, whilst the appetite for abstraction has declined. New accounts have sprung up, some supporting practitioners such as @thesequestedprize (Instagram) - a prize for self-portraiture in lockdown, whilst others such as @antidote_art (Twitter) celebrate visual creativity expressed through digital channels.

Image © Aberdeen City Council (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections)

With the launch of the Art UK ‘Curations’ tool, everyone can now curate digital exhibitions using works on their site, a remarkable resource and the online home of all UK public collections (www.artuk.org). Commentaries can be written and exhibitions can be shared, without consideration of
practical and financial matters. More art than ever can be enjoyed both in the selection process as well as when viewed.

With galleries hopefully re-opening in some form over the summer and autumn, digital art is set to continue playing a major part in the sector for months to come. Perhaps a positive legacy of the COVID-19 crisis will be the increased presence and use of art in digital form. However, all this activity raises many questions: are audiences enlarged beyond those who can visit a venue, but also limited to those with the devices and IT skills involved? How does experiencing a work of art in real life, face to face with its scale and true colours, compare to that of seeing it on a screen? Will art lovers become accustomed to free digital consumption and become less willing to pay admission charges? Is the widening of online curating democratising the profession or belittling it? I for one am trying to embrace the developing scope of digital art and await with interest its post-lockdown role. See more of my musings on art and lockdown at www.alicestrang.co.uk, or @AliceStrang (Twitter), @alice.strang (Instagram).

Brothers in Art – the transatlantic careers of Sydney Adamson and Penrhyn Stanlaws
By Matthew Jarron, University of Dundee Museum Services

This article is based on a presentation given at the Scotland & America SSAH Study Day earlier in the year, and while it concentrates on the two artists named in the title, it’s important to note they were part of an extraordinary family of four brothers and three sisters, most of whom achieved outstanding success in various branches of what we would now term the creative industries.

The story starts with James Adamson, who was a coal, brick and lime merchant in Dundee, and owner of the Megginch Pottery & Tiles Works in Errol. He lived at Mount Pleasant House, the site of which is now part of the University of Dundee campus. James was a sculptor in his spare time, showing his work in the Dundee Fine Art Exhibitions from 1882. According to the Dundee Courier, he was also ‘a buyer and critic of pictures, whose friendship and criticism were esteemed by John Pettie and other artists of eminence. [He] filled Mount Pleasant house with some of the finest pictures of the period.’

Sydney Adamson, Ivory Soap advert, 1909
Private Collection

Of James’s seven children, I’m going to be focusing on the eldest brother Sydney and the third brother Stanley, but it’s worth describing the others. Firstly the sisters - the eldest, Ada, stayed in Dundee and became a nurse at the Royal Infirmary, while the youngest, Winifred, remains a mystery. She moved to London with the middle sister Mabel but what she did there I’ve not as yet been able to find out. Mabel spent a brief period in New York with her brother Howard in 1897 but soon moved to London where she became assistant manager of an art decorator’s business in Kensington. In 1921 she was described as ‘one of the leading exponents of design and creation in lacquer work and fabric painting so much in favour with Dame Fashion’.
Born in 1873, the second brother, Howard Somerville Adamson studied engineering at Dundee Technical Institute and later in Glasgow but gave up the profession to follow his brothers into the art world. With Mabel he sailed for New York in 1897 and began his career as an illustrator on magazines such as *Life* and *Pearson’s*. Unlike Sydney and Stanley, his time in the States was brief, and in 1899 he settled in London and under the name Howard Somerville contributed to *Punch*, *The Red Magazine* and *Illustrated London News*. He became best known as a portraitist, exhibiting his work at the RA, the RSA, the National Portrait Society and the Royal Society of Portrait Painters among others. In 1939 he won the Gold Medal at the Paris Salon for *Norah*, one of two portraits he undertook of the stage actress and film star Norah Baring. He retired to Bristol and died there in 1952. Afterwards, his sisters arranged for the distribution of many of his surviving paintings to public art collections across Britain, making him now probably the best known of the brothers on this side of the pond. However, let’s now turn to the two who are better known on the other side.

Born in 1872, Sydney was the eldest of the brothers, and seems to have been the quickest to show his artistic abilities, exhibiting at the Dundee Fine Art Exhibitions from the age of eleven while also taking classes at Dundee School of Art. After a time in Edinburgh learning lithography, he took a studio in Dundee and began seeking portrait commissions while contributing cartoons to the local magazine *The Piper o’ Dundee* from 1888. He soon left for London, however, and achieved rapid success as an illustrator for the *Pall Mall Magazine*. In 1894 he was appointed art editor of Jerome K. Jerome’s magazine *To-Day*, an association which continued on *The Idler*. The same year he also began contributing to the celebrated *Yellow Book*.

