From the Chair

On behalf of the SSAH Committee, we hope that you are well and have managed to have a break over the summer period. Many museums and galleries across Scotland have reopened their doors after several months of closure, and this newsletter includes a list of some of these venues.

Since the last edition of the newsletter, the Committee has been busy organising two upcoming events for our members. We will be hosting a webinar in association with Creative Informatics on the theme of ‘Lockdown Legacy: The Digital Future of the Art and Cultural Heritage World’ on 7 November 2020. The SSAH Study Day for 2021 is inspired by the theme ‘Art, Landscape and Space’ and will take place online on 5 and 6 February 2021. Further details of both events are included in the newsletter. Work is already underway for the publication of several papers from our last Study Day on ‘Scotland and North America’ in the Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History.

Due to COVID-19, we had to postpone several events that were scheduled for 2020 and we now have a busy programme lined up for 2021. Thank you for your continuing support and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Claire Robinson

SSAH New Committee Members

Lucinda Lax
Lucinda is Senior Curator, Portraiture 1700-1800, at the National Galleries of Scotland, a role she has held since 2014. Her research focuses on the relationship between Scottish art and society in the long 18th century, with special interests in the work of Allan Ramsay and Sir Henry Raeburn and in the production and dissemination of Jacobite imagery. Prior to joining NGS, Lucinda worked as Commissioning Editor for Art and Architectural History at Ashgate Publishing and as an Artist Manager for a Bond Street gallery. In 2013, she went on to complete a PhD at the University of York, focusing on the 18th century British portrait and genre painter Edward Penny, who became the Royal Academy’s first Professor of Painting in 1768. Lucinda has also taught at the University of York and been a Visiting Scholar at the Yale Center for British Art.

Amy Fairley
Amy is a Collections Officer at Perth Museum and Art Gallery, a post which she has held since 2013. Amy holds a joint honours degree in Art History and Medieval History from the University of St Andrews and an MPhil in Decorative Art and Design History from the University of Glasgow. Her research interests include specimen marble table tops, Scottish silver, Perth glass and modern Scottish art.
Judith Liddle
Judith is an experienced Creative Producer with a demonstrated history of delivering exhibitions, events and public commissions. She has been working with artists and audiences in the contemporary art sector for over 10 years, with particular interests in co-production and accessibility. Judith is skilled in strategic development, fundraising, audience development, research, person-centred project development and public speaking. Judith supported the development and delivery of Edinburgh Printmakers £11m capital development project to launch the largest print studio in Europe. She has worked closely with Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art, The Sorcha Dallas Foundation and The Telfer Gallery. Judith sat on the managing committee for David Dale Gallery and Studios, created an arts facility for vulnerable people in North Lanarkshire, and has previously written an arts column for Benvenuto Magazine.

SSAH Upcoming Event

Lockdown Legacy Webinar: The Digital Future of the Art and Cultural Heritage World
7 November 2020, 10am-12pm

Keynote speaker:
Terence Gould, Technology Manager, Art UK

Call for Papers
The Scottish Society for Art History in partnership with Creative Informatics will host a webinar on Saturday 7 November 2020 to explore the digital legacy of the coronavirus COVID-19 lockdown on the art and cultural heritage world and the impact it is likely to have going forward. For artists, art historians, curators and all who work in the visual art, cultural heritage and digital sectors, it will examine how practitioners and organisations adapted to lockdown whilst premises were closed and physical activities were not possible, what form re-openings have taken as restrictions eased and if the future for these professions lies increasingly in the digital sphere.

The webinar will share and engage with current research and critical debate in the field. We aim to attract a range of multi-disciplinary papers from a variety of speakers including academics, archivists, artists, digital media officers, educators, information technologists and independent researchers.

