



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Harlow SCULPTURE COLLECTION

Number 14

March 2012

All Change for the Gallery

Friends of Harlow Sculpture are to be closely involved in the proposed changes to the Gibberd Gallery. Following on from the Harlow Art Trust's taking over from the Council, there have been talks between the Council and the Trust about the Gallery's future, and the Friends' committee have talked to the Trust about how we can work together.

We have agreed in principle to rename the Friends to include the Gallery in our remit. A possibility would be to call the new body 'Friends of the Harlow Sculpture Collection and the Gibberd Gallery', which seems rather clunky, but we would like to retain some reference to the sculpture in the name. Any suggestions welcome.

The plans are still in discussion, but we are all in agreement that the wonderful Gallery space is greatly underused at present. A part-time administrator would be appointed, who would work in the Gallery itself, with office space, a desk, PC etc. Visitors would be greeted, and guided, if need be. There would be information for anyone interested in the permanent watercolour collection, as well as whatever other exhibition may be in progress.

The ideal would be to have a presence in the Gallery for every day it is open. Most of this would, of course, be provided by volunteers. We hope that people would make a regular commitment – perhaps to one regular day per month. There are also plans to open out the Gallery to other art forms – perhaps music and poetry. The Trust are particularly keen to have the Gallery open on Saturdays and/or Sundays, when more visitors are able to come. The details of this will be worked out, but one possibility is having some of our members trained as security staff! Did you always fancy being in uniform? Now's your chance.

It is hoped that the new Gallery organisation will be able to secure funding for all its needs. As a charity, the Trust is well-placed to do that. In the meantime we must try to attract new members who will take an active part in these exciting possibilities. To that end we are planning a Relaunch of the new Friends' organisation, probably at the preview of the Open Exhibition in early June. We shall be publicising this event widely, and hope all existing members will bring along potential new members.

It should be fun, as well as slightly scary. Let's do it.

Barbara Burge



Marsh Award for 'Harlow Sculpture Town'

Harlow was presented with the Marsh Prize for Excellence in Public Sculpture by the Duke of Gloucester at a ceremony in London in November 2011, the first time that the prize has been awarded to a whole town. Competition judges, from the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association and the Marsh Christian Trust, were impressed by the range of works on display throughout the town, including pieces by 20th century greats such as Henry Moore, Elizabeth Frink and Lynn Chadwick. Some pieces date back to the Festival of Britain in 1951, and the town is still collecting and erecting sculptures.

The panel made special mention of Harlow Art Trust for their role in publicising and caring for the collection. The Friends have taken on some of that work in the past few years. Will Rea, chair of Harlow Art Trust, said 'The Trust is thrilled and delighted that Harlow Sculpture Town has received this prestigious prize. It is recognition of Harlow's collection and the hard work of the Harlow Art Trust, its partners and the town'.

British design at the V&A

On Monday 16th April FoHSC members will be boarding a Community Transport coach bound for the V&A to see the British Design 1948-2012 exhibition. This is of particular interest to Harlow residents, as the curators have borrowed Family Group, as well as items from Sir Frederick Gibberd's archive, including scale models of some parts of the town.

The cost of transport will be about £14. Entrance to the exhibition will be £10 for senior citizens, more for younger people

To apply for seats please contact Jenny Lushington (01279 429178 or email friendsofharlowsculpturec@hotmail.co.uk)



'The Family Group, soon after installation in the early 50s'

Harlow Arts Festival May 2012

This year's Harlow Arts Festival starts on Saturday 5th May, finishing on Sunday 27th May with the Sparks Will fly celebration in Harlow Town Centre.

Among the many and varied arts activities going on in those few weeks, the FoHSC will be working with the Gibberd Garden to organise special tours of the town's sculptures.

On each Wednesday afternoon there will be two escorted mini-bus tours, with commentary, one for the outlying sculptures and the other a walking tour of the town centre sculptures, both starting from and returning to the Gibberd Garden. The tours will include car parking, a Garden visit, a talk in the Gibberd House and a cup of tea. All for £4 per person. These tours will be advertised widely, and early booking is essential.

We shall also be offering town walking tours on some Sundays, meeting in the town centre, and hopefully at least one family cycle tour of the outlying sculptures, finishing at the Garden with tea and cake.

Do keep a look-out on our website for updates and details. There will be a Festival booklet giving details of the tours and I am sure there will also be some press coverage. We have been very lucky in getting some funding from the Harlow Arts Council which has enabled us to keep the cost down.

We can arrange sculpture tours for visiting groups of adults or children, or school parties throughout the year at times to suit at a very reasonable cost, and can liaise with the Gibberd Garden to include a visit there.

If you would like to help with some of the tours do please contact me. In any case, do spread the word so that we get flocks of visitors.

Jenny Lushington

A Visit to the Golden Banana

On a beautiful October morning 16 Friends of Harlow Sculpture boarded a coach for the short(ish) journey to the original Roman capital of England – Colchester. The object of the trip (organised by Lin Hilton) was to visit the new arts centre 'Firstsite'. Earlier in the year we had had a talk about the building and its purpose by the general manager who was overseeing the final phases of construction, so we were all keen to see the fruits of what had been a long and tiresome process.