In 1895 Sydney became co-director of the Artistic Supply Company, a short-lived agency that helped promote the interests (and guard the copyright) of several commercial illustrators, including another Dundee illustrator, Max Cowper, and other notable artists such as the Beggarstaff Brothers. It may not have been a coincidence that many of the artists on their books were Scottish.

SydneyAdamson
‘The First Intimation of the Enemy’, cover illustration for *Leslie’s Weekly*, 1899. Private Collection

Sydney spent some time studying in Paris before sailing for New York in 1898, where an unexpected new career opened up for him as a war correspondent. He was sent to the Philippines by the magazine *Leslie’s Weekly*, but earned his reputation as ‘one of America’s most venturesome and clever war artists’ during the Boxer rising in China. Travelling with the American 9th Infantry, Sydney was able to create some of the first published images of the conflict, at considerable risk to his own safety.

One of the soldiers involved in the campaign to take Tientsin recalled: ‘He was under fire all day long... he was all over the field and absolutely fearless, and the wonder is he wasn’t killed.’
While there Sydney endured malaria, dysentery and temporary blindness, and was ‘mentioned in despatches for bravery in the field.’

Sydney Adamson, ‘Strange Spectacle in China’s Forbidden City’, published in Leslie’s Weekly, 1900. Private Collection

Sydney himself wrote about his experiences with the 9th at Tientsin, suggesting he thrived in this terrible environment:

There was nothing lacking, in this arena of fire and death, of those elements of spectacular and dramatic interest which the world associates with war – the dead horses and human corpses; the ruined smoking buildings; the roar of guns and the rattle of infantry; the long train of wounded and the hideously mutilated dead; the shells bursting in mid-air or exploding on the earth...; the quiet heroism of the officers, and the dash of the men... With all its horrors it was grand. On such a day the commonplace and the ordinary are driven from one’s mind. The game is a mighty one and the stakes are life and death. Until one has seen men in battle it is impossible to truly understand the human race.

Sydney became as well known for his journalism as for his art, and he continued to act as travel writer for Leslie’s and Harper’s Magazine. In 1914 he was one of the first artists at the front, but little is recorded of his wartime activities. A member of the Society of Illustrators, he exhibited with them as well as the RA in London and the New Salon in Paris. His later career was mostly spent painting portraits, and he died in London in 1958.

The third brother, Ernest Stanley Adamson (known as Stanley), was born in 1877, but left Dundee at the age of thirteen to try his luck in the States. He found work with the Chicago Record and other papers, but seems to have moved to London by 1895, joining his brother Sydney in the Artistic Supply Company. Teaming up with another teenage artist, David Whitelaw, the pair sold composite drawings to Pick Me Up, Illustrated Bits and other magazines, calling themselves ‘the Stanlaws’ (from ‘Stanley’ and ‘Whitelaw’).

In 1896, Stanley returned to the US, this time to New York with Whitelaw. The pair soon went their separate ways, but Stanley hung on to their joint pseudonym. He experimented with signing his work ‘Stanilaus’ and ‘Penryn Stanley’ (possibly a reference to a famous Victorian called Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster), but soon settled on the name he would use for the rest of his professional career, ‘Penrhyn Stanlaws’. He earned enough money as an illustrator of the latest female fashions to attend Princeton University (1899-1901) and then the Académie Julian in Paris. While there he spent time at a café called the Chat Blanc with writer W. Somerset Maugham, who later fictionalised him as Flanagan in his novel Of Human Bondage (1915). A more unlikely acquaintance he made there was the infamous Satanist Aleister Crowley, who recalled him in his memoirs:

One day one of the Americans introduced the ‘great American artist, Penrhyn Stanlaws’. His name was Stanley Adamson and his birthplace
Dundee. He had begun his life in the traditional manner of the great by holding horses’ heads and earning dimes. Somehow or other, while quite a youth, he had sprung into popular favour and was already earning £2,000 a year or more by dashing off a succession of spidery scrawls representing fluffy American flappers in various attitudes. He had come to Paris to study art seriously. I was delighted with him… His innocent earnestness, without any root to it, his infatuation for ‘uplift’, his total ignorance of the morality of the artist, his crude prejudices based upon Sunday School, his attitude to everything assumed in blissful unconsciousness of a background: this was all perfectly charming. He had all the fascination of a new penny toy.

In 1907 Stanlaws returned to New York and became more fashionable than ever as cover artist for the Saturday Evening Post, Hearst’s, Metropolitan and others. As one of the most sought-after artists in America, his models became instant celebrities. Several went on greater fame in Hollywood, including Mabel Normand, Olive Thomas and Anna Q. Nilsson.

