



NEWSLETTER

Friends of Harlow SCULPTURE COLLECTION

Number 8

November 2009

MERRY CHRISTMAS

The Christmas Lecture this year will be 'How the Marsh was won' by Dr Michael Paraskos on Tuesday, December 15th at 7pm in the Gibberd Gallery.

The Marsh prize is an annual award for the best new public sculpture in Great Britain. Michael who was on the judging panel will spill the beans on how the judges decision was reached and give you a glimpse of entries that didn't get short-listed. Was the judges' decision the right one? Come and decide for yourself.

The Christmas spirit will be evoked with traditional refreshments

SPRING OUTING

The Spring outing will be to the Geffrye Museum in London on Friday, March 19th. To save expense we ask you to make your own way there and meet at the Museum at 11.30 am. Admission includes an introductory talk and costs £2. The Museum is a 15 minute walk from Old Street or Liverpool Street stations or you can take 149 or 242 bus from Liverpool Street. Please let Nick know if you will be coming on 07792118924

EXHIBITIONS IN THE GIBBERD GALLERY

WELCOME TO MY WORLD

In October / November the Gallery hosted a highly successful exhibition of children's photographs 'Welcome to My World'. Over a hundred children

and their parents attended the preview / awards evening bringing much needed publicity to the Gallery. A frequent question was "where's the Gibberd Gallery?" Answered by "in the Civic Centre" which was followed by "Where's the Civic Centre?" This shows there is an urgent need to make the Gallery better known. The project was organized by the Harlow Arts Council and Harlow Photographic Society and grant aided by Awards for All.

URBAN PAINTINGS



During the next three months November 28th – February 6th the Gallery will host 'Urban Paintings' by Nicola Burrell, an exhibition of constructed paintings. This exhibition spans twenty years from Belfast in 1989, including Colchester and Clacton to a number of new paintings of Harlow made while working on educational projects and sculpture commissions at Latton Lock and The Florence Nightingale Health Centre at Church Langley.

KELLY MOVES ON.

We were very sad to lose Kelly Lean, who has gone to be Education Arts Officer at County. We wish her every success in the next step in her career but it is a great loss to Harlow. Waiting with intrepidation, we now know her place will be filled with a part-time post including administration of the gallery and art development work with children. Interviews will be held at the end of November and we hope a new person will be in post in the New Year. In the meantime Nick is filling the vacuum so there should be little detriment to the gallery's operation.

GRANT SUCCESS

We have won another grant. We have been partially successful in getting a grassroots grant from County of £ 2000. This is to publicise FHSC by paying for the newsletter and the creation of a web page. We unfortunately did not get help with reprinting the Sculpture Map. Thanks to Nick for drawing up the application, all he has to do now is design the web page.

THE CULTURE OF WOOD

Robert Koenig's exhibition in the Gallery this summer was a shock at first sight. We are not used to wooden sculptures in glowing colours. In his well-attended talk to the friends towards the end of the exhibition he explained his choice of material. His parents came from a small village in Poland, where wood was plentiful and used in church carvings in particular. Born in Manchester and attending the Slade, he consciously chose to adopt this course, partly in homage to his personal history. He obviously has an innate feel for wood and paint.

His career has undergone many changes, reflected in the exhibition. Earlier works, such as the Grizedale Panel, purchased by Lady Gibberd and now belonging to Harlow, often consisted of repeated patterns – in his words 'pattern, repetition, rhythm' – of leaves and other natural forms, often with naked human figures. Later he made 'portals' and 'temples', decorated gateways framing human figures reflecting his interest in Egyptian art. Later still, during a stay in Poland, he imprinted monochrome photographs on dried bog-

oak panels dug from the local earth and allowed over time to form a pattern of cracks.

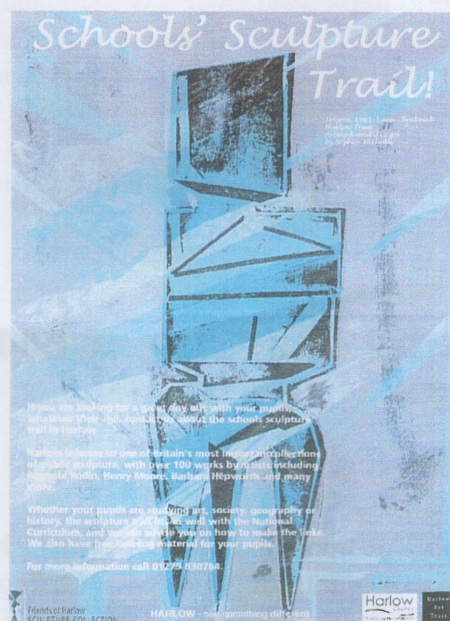
Some of his loveliest pieces are wooden islands, or acorns, covered with trees and foliage. However, he has now left these styles behind as he follows his latest inspiration 'Odyssey'. This consists of 32 lime-wood figures carved standing on pedestals. These he has taken to various places in Poland and to cathedrals and other venues in Britain. They are always grouped together and have a solemn, awe-inspiring presence. Their travels follow his mother's journeys, including the site of a forced labour camp. One can see in them something of the terrible twentieth century upheavals in Central Europe, and the silent witness of helpless populations.

