



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Harlow SCULPTURE & GIBBERD GALLERY

Number 15

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A new era: the Gallery and the town

This is the first newsletter since the changes in the Gallery came into force, and the varied contents show the different aspects of our heritage and practice. We start with Corrina Dunlea's observations on her approach to the challenges and opportunities, and go on to the successful Festival tours this May, John Graham's history of Solo Flight and news and updates on events, including Lin's review of the British Design exhibition at the V&A which we visited. We have changed our name (see above) and our Constitution. We have asked three artists who have put on successful shows in the Gallery to become Honorary Members. We have decided to work closely with Harlow Art Trust in the running of the Gallery, and we desperately need new blood. You will be asked to join, recruit and volunteer. You have been warned.

Barbara Burge

An exciting beginning

This was the first year where a charge was requested for Harlow Open submissions. The Gallery was being transferred into the hands of the Harlow Art Trust and funds were needed for its survival. It was a reluctant but necessary decision and didn't appear to put the artistic community off. We had a record 149 entries! The judges had to select because of limited space, commend work and choose Best in Show. They had a difficult job and in the end 102 pieces were displayed, including photographs and sculpture.

The feedback ranged from 'the best show we have had for years' to 'is it not enough to be selected, do we need an X factor type of show?' Overall the comments and sales (most work ever sold in 6 Opens!) speaks for itself, and many artists said they are preparing for next year. Best in Show was Anthony de Jong Cleynert's 'Mick and Jo'. He will be having a solo exhibition of his colourful abstract work in the near future. We are now preparing a programme for the next few years, a very exciting prospect, hoping to combine international artists with relevant local ones. We are offering interesting and educational talks – Lin Hilton is already booked for the first one in August. It will be my job to apply for funding, to attract great works for future shows and help the next generation to embrace our cultural heritage through structured tours and activities. It's a big task crowded into few hours, so if you have a desire to be involved give me a call.

Here is our programme for the near future:

A Gift to Harlow: A rehang of the permanent collection including talks: 24th July - 23rd August.

Harlow Happenings: A show by three Artists in Residence that evolved from working with people and unique spaces in the town. Different and exciting! 30th September – 5th October, Private View (open to all) 30th September.

Corrina Dunlea



Julia in transit - Julia is staying in the Gibberd Gallery for the permanent collection relaunch, after her near fatal adventure. She will then go to her new home in the Playhouse.

The History of Solo Flight

At the second enquiry into the building of the Harvey Centre, which proved successful, I was chosen to be the Chief Witness to present the case for the design and, under cross-examination, deal with the objections. I emphasised the major point – that the Central Space had been designed as a town space. It was to be a covered equivalent for Gibberd's Civic Square which had not been completed (it has now totally disappeared)). As a town space it was to be embellished with sculpture, planting and seating. It would be a meeting and congregating space and would remain open late, after the shops had closed. A major piece of sculpture and fountain would be guaranteed by being included and paid for as part of the building contract.

Frederick Gibberd and Partners' Harlow Office could now proceed to complete the design. Gibberd's first thoughts were for a water feature, and we contacted the sculptor who had designed the piece beside the Sea and Ships Pavilion in the South Bank Festival of Britain exhibition. In this design metal bowls gradually filled with water and then tipped and discharged into others below. The Development Corporation in August 1979 stated 'the focal point of the mall will be a water feature, which is currently being designed'. However, Gibberd changed his mind and asked Antonas Brazdys to produce a design. The maquette which Brazdys made was almost a metre tall, showed the sculpture brilliantly in stainless steel and was an attractive object. It was approved by the Development committee and stayed in my office for many weeks.

One day, with my wife Britt, I travelled to a steelworks near Gloucester which was one of the few large enough to put the required curvature on the huge stainless steel wings. I duly witnessed that they had been made and bent as required, and included their value in my next payment. I designed the pool in which the piece was to stand and gave it an illuminated fountain beneath the bird to create the intended movement. The surrounding wall was made at sitting height and immediately became the town's meeting place. The 'Three coins in the fountain' activities which resulted provided annual sums for charity.

The size of the piece – nearly 8 metres high and over 6 metres wide – meant that the entrance to the Harvey Centre from West Square could not be completed until it was installed. I thought that it was in position for good, or at least until the building was demolished. However, after several decades of its dominating the central mall and adding sparkle, especially at Christmas, new owners decided to remove it to make way for a central lift. To get it out of the building they simply cut it into pieces. The Council had no planning control over the interior despite undertakings regarding a 'town space' which had been given at the enquiry. The Art Trust found a suitable site for Solo Flight after an engineer had strengthened it against wind pressure and the pieces had been welded together again.