In 1920 Stanlaws himself entered the film business as a director, and two years later was directing Nilsson alongside Bebe Daniels and Adolphe Menjou in the film Pink Gods. Amazingly, the film was written by the fourth Adamson brother, Ewart, who worked as a Hollywood scriptwriter for over twenty years. Ewart had gone to sea at the age of fourteen, and later spent some time as a tin-mine manager in Malaya before settling in Hollywood, where he is credited with writing no fewer than 145 films, mostly at Columbia in the 1930s and 40s where he worked on endless low-budget comedies for the likes of Andy Clyde and the Three Stooges. On the drama side, his greatest work is probably the script for the classic Michael Curtiz film The Walking Dead.

But back to Stanlaws – we know of seven films he directed, mostly for Paramount. The only one known to survive is a 1921 version of The Little
Minister by J.M. Barrie, who collaborated directly with Stanlaws on the production. Stanlaws’ talents did not stop there. He was also a playwright, having plays staged in London in 1912 and at Yale in 1915. Perhaps his most enduring claim to fame, however, was as founder of the Hotel des Artistes in New York, a large-scale artists’ collective building featuring about 100 apartments and studio spaces, constructed in 1916 at a cost of $1.25 million, which coincidentally is almost exactly what it would now cost you to buy a one-bedroom apartment in the building today. These various enterprises seem to have distracted Stanlaws only briefly from his painting, and in the 1930s he held a number of solo exhibitions, including one in London. He moved permanently to Los Angeles in the late 1940s and painted portraits until he was tragically burned to death when his studio caught fire in 1957. Stanlaws’ career is perhaps the most extraordinary of what was clearly a pretty amazing family, but as we discovered at the SSAH Study Day, he was just one of many talented Scottish artists seeking new opportunities across the pond.

To read more from sources for this article, see:

- F.A. Sharf & P. Harrington, China 1900: The Eyewitnesses Speak (2000)
- David Whitelaw, A Bonfire of Leaves (1937)

Exhibitions, books and more

The Art of Putting Things Off
By Vikki Duncan, Curator North, The National Trust for Scotland

Like so many of us now, I am having to put off tasks and objectives during these unusual times. I am also, of course, taking on new responsibilities and adapting my work pattern on an almost daily basis. We are all responding to the extreme challenges of the COVID-19 scenario as it has emerged and continues to evolve. The lockdown across the country has had an impact on everything and everyone. Travel is restricted and whilst our creative side is emerging, we are not able to visit art galleries, museums and historic properties in the way that we might like to. We can visit in the ‘virtual’ sense, however, and we have all seen very inventive apps and features on websites that allow us to view world-class collections and exhibitions. Two that I would recommend checking out are the Inside the Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams exhibition at the V&A in London.
The new exhibition at Drum Castle *Out of the Wood* was due to open on 5th April. It features the combined works of Gray’s School of Art graduate, Margaret Pitt, and Society of Scottish Artists member Tansy Lee Moir. Both artists have a tangible affinity with wood, landscape and setting. *Out of the Wood* is designed to bring these together in an exhibition which spotlights the natural habitat of woodland and environment, the use of wood, its place in woodcut printing and how woodland influences the illustrative form. Tansy’s work takes inspiration from the natural habitat of woodland around Drum Castle and other wooded areas, using charcoal and pastel. Margaret’s work draws inspiration from archaeological sites in Scotland and further afield, using woodcut print as her medium.

The decision about whether we could install in the last week of March, as planned, was about to be made for us. I contacted the artists to let them know that the exhibition would have to be postponed indefinitely. They are understandably disappointed. I am too, of course, since this represents many months of research and communication and arrangements that have all had to be ‘put off’. One of the most difficult aspects in situations such as this one is the uncertainty; we don’t know when, or even if, we will be able to host the exhibition as planned.

This is something that galleries, museums and historic properties are all having to face now and it’s challenging. Most of us have a programme of exhibitions lined up two or as much as ten years in advance which all segue into one another. If one of them is extended or removed or installation is delayed, the programme doesn’t always allow for the others to simply shift up to fill the gap. This is because exhibitions may be touring to a different venue or in a slightly different format (requiring removal of some works, addition of others) or simply because the one following it is also subject to specific dates.

This is the scenario with *Out of the Wood*. The exhibition would be finishing at the end of October as Drum Castle closes for the Winter season. What I, and many of my colleagues will be doing, is trying to find a creative way to allow those exhibitions to go ahead but perhaps for a shorter length of time. All of us will be aware that artists have worked hard to create work specifically for these shows.

