

# Friends' Perspective



*Study of a Tree (finished drawing) Alexander Cozens 1717-86.  
©The Whitworth, The University of Manchester.*

Standardisation  
and Deviation:  
The Whitworth  
Story

*Full details on page 2.*

Lights, Camera,  
Action at the  
Whitworth

*Full story on page 6.*

# STANDARDISATION AND DEVIATION: The Whitworth Story

by Imogen Holmes-Roe, Curator (Historic Fine Art)



© Michael Pollard

My appointment as Curator (Historic Fine Art) in 2019 coincided with a major milestone in the Whitworth's history. As the gallery prepared to celebrate its 130th year, one of the first major projects I have undertaken has been to develop an exhibition which explicitly explores the history of the Whitworth Institute, gallery and park.

The Whitworth has been making art useful since 1889. Originally founded in the memory of the pioneering engineer Sir Joseph Whitworth (1803-87), it was built for 'the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester' with the stated intention to be 'a permanent influence of the highest character in the directions of Commercial and Technical Instruction'.

A proponent of standardisation, Sir Joseph revolutionised precision engineering through his

development of interchangeable parts in machinery. Using the Stockport-born engineer as the starting point, examples of his world-changing mechanical innovations, including his famous micrometer and rifles, have been loaned and displayed within the gallery amongst highlights from the Whitworth's own diverse collections of textiles, fine art and wallpaper.

Having spent the previous 16 years working as Curator (Art & Photography) at the National Coal Mining Museum for England, I understand the powerful relationship between industry and art. To be given the responsibility of reconnecting and engaging the Whitworth's diverse audiences with its own industrial legacy and with its origins as an artistic and educational institution founded on the use of art for social change and the advancement of knowledge has been both hugely rewarding, but not without its challenges.

The exhibition is being shown in a reconfigured Gallery 1, the first gallery space that visitors encounter as they enter the Whitworth from Oxford Road. Having been used as a Textile gallery for over 20 years, this exhibition marked a radical departure in how this space has traditionally been used. Within the space, there are six separate ways of entering/exiting the gallery. Together, these presented a number of obvious challenges for how we present the Whitworth's story. As a result, we deliberately chose not to adopt a chronological approach,

*Front cover Study of a Tree by Alexander Cozens 1717-86 is on display in the exhibition Standardisation and Deviation: the Whitworth Story. The drawing was presented to the Gallery by the Friends of the Whitworth in 1936. The image is also being used for publicity for the Friends on cards in the Gallery café.*

but have utilised the twelve display cases to present the Whitworth's history and internationally significant collections through a series of interconnecting themes. The inspiration for this approach lies in the unique design feature of Whitworth's percussion muzzle-loading military rifle. To mirror the action of a rifle, our aim is for our visitors to experience a sense of the Whitworth's history being ricocheted across the gallery.

Throughout the exhibition, Sir Joseph's passion for standardisation is used as a counterpoint to significant moments of deviation within the Whitworth's collection and history. During the Great Exhibition of 1851, Sir Joseph demonstrated his now renowned bench micrometer. Capable of detecting differences of less than one millionth of an inch, his machine earned him international fame and helped pave the way for mass production. Today, Sir Joseph is probably best known for his introduction of the universal system of screw threads. He pioneered the development of uniformity in industry, reduced costs while improving efficiency.



Albrecht Dürer, *Melancholia*, 1514.  
The Whitworth, The University of Manchester

The Whitworth has also looked beyond accepted models of practice throughout its history. The gallery's early and distinctive collecting policy reacted to the 'commercial' trends which dominated the municipal galleries. The founders chose to focus on textiles and the importance of watercolour in the history of British art, areas that they felt other public galleries had neglected in favour of (more fashionable) oil painting. This expansive thinking has continued with the addition of wallpaper to the collection from the 1960s and more recently with the acquisition of the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection and the Arte Útil Archive.

This progressive ideology has, however not been confined to the gallery's collecting policies. A key figure in the Whitworth's story who cannot be overlooked and is represented in the exhibition is former honorary Director, Margaret Pilkington. A progressive thinker who advocated opportunities for women and combined a passion both for art and reform, Pilkington's legacy continues today. The Friends of the Whitworth which she formed in 1933 has been enriching the collections for nearly 90 years.