Topics include (but are not limited to):
• Digital output during lockdown by public bodies and private individuals
• Artistic responses to the lockdown created and / or communicated in digital form
• The pros and cons of on-line curating and teaching, whether as instigator or participant
• Digital audience engagement, development and response during lockdown and since
• Digitisation of collections and on-line interpretation of them
• The digital future of the visual art sector
• The interface and overlap of physical and digital cultural heritage in the visual arts

We welcome proposals for 10-minute on-line presentations for the webinar. Speakers will be expected to provide images to accompany their presentation, to be given using Zoom. Instructions on doing so will be provided. Proposals should be in the form of 300-500 word abstracts. The deadline for proposals is 30 September 2020.

If you would like to discuss the Call for Papers in greater detail or submit an abstract, please contact Alice Strang, SSAH Committee Member, on alicecurator@gmail.com.

SSAH: https://ssahistory.wordpress.com/
#SSAHlockdownlegacy

Creative Informatics: https://creativeinformatics.org/
Feature Articles

John Ruskin’s Dunbar drawing: the when and where of it
By Dr Robin Campbell, Honorary Lecturer at University of Stirling

In his artistic prime, Ruskin made three visits to Scotland from which drawings of high quality survive: in 1847, 1853 and 1857. I will make some comments here about his well-known watercolour said to be of the coast near Dunbar. This is quite large (32.5 x 47.5 cm), fully finished, and found its way in 1907 into the collections of Birmingham Museums, from which it has been widely exhibited around the world.

In recent times, certainly since the 2000 Tate exhibition Ruskin, Turner & the Pre-Raphaelites, the drawing has been given a date of 1847. Ruskin, accompanied by his servant ‘George’ Hobbs, passed through Dunbar in that year on his way to a holiday at Crossmount near Loch Rannoch. He arrived in Dunbar late on 18 August, and stayed there at least until 22 August, according to the published version of his diary. He recorded in his diary for 21 August (eds. J. Evans and J.H. Whitehouse, The Diaries of John Ruskin, Vol. 1, p.362) that ‘I have had a happy day, drawing by the seashore, and so far a successful one, and yet I feel dispirited and ready to seek for any excitement this evening.’ In Stephen Wildman’s catalogue note for the Tate exhibition, he observed that in Ruskin’s MS note about his various tours and journeys between 1826 and 1876 (Works 35, 352) there is the entry ‘1847. Scotland. First careful colour study’ and Wildman supposed that this referred to the Dunbar drawing.

However, according to the information on the Pre-Raphaelite Online Resource site managed by Birmingham Museums, the drawing has a verso inscription ‘in the artist’s handwriting’ which reads ‘Dunbar – ’57. C. saw J. R. do this.’ So there is a very plain indication here that the drawing was made in 1857, confirmed by the reference to ‘C.’ who would be Frederick Crawley, Ruskin’s servant at that later date. It is somewhat curious that Ruskin should refer to himself as ‘J.R.’ rather than as ‘me’, but Ruskin’s handwriting at various stages of his life is well substantiated and it is reasonable to suppose that this was carefully checked by curatorial staff at Birmingham when the note about the inscription was recorded.

Ruskin certainly passed through Dunbar on the way south from his trip to Scotland in 1857 with his parents (described in Praeterita - Works 35, 484). This is known because he wrote a letter to The Witness dated ‘Dunbar, 14th September 1857’ about threatened damaging works at Edinburgh Castle. This letter is reproduced in Arrows of the Chace (Works 34, 485). There is no proper account of this tour through Scotland to Dingwall and back and no diary for 1857, but it is also likely that the family stopped in Dunbar on the way north. So it is perfectly plausible that the verso inscription on the Dunbar drawing is entirely correct, and the drawing was made in 1857. At the very least, there are much stronger grounds for 1857 than for 1847. As for the ‘first careful colour study’ made in 1847, that remark might well have been intended by Ruskin to refer to his masterly drawing of Rocks and Ferns in a Wood at Crossmount (Abbott Hall).

