

friends' perspective



Gallery in the Park

Progress report on the Whitworth's emerging new building...



...and highlights of the closing weekend: see pages 2 & 3

Gallery in the Park - the Whitworth's emerging new building

Progress report from Nicola Walker, Head of Collection Care & Access, and Client Coordinator for the project

The Gallery's exciting new build and refurbishment project is now just over a year into the delivery phase, and huge progress has been made since the last report in *Friends' Perspective*.

Once the construction site had moved past the digging holes in the mud stage, the basic outline of the building rapidly took shape. It was a bit of a race against time to have the Landscape Gallery far enough advanced to host Indian artist Nikhil Chopra for the MIF in July, and similarly the less obvious work of installing plants and preparing the area designated for housing our collection stores was a time consuming and complex process.

Now, this autumn 2013, you can see the bold shape of the Landscape Gallery with its large windows, and also the more delicate forms of the Café and Promenade, characterized by the extraordinarily polished steel mullions, which will reflect the surrounding landscape and seasons. Over the rest of the season, the focus will be completing the roof-works to the exhibition galleries, culminating in a traditional 'Topping Out' ceremony, fitting glazing and working on the brickwork. As you read this, ISG are busy with the fine detailing and interior fit-out.

Alongside this, ISG has taken control of spaces within the current Whitworth building – this was only possible following a huge decant programme, involving all Whitworth staff in moving offices, collection stores and operational kit. It's easy to forget, that while the building is increasing in size by over 30%, a huge amount of work is taking place to install a lift at the front of the



building, opening up the grand staircases and the Grand Hall, as well as rationalizing staff accommodation and stores, and providing new toilets and cloakroom facilities within the lower ground floor.

Photographer Alan Seabright who works at Manchester Art Gallery is carefully documenting the project, and other photographs are being taken by Stephen Iles, who is engaged in a project to record buildings in transition. Finally, you can catch up on all recent developments by checking the *Gallery in the Park* blog where I am making regular up-dates:

<http://capitaldevelopmentwhitworth.wordpress.com/>



Taking shape:

Alan Seabright's photos document the transformation of the gallery



A Grand Event...

A few images of the closing weekend at the Whitworth



Above: Six White Horses
by Nick Crowe and Ian
Rawlinson in Whitworth
Park

Right: another recreation of
a much loved work - here
Jacob Epstein's, Genesis,
1931 in willow by artist
Lucy Burscough



Below: activities and
messages from the closing
day



Spotlight on Daniel Hogger

Conservator of works on paper at the gallery

Here's another 'behind the scenes' – the spotlight is on Daniel Hogger, conservator of works on paper – he takes time to tell us about his specialist subject.

My decision to train as a conservator was taken after spending 3 months digging trenches in the cold winter countryside of Dorset, whilst undertaking an undergraduate degree in Archaeology. The romantic notion I had of becoming the next Indiana Jones was swiftly dispelled and after a fortunate meeting and discussion with David John Lee (collections team for the British Museum) I applied to undertake the Conservation degree at Camberwell College of Art, University of the Arts, London, where I qualified as a paper conservator in 2002.

My previous positions were at The National Library and Archives of New Zealand, Wellington, The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington and The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. I returned to the UK and The Whitworth Art Gallery in 2009. My role here is the care and preparation of the paper collections, be this either fine art or wallpaper. A large part of my day-to-day work involves the preparation of artworks for display and loan. This can involve a range of activities including washing, surface cleaning, de-acidification or repair of the objects prior to mounting them ready to be framed and put on display or sent out on loan. The reasons behind these interventive treatments are to stabilise the objects and to ensure that they are presented in their best appearance.

The need to undertake interventive procedures such as cleaning artworks be it mechanically or aqueous is not an exercise to be taken lightly and should always be undertaken by a specialist conservator. Build up of soiling on an artwork's surface can have severe repercussions, be it changing and distorting the image, deforming the primary support (paper) or promoting a change to the PH level of the artwork. The rise in an object's PH level can have dramatic effects on the overall condition of an artwork on paper, the acid levels in the paper can lead to cellulose breakdown occurring which can severely weaken the paper support, therefore increasing the rate of decay of the artwork.