After a chequered history the great bird has finally come to rest – or will it take off again some day?

John Graham

Seeing the sites with Community Transport

With Mag Barrett, John Curry and Cherith Lowry from the Gibberd Garden the four Mini Bus tours for the May Festival were planned. We decided to cover all the Wednesdays in May with a possibility of 2 tours each afternoon. We also included a walking tour of the town centre on Sunday 13th May, which in the booklet said 11.00, and on the e mailed advertising said 2.30. We also planned a cycle tour for Saturday 12th May at 2.00, organised by John Curry, which ended at the Gibberd Garden with a complementary cup of tea. The tours were advertised by us via e mails using a decorative page developed by a Gibberd Garden Volunteer. Details (with an incorrect phone number) were included in the Festival brochure, as well as in CM17 and the Little White Mag magazines. And they were talked about on BBC Radio Essex on Tuesday 8th May by me on the Etholle George programme at 3.30.

I had to cancel the first date (2nd May) as there had been no bookings at all. The town- wide tour on 9th May was fully booked and went off successfully, everyone arriving on time with their booking number and receiving a nice decorative ticket from Cherith at the Garden. (Seven of them were a walking group from Chelmsford.) There were no bookings for the possible second tour that day, which made it less stressful conducting the first, leaving at 2.00. The cycle tour on 12th May had at least 8 visitors who set off in good heart from the Market Square with John (I saw them off) and they all arrived at the Garden and were very happy with their tour. On Sunday 13th I turned up at 11.00, just in case, although I had not been contacted. One lady did come for the tour – so she had individual attention. The four people who had booked for the afternoon walk enjoyed it. One was a member of Hertford U3A and hoped to book a day tour for them all to come. I had to cancel the third Wednesday. Although there were 7 bookings 4 cancelled through ill health and the others transferred to the 23rd tour. This last tour became fully booked at the very last minute, so there wasn't even room for Mag to join us, but she did take some photos before we left the Garden. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon and all were ready for their cup of tea before going into the house, which completed the picture of sculptures in Harlow. We walked through the Stow to see Not in Anger and walked round the Museum Garden. As well as locals there were visitors from Loughton and Hertfordshire. Altogether this was a positive learning experience and I hope we can do it as part of the Festival next year. I would hope then that the publicity could be out sooner and that we can get some more contacts for our list – such as all surrounding U3As and other activity groups. Once we have received the bills from Community Transport I should be able to work out costing so that we could provide similar tours at any time in the future as needed. Tying up with the Gibberd Garden works well, providing tea and cake for satisfied but weary tourists. Money for the Tours was all paid to the Gibberd Garden. The mini bus should be covered by the HAC Grant, and charges for the walks and cycle tour resulted in a profit to the Friends of £29.00.

Jenny Lushington

Pictures from the Festival Tours



British Design 1948-2012 at the V&A

Members visited the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition on April 16th to see displays which spanned the Post War Years to the present.

The Family Group, architectural models and designs borrowed from Harlow were based in the first section on Tradition and Modernity showing the rebuilding of Britain, the celebration of its products in the 1951 Festival and the Coronation. Section Two contrasting 'Mod' and 'Punk' eras in fashion, film and objects was entitled Subversion. Its flamboyance, recycling and use of unusual materials broke with traditional industrial methods. The Third Section entitled Innovation and Creativity highlighted engineering skills used in transport, architecture and domestic products. The new technology used in the processing of designs, models and graphics seemed so sophisticated in comparison to the 'handcrafted' approach of the earlier rooms.

The group enjoyed the visit and had the bonus of a sunny day and a ride along the Embankment en route to the Museum. Highly recommended for anyone interested in design and guaranteed to evoke nostalgia, the exhibition runs till 12th August.

Lin Hilton

...And our next trip

Friends are invited to join our trip to the Fry Gallery in Saffron Walden on Tuesday 11th September. We arrive at 10.30 to see the Edward Bawden exhibition, including two works lent by the Gibberd Gallery. Bawden lived in Saffron Walden for many years. There will be a talk about the exhibition and the Gallery, which shows works by local artists from the 30s to the 70s. The Bridge Gardens behind the Gallery are beautiful, and visitors could picnic there or lunch in the town. We should return at 2.30 to arrive in Harlow at 3.30. The cost, including the talk, is £9. To book contact Lin Hilton on 01279 415007.

Lin Hilton

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

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Date.....

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