The second puzzle is what does the drawing depict? The eye is immediately drawn to two features: the striking pinnacle or stack in the bay to the west of Ruskin’s viewpoint, and the distant conical hill rising from flat land. The most likely candidate for the conical hill is North Berwick Law, a volcanic plug just south of North Berwick – a small town 9 miles north-west of Dunbar.
It is shown below detail from Ruskin’s work, and clearly it is a good match for the conical hill in his drawing.

The pinnacle or stack in Ruskin’s drawing is shown in the detail image above. There are no similar pinnacles in the vicinity of Dunbar. It resembles a pinnacle known as The Souter, but this is to the east of Fast Castle Head, some 11 miles east of Dunbar. An image of The Souter taken from a rigid inflatable by Walter Baxter is shown below.

However, the resemblance between Ruskin’s pinnacle and its surrounding rocks and The Souter is not perfect, and the cliffs that lie beyond the bay of the pinnacle do not match those of Fast Castle Head at all well. So a different location was sought. It was found by a geologist friend, Noel Williams, who spent the Christmas period of 2019 exploring the East Lothian/ Berwickshire coast. The following two images show Ruskin’s approximate viewpoint, and its location on the 25-inch map of 1906.
It seems clear from the many exact correspondences that this is Ruskin’s viewpoint. The location is reached by passing to the east of the Pin Cod sea-stack at low water. The next image shows detail of the bay in which the dramatic pinnacle appears in the drawing.

Again there are many correspondences, although the pinnacle is absent. I presume that the pinnacle collapsed after Ruskin made his drawing. Evidence of collapse is provided by the bright red un-eroded rocks.

All 39 volumes of the Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin (1903-12) are viewable online at https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/the-ruskin/the-complete-works-of-ruskin/. ‘Works’ references in this article give volume and page number.

For David, Samuel and Henry:
The Studio at 32 York Place, Edinburgh
By Alice Strang, Art Historian and Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art (https://alicestrang.co.uk/)

Whilst scrolling through the colour and noise of Instagram, a low-toned Mother and Son portrait slowed my finger to a stop.

David Eustace, Elizabeth and Guy Peploe, 2020

Taken by the photographer David Eustace (https://www.davideustace.com/) it showed Elizabeth and Guy Peploe, daughter-in-law and grandson of the Scottish Colourist Samuel John Peploe (1871-1935). Depictions of the maternal-filial relationship when the protagonists have reached grandmotherhood and fatherhood are rare. This image was particularly moving: set before a plain, soft brown background, Elizabeth’s geometric bob and colour-block jacket were illuminated by natural light falling from the left. She held hands on a table-top with her black polo-necked and expansively bearded son, the white support around a finger she had recently broken placed on top of a comfortable jumble of digits. Both sitters look calmly and directly at the viewer, proud of their emotional and physical bond.

The post revealed that the portrait had been shot in the studio designed in 1795 by the Scottish portraitist Henry Raeburn (1756-1823) at 32 York Place in Edinburgh. Peploe had worked in it between 1905 and 1910 and both artists had created some of their best works there. Eustace
had been given access to this mythical space and was deep in creating a major new body of work. I was intrigued. A direct message to Eustace resulted in an invitation to observe a sitting that weekend.

Bearing a bunch of roses, Peploe’s flower of choice for still-life painting, I was admitted through the imposing Georgian front door. Following in the footsteps of Raeburn and Peploe’s notable sitters, I climbed the stairs to the first-floor studio. Situated at the back of the house, it was painted white and was dominated by an elongated, north-facing window with views over the city and across the Forth to Fife. Even on a dull day in August a gentle luminosity filled the space. It was whilst working here that Raeburn had painted masterpieces such as Sir Charles Hay, Lord Newton, before 1806 (Dalmeny House near Edinburgh) and Isabella McLeod, Mrs James Gregory, c.1798 (National Trust for Scotland, Fyvie Castle). A century later, the studio’s proportions and light had inspired Peploe to paint his celebrated women in white series, featuring his future wife Margaret Mackay (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums) and the model Peggy Macrae (Kirkcaldy Galleries).

