



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Harlow

SCULPTURE & GIBBERD GALLERY

Number 23

June 2015

Friends of Harlow Sculpture and the Gibberd Gallery Newsletter Summer 2015

One of Harlow's sculptors returns

William Mitchell, whose semi-abstract piece on an exterior wall behind Bhs appeared in our last issue, will be giving a talk at the Gallery on June 20th. Last autumn a small group from Harlow Civic Society heard him speak in London and were so impressed that two of them wrote pieces for the newsletter. John Curry's piece was featured in the last issue. Below is Alastair Howe's, held over till now.

William Mitchell will be talking at the Gibberd Gallery on Saturday 20th June at 1.30pm. Contact the Gallery to book.

Bill Mitchell - an adventurous life

Public speaking at ninety years old, wow!

Bill took us on a whistle stop tour of his remarkable life which, he said, was just a case of one thing leading to another. He told us a little about his childhood illness which meant much time spent in 'homes', rather than 'at home'. Later, whilst on demobilisation leave following time in the Navy during the second world war, he landed a job as 'NAAFI artist', decorating canteens around the world. When he realised this work was running out he applied to study art at Portsmouth, but was rejected on the grounds of too little education, so decided to try to buy his way in and set about selling insurance to get the money. Sometime later, having achieved this, he took a suitcase full of cash back to the college, allegedly dumping it on the principal's desk and getting a place! He didn't complete the course as it wasn't to his liking, but went on to the RCA where he did three years at the School of Woods, Metals and Plastics.

He then went on to the British School in Rome where, after many misadventures with taxi drivers and the police he arrived well -lubricated! This sojourn in Rome introduced him to a broad cross section of 'movers and shakers' - he spent time in the offices of Gio Ponti, Nervi & Pininfarini (all within a year?!). This education, so he says, was all down to a day at the dogs during demob leave!

The Water Gardens in Harlow, by William Mitchell

On returning to the UK he landed a job with the LCC creating decorative works for housing estates - from NAAFI artist to LCC artist! We were treated to contemporary video of him grit-blasting drawings into concrete blockwork - a fantastic feat - imagine drawing a finished design in one go, without guidelines and without taking the pencil from the paper; then imagine the paper as a concrete block wall probably ten feet long by seven high and the pencil for a high pressure hose blasting grit to gouge out the blocks!



One thing continued to lead to another, he says. Work on bridge panels and the like in the UK led to work on the San

Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit system which in turn led to Hawaii and creating work in Honolulu Civic Square. He also told us about building a zoo in Qatar, and the fantastic ability of the Afghani craftsmen he worked with. Wrapping up (I've had enough, don't know about you, he said) we were told about his work for Mohammed Al Fayed - the Egyptian Escalator at Harrods - the only reason for going there in my view! If you haven't seen it, you really should pay a visit next time you are in London.

Somewhere in amongst all this he met Freddie Gibberd (a dapper chap, I think he called him) and did the work we probably know best, here and at Liverpool Cathedral. Clearly there is more to be told of this relationship and I hope we will be able to hear him speak here in Harlow in the not too distant future

Alastair Howe

Workshop creations in The Gibberd Gallery based on The Water Garden Reliefs by William Mitchell



Walking and Talking: The summer tours have started.

In February I sent out a call for volunteers to help with the Walks and Talks for the Culture tours. Special thanks to Gwen, David, Geraldine, Andy and Mandy, who answered the call. John, Mag and I have met and shared information and planning, had a trial tour of the new route for this year and a practice walk of the town and now have a rota for the summer.



On the 9th April the first **cultural tour of Harlow** for the **2015** season took place. After a misty start at the Gibberd Garden all the 15 'Girls Go Out' swapped their individual cars for a ride in the Community Transport minibus to arrive at a warm reception in the Gibberd Gallery with coffee and pastries. They then enjoyed a talk about the Gallery and art collection from Lin, one of our FoHSGG volunteers. After hearing about the Family Group in the Civic Centre they followed Jenny out into the sunshine to view the second Henry Moore sculpture and the Water Gardens. The group walked on to the Playhouse via College Square and enjoyed the varied sculptures on display there while learning how they all arrived in their present home.

The 'Girls' then had a brisk walk round the town, taking in 8 more sculptures with the help of John and David, to arrive back in the Water Gardens where, apart from admiring Eve and all the well heads, they were surprised by the wild life – not just the fish and the ducks but the two turtles basking in the sun. Back on the minibus our driver took us at a steady pace past the relief on Asda's wall, the Ports Of Call off 5th Avenue and on to Contrapuntal Forms now glowing in the sun. We continued via

Solo Flight to the museum where we saw 6 more sculptures in the walled garden, and the wonderful Industrial artefact that is the Gilbey still. Our morning finished with a detour round New Hall to see the two amazing organic shapes of the sculptures and the intriguing spiral of Tele Tubby hill.

After a relaxing lunch in the Barn and a talk about Sir Fred the Group were escorted into the Gibberd rooms, where Inger described how the house and garden and the unusual collection of objects found there came about. The girls then finished off their day with a wander round the garden, enjoying the sun and the setting.

This first tour of the season made a very enjoyable day both for the guests and the volunteers – an auspicious start to the summer's programme.

Jenny Lushington

Gallery News

'Not that far from the madding crowd'

The new audiences we are greeting in the Gallery are a growing phenomenon. The recent exhibition 'Jazz as artists see it' and the previous 'Light, Art, Action' prove that genres can be melded together and present exciting and attractive themes that continue to inspire people. We are mixing the programme, offering fresh shows like dance and theatre in a way that's unique and creates a buzz about arts and culture.