Robert Koenig encouraged visitors to touch the works, which was a satisfying experience. Several pieces were bought by local people, and some will be on permanent exhibition at St John's Arc in Old Harlow and the Playhouse. Robert Koenig's work has left a deep impression.

Barbara Burge

TALKS AND TOURS

The Friends main source of income is charges made for conducted tour and talks. We have just produced a poster designed by Harlow College design students, to publicise this service and we hope more members will volunteer to be guides. It is not too onerous a task. Jenny gave talks at the Robert Koenig exhibition and recounts her experiences.



SUMMER EXHIBITION 2009

This summer we were very lucky to meet the sculptor Robert Koenig when he came to finalise the setting up of his retrospective exhibition – Culture of Wood. He took the time to talk to several of us who were able to be there and expanded on the official notes. It was most interesting to hear little anecdotes about the production of individual pieces and to hear and see his humour in them. I am an avid note taker and usually find if I have written it down – I remember it! This came in very useful during the weeks of the exhibition when I was able to host various groups from around the town who came to see it.

Just looking at pieces of sculpture is good but when someone can focus you in on a specific aspect and appreciation is enhanced. I think I was able to pass this on with the groups that came and often lively discussions arose – especially round the expressions or lack of them on the figures. Helping people to look at some of the wall mounted sculptures as the practise/trial pieces which lead up to bigger and bolder sculptures placed in specific settings – especially the Modern Girl profile which eventually became a huge sculpture in Milton Keynes – really put the whole exhibition in perspective.

The humour in the title of the plaque showing a repetition of a footballer in action called 'We like to boogie' brought a lighter side to the exhibition but also focused us on the fact that it is often easier to recognise people at a distance from their familiar movement rather than the detail of their features (Especially as one gets older and needs glasses!)

Many people were amazed at the contrast of his coloured carving with the later work in black and white using Bog Oak and photography but when they understood the significance of the dust stripes/furrows really began to appreciate the sculptor's journey in time.

These sculptures were a delight to the many people who saw them and touched them – so nice to be able to feel the texture of the surface especially the peachy softness on the circular plaques and the never ending leaves in the woods and landscapes. The small group of V.I.P.s who came were really able to appreciate the work, especially the figures and the three dimensional landscapes.

This was a lovely exhibition and I hope one day The Odyssey Figures can come and stand about in Harlow – in the town park perhaps. What I do look forward to in future years is the opportunity to hear from an expert or the sculptor all about the work on display so that we may pass this on to people who come to visit again.

Jenny Lushington

SCULPTOR FOCUS

LYNN CHADWICK 1914 -2003

Lynn Chadwick trained as an architectural draughtsman and only started to develop an interest in sculpture in his thirties. After World War Two, Chadwick first began to make mobiles, then more fixed constructions he called 'stabiles'. A key moment in his early career was a commission for two new works for the Festival of Britain, one of which, *Cypress* (1951), was a three-meter high stabile for which Chadwick learnt to weld.

In 1952, Chadwick was among a group of eight young sculptors representing Britain at the Venice Biennale. *New Aspects of British Sculpture* was an exhibition that demonstrated the experimental approaches to sculpture employed by a new generation of British sculptors, including Eduardo Paolozzi, Reg Butler and Kenneth Armitage. Welding, modeling and other assemblage techniques gave these artists' work a dynamic, industrial presence, quite unlike the flowing lines of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth's prevailing sculptures.

The exhibition was a huge success, loved by critics and collectors alike; it elevated Chadwick onto the international stage. Chadwick's four sculptures demonstrated his transition from the mobiles and stabiles he had shown at the Festival of Britain the previous year, to more weighted structures. Made from iron, the works were developed using a welded armature and experimental modeling materials such as 'Stolit' (an artificial stone compound). Chadwick's ability to capture the qualities of the materials in his sculpture gave his work a vitality and power. Often the armature would remain exposed, becoming integral to the finished surface. The forms were aggressive and spiky, suggesting ambiguous predatory creatures, but they also implied a fearful defence. It is this tension between aggression and vulnerability, an unconscious reference to the trauma of war, which gave Chadwick's work a disturbing force.



Chadwick went on to create more welded works as well as progressing to casting works from bronze. In 1956 he was awarded the International Sculpture Prize at the Venice Biennale (controversially beating Alberto Giacometti). From the late 1950s Chadwick produced numerous large-scale pieces in bronze including *Trigon* in 1961, which was bought by the Trust after Maurice Ash visited the artist's studio in 1963. Initially, the trustees commissioned it in bronze-effect fibreglass. However, as his fibreglass techniques were quite experimental at this stage, Chadwick offered a bronze version instead.

Chadwick continued to work up until his death in 2003. Characteristic of his later work was the increasing use of stainless steel as a replacement for bronze. The first major retrospective of Chadwick's work was organised by Tate Britain in 2003. Chadwick was involved with the planning but died several months before the show opened.

Kelly Lean

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN THE FRIENDS?

Membership costs £8 for adults, £5 unwaged/students and £15 for organizations.

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 this form with your cheque to : Karen Bishop, 78, Bynghams, Harlow, Essex CM19 5NT

Name..... Date.....

Address.....

Town..... Post Code.....

Telephone e-Mail.....