Another century on and Eustace and his assistant BJ had created a minimal set in the studio. An 18th century table and armchair were placed on raw floorboards beside the window. They were dressed with a tawny velvet drape and large, heavy books of a distinguished age. A second armchair, costume accessory boxes and black drapes stood to the right, positioned at 90 degrees to a black backdrop, itself parallel with the window. There was barely time to delight in the surroundings before that day’s sitter arrived. He and Eustace quickly found common ground in talking about football and the shoot began.

Eustace was aiming not for a portrait of an individual, but rather for an image to play its part in a series nearing completion. He had established boundaries within which to challenge himself to create something new and began with a preconceived starting point for the session. Amongst Eustace’s banter were simple directions to his subject, seated beside the window, to adjust his pose: right-hand on the table, chin up, look at the camera. Details of the scene were rhythmically tweaked with the help of BJ fine-tuning the position of the props, accompanied by smooth lens and tripod position changes. Working only with the available natural light, at speed and without fuss, Eustace and his sitter were both focussed whilst visibly enjoying themselves. Eventually Eustace declared himself satisfied. A connection to Raeburn, Peploe and their models, which had been palpable during the shoot, melted away and we found ourselves thanking today’s sitter and accompanying him down the stairs and out into York Place in 2020. The results of the day’s work and the overall series are to be unveiled in due course.

With thanks to David Eustace.

Exhibitions, books and more

Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s
City Art Centre, City of Edinburgh Museums & Galleries
By Dr Helen Scott, Curator (Fine Art)

In March 2020 museums and galleries across the country were forced to close their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City Art Centre in Edinburgh had just finished its successful run of the exhibition Mary Cameron: Life in Paint, and we were looking forward to installing two new summer exhibitions celebrating the work of Charles Hodge Mackie and Ian Hamilton Finlay. At the time of the closure we probably all assumed we would be back at work in a few weeks, but as the situation worsened it became clear that we would need to rethink our exhibitions programme. The decision was made to reschedule both summer exhibitions to 2021, but the autumn 2020 exhibitions hung in the balance. Would they be able to go ahead as planned?

Months of waiting, hoping and scenario planning ensued. Finally, in August, we received the good news: the City Art Centre would reopen in time for the autumn exhibitions to take place. Cue a frenzy of activity to install the new shows, and a range of measures to make the building as safe and welcoming as possible for returning visitors.
The first new exhibition of the season is *Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s*, which opened on 12 September. This is the latest in a series of exhibitions drawn from the City Art Centre’s own fine art collection. It focuses on artworks produced in the 1920s, an evocative period of striking contrasts. In some respects, the decade can be characterised by the playful confidence of the ‘Roaring Twenties’ – bobbed haircuts, summers in the south of France and the celebration of avant-garde modernity. Then again, it was also a decade of sombre reflection and hard realities, with the long shadow of the First World War continuing to influence artists’ lives and careers, and the 1929 Wall Street Crash looming on the horizon. *Bright Shadows* explores the events, ideas and styles that shaped Scottish art during this fascinating era.

The exhibition is timed to mark 100 years since the dawn of the 1920s. It showcases a selection of paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures by a wide variety of artists. The Scottish Colourists are featured, with J.D. Fergusson’s Art Deco gem *Villa Gotte Garden* (c.1920) and S.J. Peploe’s radiant landscape *Iona, Mull and Ben More in the Distance* (c.1929). The progressive but short-lived Edinburgh Group is also represented, with Dorothy Johnstone’s *Rest Time in the Life Class* (1923) and D.M. Sutherland’s shimmering harbour scene *Concarneau, Brittany* (1924). The Scottish printmaking revival is explored through the work of Ernest Lumsden and James McIntosh Patrick. Meanwhile, the influence of Cubism, Vorticism and abstraction is traced through the progress of William McCance and William Johnstone.
One of the highlights of *Bright Shadows* is *Cecile Walton at Crianlarich* (1920), a bold portrait of the artist by her husband Eric Robertson. The painting arrived at the City Art Centre on long-term loan from a private collection in late 2019, and this is the first opportunity for visitors to see it on public display. Two recent acquisitions by William Wilson are also on show for the first time. *Princes Street Station, Edinburgh* (1926) is a finely detailed drawing of the grand railway station that once stood in the city’s west end, while *Dunfermline* (1928) attests to Wilson’s considerable talents as a printmaker. Another highlight is D.Y. Cameron’s *A Garment of War* (c.1926), an epic battlefield landscape recalling the artist’s experiences in the First World War. This canvas has recently undergone conservation treatment, and is being unveiled for the exhibition.