We are told continually that people don't know the Gallery is here, and it is a challenging location, but slowly word of mouth is becoming our marketing strength. People recently travelled from Aylesbury (on a mystery tour admittedly) and headed for the Gallery as their place of interest!

Thank you all for helping promote our wealth of culture in ways that only you can. To help with this we are opening on Saturdays (at least two for each exhibition) with free events on these days, so look out for them and come along if you are in the town.

Diary date! Don't miss Saturday 6th of June at midday when we can be party to a live demonstration by the talented Andrew James RPS. He will transform a blank canvas into a mesmerising portrait while the audience can also sketch along and ask for his expert feedback. All ages are welcome.

This is free, let's face it, not much else is, aren't we lucky?

Corrina Dunlea

Moongate by Grenville Davey



Newly sited (February 2015) in the Civic Centre foyer is the sculpture Moongate on loan from County Hall Chelmsford to the Art Trust. The work is part of a series commissioned by Chelmsford in 2009 to celebrate the county's association with Jiangsu Province, China. After visiting China, Davey produced six pieces relating to its temples, gardens and customs. This piece is inspired by garden entrances; the idea of inner and outer spaces and the passage from the real to the imaginary. The subdued colours of red, blue and yellow transform the metal structure into a more organic surface softening the angularity and curve of the circle and leading down to the square wooden plinth which is open-grained and cracked.

Grenville Davey won the Turner Prize in 1992 and is now a Professor at the University of East London. He lives and works in Great Yeldham and in 2012 made a work called Inter Alia (between things) a ninety metre long wall for the Queen Elizabeth Gardens in the Olympic Park. Collaborating with Royal College students and members of the public, handprints were pushed into the wet concrete and covered with Davey's 61 aluminium bronze markers.

The wall is an example of the participation that Grenville Davey encourages; our Moongate invites every viewer to engage with the landscape/townscape by looking through the aperture this work creates.

Lin Hilton

Visit to the Royal Opera House Workshops

We had a tour of the new workshops in Purfleet in February. Custom-built for theatre fabrications, the design and layout of this open plan building was impressive. It opened in 2010 having relocated from the East End, where its former site was redeveloped for the Olympics. We were able to see the development and production of sets and backdrops from drawings and models of the design through carpentry, metalwork and painting. The roof opened to natural and computer-controlled lighting and the final designs were dismantled and flat-packed into portable containers and sent on conveyer belt for transportation to Covent Garden via the delivery vans.

We also had a guided tour of the landscaped gardens and were told about the history of the farmhouse on which the complex is built. They are extending the facilities currently to accommodate the costume collection, which is at present housed in Wales. A most enjoyable outing.

Lin Hilton

New and Reviews in brief

Visit to Kettle's Yard, Cambridge April 28th

Some Friends visited Kettle's Yard to see the exhibition 'New Rhythms' which celebrates the centenary of Gaudier-Brzeska, the sculptor's, death. He died in the First World War aged 23. His work is shown with contemporary pre-War art and illustrates influences from Rodin, Epstein, Brancusi and the Vorticists. We also visited the House of Jim Ede next door, who was an avid collector and whose cottage became a showcase for artworks, a delightful experience. Entrance is free Tuesday-Sunday 11.30am-5pm. Viewing of this well-curated show now is highly recommended, especially as this is the final exhibition in the Gallery before closing for major redevelopment for two years on 21st June. The House will also close and its contents will be stored while building takes place. They are adding a café and a new education wing.

New Venture

This last month we have given our first trial talk to the U3A Art & Design group, using some of the archive photos from HAT. With Mag producing the photos on the screen I was able to give the background about the acquisitions and the sculptors, as well as the stories of their moving about the town. Our Sculptures don't just stay put! We now have to learn a bit more about some of our new sculptures so that we can go back to the U3A and finish what we started, as well as taking on more speaking and showing engagements. I know many groups that invite speakers have to make their bookings months if not a year in advance, so pass on this news to any groups you have contact with and we will progress with the presentations. JL

Help Needed

Dear Friends, you responded so well to my call for help with the tours that I am seeking your support again. On Saturday 25th August (way ahead I know) we have the Charity Car Park at the College. I am looking for 10 people who can give 90 minutes of their time (working in groups of 3) to take the fees and show cars to parking spaces. Please let me know by email if you will be free in August. Thanks, Jenny L. (jenny.ml@virginmedia.com).

Friends' Raffle won by fellow artist.

Jim Peel, a local water colourist and art teacher, drew the winning ticket for the Friends' latest raffle on April 1st at the Gallery. The painting of the Clock Tower (now unfortunately looking very different from when Jim painted it a few months ago) was won by Jill McLintic, a member of the WAGS group who paint at the Baptist Church Hall in Old Harlow on Wednesdays. The raffle raised £130 which will go towards new signage for the Permanent Collection.

Damaged Sculpture

If you have any concerns over the condition of a sculpture please contact Sue McDonald.
sue@harlowarttrust.org.uk.

Membership details

To join the Friends of Harlow Sculpture and Gibberd Gallery, receive information about forthcoming events, invitations to private views, the newsletter, talks by artists, subsidised visits to local and regional exhibitions and become involved in investing in Harlow's heritage and future, please complete the following form:-

Membership costs £12.00 for Adults or £10.00 for Students and unwaged or £20.00 for organizations.

Nametype of membership £..... Date
AddressPost code
Telephone Mob Email

*Please make cheque payable to Friends of Harlow Sculpture and Gibberd Gallery, (FoHSGG) and forward to :-
The Membership Secretary, FoHSGG, The Gibberd Gallery, Civic Centre, The Water Gardens, Harlow, Essex. CM20 1WG.Cash payments can be made in person at the Gallery desk.
Membership renewal is 8th April please.*