The exhibition also seeks to address the more complex questions within its history and collections. During the Great Exhibition of 1851 (now often referred to as the 'Temple of Peace') Sir Joseph's engineering accomplishments earned him numerous accolades. Yet, as the emergence of his 'Whitworth Rifle and Ordnance Company' shows, by the 1862 International Exhibition, Sir Joseph had become one of a growing number of inventors who were encouraged to develop new technologies for imperial expansion. Elsewhere in the exhibition the inclusion of Raisa Kabir's 'It must be nice to fall in love' (2016) has been displayed alongside historic textiles to show how the Whitworth is working with contemporary artists to articulate the region's own complex history with the textile industry.



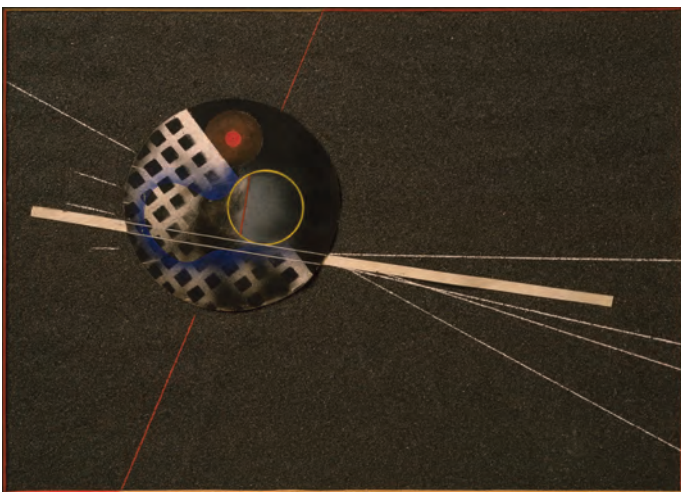
© Michael Pollard



© Michael Pollard

The exhibition has also been carefully designed to reflect the start of a new era in the Whitworth's history. The Whitworth recurring screw motif, has been an essential and successful part of the Whitworth's visual identity for the last five years. Within the exhibition this has been deliberately subverted to reinforce a sense of the Whitworth's transition as the gallery's new vision is launched and we prepare to open the Office of Useful Art.

Standardisation and Deviation: the Whitworth Story is currently planned to remain on display until June 2021.



Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Emery Paper Collage*, 1930.  
The Whitworth, The University of Manchester



Lawrence Stephen Lowry, *Industrial Scene*, 1965.  
The Whitworth, The University of Manchester © The estate of L.S. Lowry/DACS 2019

## Bruce Anderson puts us in the picture

The postcards featured in this exhibition are part of a considerably larger collection that I have of Whitworth Park and Gallery. I have been collecting postcards for some 10-12 years that also illustrate Rusholme, Victoria Park and Fallowfield.

Postcards became popular just after 1900 and for the next 20 years they became something of a national craze. Whilst we often look at the photographic image first and think about how that particular view may have changed in the last 100 years, I often look at the messages on the stamped side. They were the email of their time, regular collections and deliveries during the day could often ensure a message sent in the morning could be delivered the same afternoon in that locality. 'I cannot come this evening – I am laid up with a bad cold' is a common variation of an apology of some form, but on another card, the message is starkly brutal,

*"Dear Polly, Do not get me anything as I am going to my sister, her baby is dead. From Clara".*

The postcard views that I enjoy of Whitworth Park are long abandoned features; the lake, the children always playing right on the edge of the water; the bandstand, a very popular part of the park where both local and military bands played and finally pictures showing benches, where visitors could sit and pass the time looking at the extensive flower beds.

If you would like to see my entire collection of Whitworth Park postcards go to:  
[rusholmearchive.org/whitworth-park-and-gallery](http://rusholmearchive.org/whitworth-park-and-gallery)



Whitworth Park

# Putting Art into Action



Ed Watts

*Ed Watts, Head of Learning and Engagement tells us of the amazing work in and out of the gallery.*

*Standardisation and Deviation: the Whitworth Story will also be central to the work of the team.*

As we look to the future, through this period of change for the gallery, it is a good time for me to reflect.

I started working at the Whitworth ten years ago to develop a new adult engagement programme and over this last decade I've seen so much change. I've worked on countless events working with amazing artists, colleagues and communities, 2015's capital development and now a new Director for the gallery and a redefined mission; to use art for social change.