Over the course of the autumn, another two new exhibitions will join *Bright Shadows* at the City Art Centre. *E.A Hornel: From Camera to Canvas* opens on 7 November. This major retrospective, organised in partnership with the National Trust for Scotland, examines the role of photography in the work of the Glasgow Boys painter E.A. Hornel. The following weekend then sees the launch of *Jock McFadyen goes to the pictures*. Opening on 14 November, this quirky and thought-provoking show reveals paintings by contemporary artist Jock McFadyen juxtaposed with artworks he has chosen as counterpoints from the City Art Centre’s own collection.

All three new exhibitions celebrate the rich creativity of Scottish art – a cultural legacy that continues to endure despite the difficulties of current times. After six months of closure, we look forward to sharing these wonderful artworks with visitors once again.

---

*Eric Robertson, *Cecile Walton at Crianlarich*, 1920
On long-term loan from the collection of Russell C. Johnston. Photo: Lyon & Turnbull

*Bright Shadows: Scottish Art in the 1920s* runs until 6 June 2021. Admission is free, but visits must be booked in advance. For more information on exhibitions at the City Art Centre, and details on how to book please go to the website: [https://www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/whats-on](https://www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/whats-on).

*Videos and Virtual Exhibitions from the University of Dundee*
By Matthew Jarron, Curator of Museum Services

During lockdown the University of Dundee’s Museum Services have been creating a wide range of online content, including exhibitions on the Art UK website, virtual public art tours using Google Streetview and Curator’s Chat films about the collections.
The Art UK exhibitions include:

- **David Foggie: The Painters’ Painter** – exploring the life and work of the Dundee-born painter (1878-1948) who became an influential tutor at Edinburgh College of Art and a stalwart of the Royal Scottish Academy.

- **Joseph Lee: War Poet & Artist** – featuring drawings from the University’s extensive collection of work by the Dundee journalist and illustrator Joe Lee (1876-1949) who became one of Scotland’s most famous Great War poets.

- **Alan Robb and the Dundee Imagists** – a tribute to the late Alan Robb (1946-2020), who was Head of Fine Art at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art for many years and a huge inspiration to a generation of art students, particularly a group of 1980s painters such as Graeme Todd, Sandy Guy, Ian Scott and Derrick Guild, who became known as the Dundee Imagists.

  Emma Sandys, *Pleasant Dreams*, oil on canvas, 1876 (James Nicoll Bequest, University of Dundee Museum Services)

  Moira Macgregor, *Fashion Illustration*, c.1967 (Moira Macgregor Collection, University of Dundee Museum Services, © the artist’s estate)

  Curator Matthew Jarron has also made over 20 short films exploring different areas of the University collections, from Blaschka glass to x-ray crystallography. Several of these focus on art and design topics, including:

- **John Duncan and the Celtic Revival in Dundee**
- **The Needlework Development Scheme Collection**
- **The Moira Macgregor Bequest - Biba and Beyond**
- **The Art Collection of Dr James Nicoll**
- **James Lamb and the University's Fine Art Collection in the 1960s and 70s**
In addition, several works of video art from the DJCAD Collection have been made available online for the first time. In the mid-1980s, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art established a state-of-the-art Television Workshop and introduced a pioneering postgraduate course in Electronic Imaging, followed by undergraduate courses in Animation and Time-Based Art. Highlights from students’ work in these subjects can now be seen online – follow the links provided in https://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/visitor-information/online-resources/