Of course, it is not only the curators who are having to cultivate the art of putting things off. Registrars are juggling the requests to extend our loans that are already out and postpone those loans that should have been going out. This will have a knock-on effect for all art handlers and art couriers who may be struggling to rearrange their own schedules when we all return to a degree of normality. At Drum Castle, our Functions and Events team has had to retract invitations that had already been sent out and reschedule the workshops and talks planned in to support the exhibition.
I wrote this article from a dual perspective. Firstly, to highlight Drum Castle’s second selling exhibition (a percentage of any sales made supports the important conservation work of the National Trust for Scotland), which we hope will, eventually, go ahead in some format. Secondly, to share the topical concerns and issues facing many galleries, museums and historical properties right now.

Recently published book: *Patrick Geddes’s Intellectual Origins* by Murdo Macdonald

This book considers the intellectual background and cultural legacy of the Scotsman Sir Patrick Geddes. It discusses art history in several chapters, covering topics such as art and science; arts, crafts and social reform; ‘The Dunfermline Plan: institutes of science, history and art’ and Indian art. Please see [https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-patrick-geddes-s-intellectual-origins.html](https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-patrick-geddes-s-intellectual-origins.html) for further details.

**Upcoming book: The Story of Scottish Art by Lachlan Goudie**


**Exploring art online: suggestions for you**

By Shona Elliott, SSAH Newsletter Editor

Several articles in this spring/summer issue of the SSAH newsletter have highlighted initiatives by museums and art galleries to reach pre-existing and new audiences online during lockdown. Here are some that you may like to explore:

- Art UK has launched ‘Curations’. This tool gives people the opportunity to create online exhibitions from their homes. They can also view exhibitions designed by others, including virtual displays put together by museum staff. Visit [https://artuk.org/discover/curations](https://artuk.org/discover/curations).

- Art UK has also been facilitating an #OnlineArtExchange on Twitter between museums and galleries in different regions across the UK during lockdown. Members of staff from a wide range of museums have been selecting images of artworks from other cultural organisations that match themes set by Art UK e.g. ‘self-portraits’. Staff post why they love the works and Art UK then retweets, encouraging sharing and creating greater awareness of artworks.

• #DougieDraws on Twitter recreates artworks using MS Paint. Many of the reimagined works are based on Culture Perth and Kinross Museums’ collections.

• Matthew Jarron (University of Dundee Museum Services) has used Google Streetview to create a series of virtual public art walks in different parts of Dundee as part of the on-going Public Art Dundee initiative. These can be found along with other online resources, including filmed talks, at https://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/visitor-information/online-resources/

• Virtual visitors to Aberdeen Art Gallery can enjoy highlights from the collection on a digital tour. Go to https://smartify.org/tour/discover-aberdeen-art-gallery or download the Smartify App for free from the App Store and Google Play.

• National Galleries Scotland has commissioned concerts in response to artworks in their collections. These concerts have been pre-recorded in the homes of the performers and you can see them online by visiting: https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/features/live-music-now. The virtual environment enables viewers to hear the music and simultaneously take a close look at the artworks.

• Glasgow Life’s venues are highlighting their collections on several social channels and a range of engagement opportunities are being provided: https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/glasgow-life-removes-the-barriers/

• The Guardian is running ‘The Great British Art Quiz’ on its website. This daily quiz contains questions set by museums, galleries and heritage sites around the UK, and it provides an entertaining way of testing your art knowledge. The answers are often detailed, giving opportunities to learn art history. See https://www.theguardian.com/culture/series/the-great-british-art-quiz.

• The V&A Dundee has pulled together a wide range of resources for their ‘Enjoy the Museum at Home’ webpages. Visit their website at https://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee/info/coronavirus-covid-19 for design-themed written stories, audio talks, children’s activities and much more.

• Follow the Museums of the University of St Andrews on Facebook to find out more about their collections online at their weekly Wardlaw Workshops and Wellbeing Wednesdays. They have recently launched an Instagram gallery of Scottish modern and contemporary art at https://www.instagram.com/museumsunista/.
2020 Committee Members

Chair: Claire Robinson, cr67@st-andrews.ac.uk

Treasurer: Jim Barnes (Independent Researcher)

Membership: Lili Bartholomew (The McManus)

Research Grants: Michelle Kaye (Glasgow School of Art)

Journal Editor: Karen Mailley-Watt (University of Glasgow/ Glasgow School of Art)

Newsletter Editor:
Shona Elliott (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums)

Events: Claire Robinson (University of St Andrews),
Matthew Jarron (University of Dundee)

Minutes Secretary: Tara King (University of St Andrews)

General member:
Lucinda Lax (National Galleries of Scotland)
Alice Strang (National Galleries of Scotland)
Amy Fairley (Culture Perth and Kinross)