Though this is something I feel has very much driven the work of the Learning and Engagement team at the gallery for many years and now with this new energy comes opportunity to grow bigger, more ambitious, innovative and inclusive projects than ever.

Since May 2018, I've had the privilege to work as Head of Learning and Engagement, helping support such a dynamic team's work with diverse collaborators of our local artists, communities, volunteers and partners to build relationships with everyone from our smallest visitors and their parents, young

people, strategic health partnerships and schools through to older groups through our work with Age Friendly Manchester.

As a team, we're now working with our closest peers, partners and constituents to refresh our projects and programmes to better support the Whitworth's new vision and principles. This will see the launch of three key strands of work that will support our work across all audiences. These three strands will echo the strategic priorities for the Learning and Engagement team; Civic Purpose, Education and Health. Art in Action will see us working together with purpose for positive change in our community, the School of Creativity will be our life-long curriculum for innovation, making and creative thinking and the Natural and Cultural Health Service is where nature and imagination come together to support physical and mental wellbeing.

I hope as Friends of the Whitworth, you'll enjoy watching these ideas grow and as activities spill out across the galleries.

# The Singh Twins



*The Singh Twins*

*The Singh Twins gave our 50th anniversary lecture to critical acclaim.*

The Twins are pictured in front of The Whitworth Tapestry 1967-8 designed by Eduardo Paolozzi – the tapestry, recently featured in *Tapestries*, was commissioned by the Gallery to mark the official opening of the newly modernised galleries on 22 March 1968.

## The next Pilkington

Sarah Dunant, writer, broadcaster, teacher and critic gives the 51st Pilkington Lecture. She will take us on a journey through art, history and fiction. Her most recent novels, set within the Italian renaissance weave historical scholarship with fast moving fiction – a lecture ‘sumptuously’ illustrated she tells us.



*Sarah Dunant*

# You are watching Cold Feet or Coronation Street and recognise your favourite gallery – the Whitworth.

*Olga Gribben, Development Manager explains the commercial sense behind the gallery as a film, television set and much more.*

Public and charitable funding for the arts has never been more competitive and the gallery is therefore always looking for ways of generating more commercial income.

In 2018/19 almost 15% of our income was derived from commercial activities including our shop and café. Less obvious perhaps is the income that we receive from the many non-gallery events that take place in the Whitworth and from the hire of our gallery spaces. From weddings, to corporate events, to the Whitworth as a film location, we are able to offer potential clients the use of our beautiful gallery and outdoor spaces, expert technical support and of course wonderful onsite catering.

As a public gallery, we always have to balance the expectations of our visitors with the need to generate more income. We therefore try to avoid closing the café and public areas whenever possible, with many events taking place in the evening and when the gallery is less busy. On occasion though, such as when the luxury brand Chanel took over part of the gallery for a day and used the café for a very glamorous reception, we are able to charge a fee that made it sensible to close off part of the building for a short period.

We also occasionally close parts of the gallery to allow for filming, including episodes of Cold Feet, Coronation Street and Brassic as well as, most recently, SKY One's latest Sci Fi drama

'Intergalactic'. We are always amazed at the amount of people and equipment that arrive at the gallery in the early hours for what might be just a couple of minutes on screen in the final edit. We will soon be promoting the Whitworth as a film location through the City Council's initiative 'Screen Manchester', so look out for the Whitworth on your screens more and more!

Away from the glamour of the film and TV world, our most regular commercial income comes from conferences in the Grand Hall and South Gallery, organised by our colleagues from right across The University of Manchester. These are often connected to important research projects with international attendees. The hire of meeting rooms by the wider university also brings in a regular amount. Other public and private organisations also regularly book out rooms and other gallery spaces for their own events and conferences, from book sales to corporate dinners, to product launches.

Weddings at the gallery are perhaps not surprisingly very popular and since we reopened in 2015, 24 people have made their vows here. This is an income stream that we hope to increase and we already have 3 bookings for the year ahead! Again, we try to minimise the impact on our visitors, with weddings often being programmed for late on a Saturday afternoon for example.