By Rob Airey, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust

Since first being published in 2001 (and revised in 2011), Lynne Green’s definitive monograph *W. Barns-Graham: A Studio Life* has served brilliantly as the place to go for detailed information about the life and work of the artist. A subsequent series of catalogues for the exhibitions *A Discipline of the Mind, A Scottish Artist in St Ives* and the current *Inspirational Journeys* have all brought a focus to specific aspects of Barns-Graham’s long career, as have a number of commercial gallery publications.

The Trust is delighted then to announce the publication of the first new book in 20 years dedicated to Barns-Graham, written by the respected writer, curator, academic consultant and expert on British modern art Dr Virginia Button. Virginia was a curator at the Tate (1991-2001) with a specialist remit for modern British and contemporary art. She was assistant curator of their Ben Nicholson retrospective of 1993, and curator of the Turner Prize from 1993 to 1998 and the first Tate Triennial in 2000. Virginia has also written single artist focused books on Christopher Wood, Ben Nicholson and Lucian Freud.

Illustrated in full colour, *Wilhelmina Barns-Graham* aims to offer new audiences a concise and accessible introduction to the artist’s life and work, while its new perspectives will make it essential reading for anyone with an existing interest. Alongside an overview of her life and career, three further chapters explore key aspects of Barns-Graham’s practice – abstraction, drawing and colour in more depth. Barns-Graham’s contribution to the story of St Ives modernism and post-war British art more broadly has been relatively overlooked. This book reassesses her work as a woman artist in an overtly masculine, post-war art world milieu, and tells how, following early promise and success, she overcame personal and professional challenges in mid-career to achieve the recognition she deserved at the end of her long career as an artist.

To see a comprehensive list of sites that have reopened, you may want to look at [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) and click on ‘Visit Advice Page’. Go to ‘Attractions - museums, galleries, visitor centres, etc - now open’. There is an option to filter for the ‘We’re Good to Go’ scheme and you can also easily filter for museums and galleries.

If you wish to visit galleries and museums, please ensure that you firstly check their websites or social media as many sites will require visitors to pre-book tickets for entry. Some may have reduced their opening days and visiting times, and there will be limits for groups. Certain exhibitions may be cancelled or postponed, or temporarily closed-off if room size and access prevent social distancing. New local lockdowns may affect services.

---

**Exploring art in person again: suggestions for you**

By Shona Elliott, SSAH Newsletter Editor

Hooray! Several art galleries and museums in Scotland have reopened after being closed during lockdown. Members of staff have worked hard at making changes to meet the new health and safety requirements in order to offer physical access to artworks. Here are some venues that can now be visited (correct as of mid-September 2020):

- Aberdeen Art Gallery ([www.aagm.co.uk](http://www.aagm.co.uk))
- City Art Centre, Edinburgh ([www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/venue/city-art-centre](http://www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/venue/city-art-centre))
- The McManus ([www.mcmanus.co.uk](http://www.mcmanus.co.uk))
- The Scottish National Gallery and Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (Modern One) ([www.nationalgalleries.org](http://www.nationalgalleries.org))
- V&A Dundee ([www.vam.ac.uk/dundee](http://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee))

Sir John Everett Millais, *Bright Eyes*, 1877
Alexander Macdonald Bequest, 1901
Image © Aberdeen City Council (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums Collections)

*Bright Eyes* can be seen on display in Gallery 1 – *Collecting Aberdeen*
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 Editors: Karen Mailley-Watt (University of Glasgow/ Glasgow School of Art), Matthew Jarron (University of Dundee)

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 (Art Historian, Curator)
Amy Fairley (Culture Perth and Kinross)
Judith Liddle (Creative Producer)