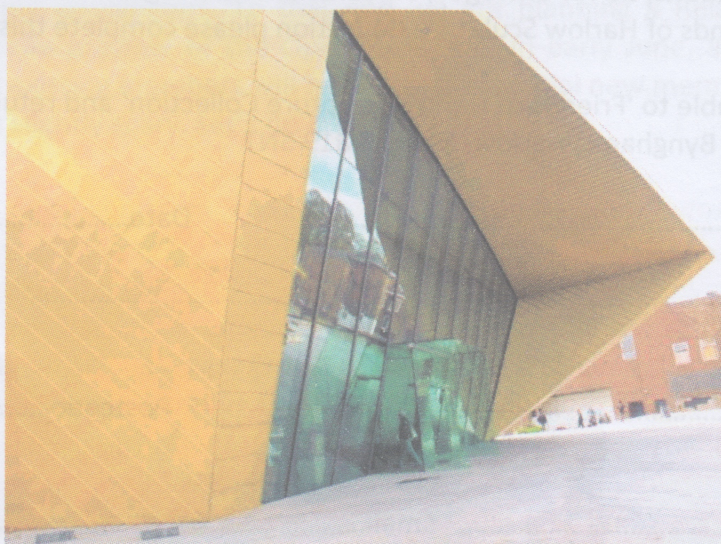
The architect, Uruguayan/New Yorker Rafael Vinoly, won the contract in an international competition. Vinoly is an internationally recognised architect and is expected to produce high-quality buildings. Firstsite does not disappoint – you might not like it but it is a very striking, and, in my opinion, a very fine building. It is clad in gold-coloured aluminium sheeting, and when exposed to normal weathering, after the initial matting a golden/yellowish oxidation layer gradually emerges, changing over time to a soft golden colour.

This long, curved building has acquired the nickname 'Golden Banana'. Tastier than a gherkin! It could not have been easy to build, with very few straight lines or vertical walls. The interior is well laid out, with a spacious foyer containing a help desk and the inevitable shop. There was also an art installation which I mistook for a work in transit, as some of it was in packing cases. That's art for you. The galleries interlink very well and the public areas are generous in size. With sloping walls mounting an exhibition is a challenge. There is also a delightful auditorium, clad in wood with excellent detailing and subtle lighting. The cafe with its nice terrace is well-conceived, although the view across the large lawn towards the bus terminus is unfortunate. The terminus is due to be moved soon. I hope the trauma of producing this building will not deter Colchester from doing something equally bold with the terminus site. The Golden Banana deserves it.

A few of us ate in the 'Love Bistro' in the Minories building next door. There is a lovely contrast between the elegant Georgian Minories, the Victorian neo-Gothic folly in its garden, and Firstsite. All work well together despite their obvious differences.

I got the impression that Firstsite got the thumbs-up from the majority of our party. At present the building is the star. Given time and the budget I'm sure that exhibitions mounted there will be able to hold their own. Congratulations to all those involved in having the vision and courage to commission this very fine building. Harlow should have employed an architect to design the Leisurezone. They didn't and it shows!

John Curry



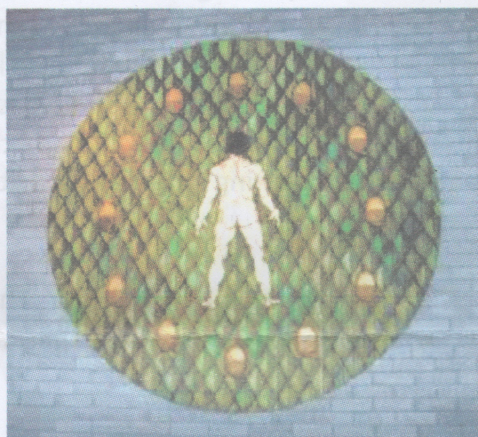
Robert Koenig and wood

Robert Koenig was the subject of the summer exhibition in 2009, and came to talk to the Friends during its course. At the time he had only one work (the Grizedale Panel) in the town, but two of those exhibited were bought after the exhibition. These are 'I am all Leaves' a large circular work depicting a man from the rear against a background of carved wooden leaves. This is now in the Playhouse. The other is 'Planty' a small panel having three carvings of trees in leaf. This is in the Arc in Old Harlow. Some of the other works shown were bought privately by visitors to the exhibition.

Robert Koenig is of Polish descent, and has adapted the Eastern European tradition of carving and painting wood, although he also uses other media. His work is very popular, and he has won many prizes and commissions. The effect of so many works gathered together in the Gallery was like entering a woodland glade, or of the sun shining through stained glass.

Many of his works have been exhibited in landscape. His series of works commemorating the victims of Nazism (Odyssey) has toured cathedrals in Britain and on the Continent. He lives and works in Brighton.

Barbara Burge



Membership costs £8 for adults, £5 for unwaged/students and £10 organisations
If you wish to join the Friends of Harlow Sculpture Collection please complete this form

Please make cheques payable to 'Friends of Harlow sculpture Collection' and return with the completed form to: Karen Bishop, 78 Bynghams, Harlow, Essex CM19 5NT

Name.....

Date.....

Address.....

.....

Postcode.....

Telephone..... Email.....