All of these events are managed and overseen by our events coordinator, Leanne Lightfoot, with support from our building and operations team. Our visitor team also play a really important role and can also be on hand to look after clients and their guests outside of usual opening hours for which we obviously need to charge an additional fee.



# Exciting Whitworth Park News



Banner at Whitworth Park

## Extending into the Community

When Ken Shone, chair of the Friends of Whitworth Park drew up his 10 year plan for the park he included a Community Garden behind the Gallery alongside Denmark Road. Ever since the Gallery reopened we have dreamed of bringing this to fruition. Now, thanks to a £25,100 Pocket Parks Plus grant funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, via Manchester City Council, we have been able to see this come to life.

Patrick Osborn, Landscape and Sustainability Technician has created the garden, installed raised hexagons and planted them with fruit and vegetables. Francine Hayfron, the Cultural Park Keeper has encouraged volunteers through the GROW project to tend the gardens and eat the produce!

Last Autumn we held an Open Day promoting the Park and our new garden so more people are aware we are open for business. Since then, building works have been organised, mounds sculpted and landscaping undertaken improving access to the garden for all those using it.

Hopefully we will soon have water and electricity in our shed so making management of the Community Garden easier.

This year sees a regenerated garden ready for people to enjoy and use.

With the increased focus in society on mental health and general well-being, we hope that this new garden will become a centre for people to relax and enjoy gardening outdoors.

Increasingly GPs are recommending patients to exercise and spend time in the fresh air. Francine is developing the Natural and Cultural Health Service Programme with pilates, tai-chi, walking for well-being and meditation as part of this initiative.

We intend to have a Grand Opening of the Community Garden in the spring when the building works have settled into the landscape. Anyone who is interested in joining the GROW team should contact Francine at the Gallery or the Friends of Whitworth Park through their website as we are always looking for new members: [park@friendsofwhitworthpark.org](mailto:park@friendsofwhitworthpark.org)

Gill Reddick

*“This year sees a regenerated garden ready for people to enjoy and use”*



# Remembering an inspirational force and trips by Friends

*Dazzling View*

## R.I.P. Charles Alexander Jencks 1939 – 2019

It has been said that everybody knew Charles Jencks – or thought they did! I had not heard of him until Adele & Richard Jennison introduced me to him – or to his landscape sculptures anyway. Charles Jencks died on 13 October 2019 just days after an enchanting exclusive visit by Friends of the Whitworth to his Garden of Cosmic Speculation at his home near Dumfries, Scotland.

Jencks born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1939, graduated first in English Literature and then a masters in Architecture at Harvard. Having moved to UK in 1965 he then gained a PhD at the Bartlett Facility of the Built Environment at UCL.

There are books, papers, articles and obituaries that record his thoughts and work as an architectural historian. To me it is his gardens that I will remember him for. They are not gardens of course or landscapes or sculpture but all of these. My first 'experience' was Northumberlandia that sensuous land sculpture

in the shape of a women's body, it has to be seen to understand the scale and how it was made.

When Friends of the Whitworth visited Edinburgh in 2016 we saw his award winning Landform 'sculpture' which connects Scotland's National Gallery of Modern Art buildings One and Two. Also near Edinburgh, Jupiter Artland with Cells of Life (a theme running through all his land sculptures) made of eight landforms with his signature terraces of snail mounds, four lakes, connecting causeways and a flat parterre. Finally in 2019 a rare opportunity, a visit to the celebrated Garden of Cosmic Speculation.

With his 2nd wife Maggie (an expert in Chinese gardens), who was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1993, a charity was set up and they began to create the welcoming and uplifting (24 so far and counting) Maggie's Centres. Enlisting his architectural friends to design beautiful building for people living with cancer to find comfort and support in a very different

environment from the usual hospital settings. Friends of the Whitworth have been able to visit The Maggie's centre in Manchester designed by Lord Norman Foster, with a garden designed by Dan Pearson and the Maggie's Centre in Dundee designed by Frank Gehry with a garden designed by Arabella Lennox-Boyd. All these centres have works of art made specially for them by well known living artists or on loan from local galleries.

There is still one more treasure created by Charles Jencks for us to enjoy – his London 'Thematic House' in Holland Park – a postmodern Jencks home created with the help of architect friends and sculptors, soon to be open by appointment as an archive museum.

There may be imitators in the future but his imagination has left some unique marks in our landscapes.

*Joan Gem*





*Royal Research Ship Discovery*



*Northumberlandia*



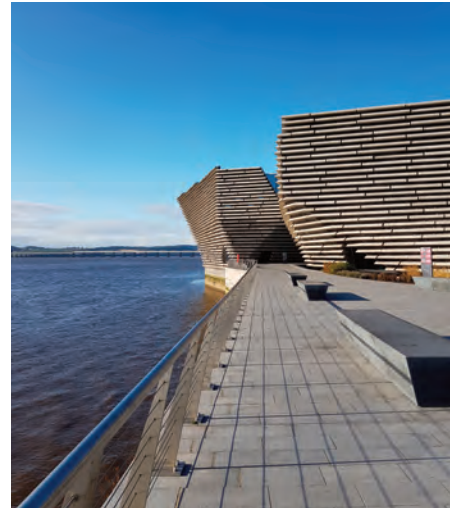
*Life Mounds - Jupiter Artland*



*Maggie's Centre, Dundee*



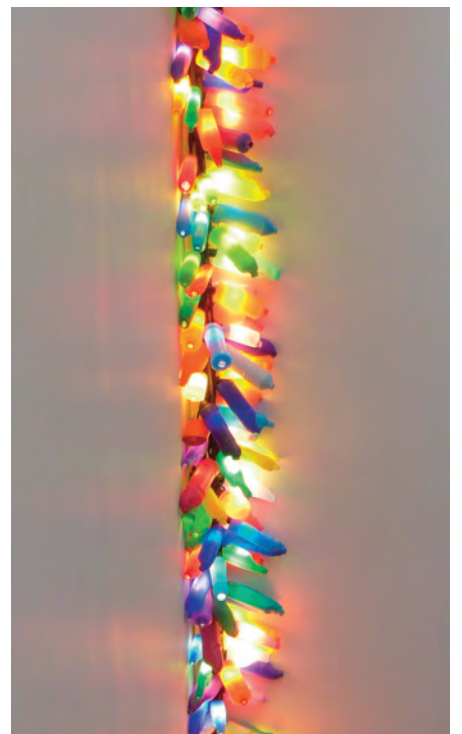
*V&A Dundee*



*River view of architect Kengo Kuma's V&A Dundee*

# Waldella, Dundee 2009

Dundee born David Batchelor's Waldella 2009 in McManus Gallery, Dundee. His light reflecting sculpture Plato's Disco delights at the Whitworth. This work was first seen at the reopening in 2015. See Plato's Disco on page 6 with bride and groom.



*Waldella, Dundee 2009 © David Batchelor*

# Shirley Nicholson remembers LI YUAN-CHIA



*Li Yuan-chia (1929-1994), Untitled, c1993. Hand-coloured black and white photographs.  
Courtesy the Li Yuan-chia Foundation*



The recent exhibition of photographs by Li Yuan-chia brought back memories. The drive from the pastures of the Irthing valley and Lanercost Priory, up the steep incline to Hadrian's Wall and the gathering of houses that is Banks village, brings one to the derelict buildings of what was once the liveliest of galleries, the LYC. Here, this quiet, private man created a vibrant atmosphere, attracting exhibitions from artists including Andy Goldsworthy, David Nash, Mary Newcomb as well as Winifred Nicholson and her daughter, Kate. His gallery openings had a real buzz. This was a place where children loved to come, to engage with his moveable magnetic work and learn Chinese calligraphy. Li fostered a real love of art in many of the young people in the local community and beyond.

There were those in Banks who didn't understand Li and Li was sensitive to their feelings. He was a Chinese artist in a traditional rural and predominantly white area. When Edna, who ran the village post office above the small green, complained about the cars from visitors coming to gallery openings, Li turned the gallery garden into a car park. He set about laying the flagstones himself and had everything ready for the next opening date. This was rather

a shame as Li had planted out the garden lining trees by the roadside wall for privacy, and he held poetry readings there. His poetry was another aspect of his creative life.

Li was fortunate to have the artist Donald Wilkinson and his wife Shirley as near neighbours. He often called by for a cup of tea and would talk at length with Donald about the photographic work he was doing, for example, his attempts to colour photographs with watercolours which weren't a success, and his eventual use of dyes. Or how he made two images overlap so a ghost image was achieved. Shirley used to take him shopping.

Emmy Davidson was another friend and always gave Li a warm welcome. He would return home with her baking. She cleaned the gallery, made jam and scones for each opening event. Li in turn helped her with tasks she couldn't manage in the house – particularly electrical problems.

Winifred Nicholson had sold the buildings to Li at a reduced price. She loved the idea of having a gallery on the Wall and envisaged this continuing. Sadly, after Winifred died Li didn't want to keep the gallery open. He'd spent so much effort on the gallery and on other people's work that to some extent, he had neglected his

own. My husband, Jake Nicholson, arranged meetings in an attempt to keep the gallery open in conjunction with Northern Arts but this was not to be. Li found money and accounts very challenging and this didn't make it easy for those trying to find a way forward. The community lost something special, although to those who remember the gallery it was a beacon during those ten years, 1972 – 1982.

It's hard to explain to those who may not know the area, the unique position this gallery held beside the stones and milecastles of an ancient Wall, looking across to the north Pennines and, to the west the Lakeland peaks, with this innovative, experimental man as its guiding energy. Towards the end of his life Li told me he felt his own art hadn't been given the recognition it deserved, saying that it was ahead of its time. Not so long ago I came across Li's work displayed in Tate Modern and thought back to our conversation. I was glad he was receiving this recognition, as he'd hoped he would.

Shirley is a Friend of the Whitworth. She married Jake Nicholson, son of Winifred and Ben. You may remember the talk Shirley gave to us some years ago about her illustrious family.

# Look and Speak about ART

*'Friends' were in the audience for Articulation 2020, the art focused public speaking competition for students aged 16-19 organised by the Roche Court Educational Trust.*



ARTiculation  
Prize 2020  
winner  
Charles Lee

It's the 5th year at the gallery. Subjects ranged from William Hogarth's *Gin Lane*, 1751, John William Waterhouse, *Hylas and the Nymphs*, 1896, Edgar Degas, *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, Jimmie Durham, *Someone Stole My Diamond*, 1998 – and the winner in the North West regional heat was Charles Lee (pictured) from Xaverian College. His talk was Manchester's *The Proud Trust Centre*, 1988.

Two adjudicators this year – Dr Niccola Shearman, Lecturer in Art History at the University of Manchester and Roger Harding of RECLAIM, the working class youth leadership charity.

Denise Bowler, Secondary and Post-16 Coordinator yet again organised the event on behalf of the Whitworth.

Charles went on to win The Grand Final held at Clare College, Cambridge.

Charles Lee

## Pick of the Month

A new collaborative venture between Friends and the Gallery shop will be starting soon.

The shop will highlight a featured product, chosen by Friends, as our 'Pick of the Month.' This promotion is aimed at raising our profile with visitors as well as benefiting the shop and hence the Gallery.

Keep an eye out for the product each month. You may find it is just something that will be right for that birthday or other special occasion.

Christine Tomkinson.



Tina Harmer and Anne Mackinnon in the Gallery shop with one of Anne's cards sold on behalf of Friends

### A request from Mike Tierney...

*Moving house or changing your email address? Please remember to update your details!*

You can do this by going to our website at [www.friendsofthewhitworth.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthewhitworth.org.uk) and using the login facility to open your personal page – don't forget to leave a space between the two parts of your postcode!

Scroll down to your contact details and click on the button 'Update these Details'. Fill in the form with new information and don't forget to press the button 'Submit' for approval. If you have no access to a computer, please send us a note with your new details to:

Friends of the Whitworth,  
Whitworth Gallery, Oxford Road,  
Manchester M15 6ER

# Friends' Perspective

Why not take this once in a lifetime opportunity to really make a difference to the Whitworth?

All donations, large or small are welcome - please send cheques payable to the Friends of the Whitworth at the following address:

Chairman,  
Friends of the Whitworth,  
The Whitworth,  
University of Manchester,  
Oxford Road,  
Manchester, M15 6ER.

*Editor:* Gill Crook.

If you have any ideas for Friends' Perspective I would be pleased to hear from you.  
Contact me at [fow@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:fow@manchester.ac.uk)

For contact and membership information, please visit: [www.friendsofthewhitworth.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthewhitworth.org.uk)

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