Recent projects and changes to classic procedures

The recent summer exhibition change over at the Whitworth has been a busy time for me, with the need to prepare four large paper based exhibitions. These exhibitions

included the majority of the Whitworths star attractions with watercolours from Van Gogh, Blake and Turner and prints by Dürer, Picasso and Kapoor. All had to come through the conservation studio to be assessed for treatment and to be prepared for mounting and framing.

Running parallel to these fine art collection based exhibitions was the Wall-to-Wall exhibition, our latest wallpaper exhibition made possible by a major five-year programme of historic wallpaper acquisitions funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's Collecting Cultures scheme. Exhibiting wallpapers gives the collection team a whole different set of issues to overcome when displaying the objects. Unlike the historic/contemporary fine art collections, which can be mounted and framed, wallpaper requires to be shown in sections or roll format. Especially designed in house roller systems and support boards are used to show the papers in their full grandeur. Over the last 15 months I have also been working alongside the collections team to prepare, deliver and return 'The Real & Imagined, watercolours from the Whitworth art Gallery' loan. This loan consisted of 156 watercolours, which toured for 13 months in four venues across Japan. As well as preparing the works for the shows I have to complete a condition report for each artwork, which allows me to track any changes, or damage, which may have occurred to the objects during the loan. I am glad to report all of the works returned in the same condition as they left, and the tour was a great success!

Finally, we are seeing some changes to the types of paper based artworks we are now exhibiting in our exhibitions. Artworks are growing in size and format, so new display techniques are now being investigated and developed. Gone are the days where we would just be mounting and framing watercolours, I now work alongside artists who wish their works to be displayed in a certain way and it is my job to develop a strategy which will allow us to show the works safely to conservation standards but allowing for the artists vision to be realised.

For example large works including Liz Rideal's monotype prints displayed in the cotton exhibition, which consisted of two, 94cm x 449.5cm prints on light weight handmade Japanese paper and Barthélémy Toguoguo, 5m long watercolour which was created for the exhibition We Face Forward. Two differing approaches were taken for these works. Magnets were used to install the Liz Rideal monoprints. These had to be strong enough to also hold up a white lining paper as well as



the prints, but also not to be too intrusive to the artwork. I chose to use Neodymium Iron Boron Magnets, the strongest type of magnet commercially available and manufactured in a wide range of shapes, sizes and grades. Once the magnets had been sourced, small circles of Japanese paper were adhered to the top layer, which allowed them to blend into the artwork giving the impression of floating which the artist required.

Barthélémy Toguoguo had a totally differing set of requirements; he requested the work was nailed to the wall, thus allowing the nails to become part of the work. Ordinarily conservators are against causing damage to artworks, and placing holes for nails to be hammered into was an ethical issue, which I needed to overcome first. After having discussions with the artist, it became apparent that the nails were always going to be used as part of the work; therefore I had to ensure the holes would not tear further under the weight of the paper once displayed. In this case, I chose to support the holes from the verso with circles of Japanese tissue applied with wheat starch paste, this stopped the holes from increasing in size as well as giving a support to the panel pins we settled on using to attach the work to the wall.

The paper conservator role is a large and varied position at the Whitworth and my main focus for the immediate future is preparing the collections for decant into our new collection store.

Ed's note: many of you know Nicola Walker as paper conservator at the Whitworth – she is now wearing another hat – a hard hat! – as client coordinator on the exciting gallery project (see page 2).

Volunteer Access

It's never too late to join the volunteers in the collections access area in the new build.

Many of you are keen to support this scheme (as featured in previous editions of *Friends' Perspective*) and if you are interested do come to future meetings. For more details contact kate.glynn@manchester.ac.uk. This is what a couple of volunteers think:

Carol Hardie: 'When I retired two years ago and felt like a change I moved from Liverpool to Manchester. One of the first things I did was join the Friends of the Whitworth. As they were asking for volunteers, I offered my services and have been asked several times to join the mail-out team. Twice a year we gather for a morning and, working like a well-oiled machine, reminiscent of a scene from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, stuff thousands of sheets of paper into hundreds of envelopes. This is a great opportunity to meet and chat to friendly and interesting people – and have plenty of coffee and biscuits in the break. When I saw a flyer asking for volunteers to work in the new Collections Access area, which will be part of the extended Whitworth when it reopens next year, I jumped at the chance. While the role of Information Assistant is not yet totally defined, we have so far attended fascinating sessions on textiles, works on paper and wallpaper and I'm looking forward to being part of this exciting new development'.

Robert Sabin: 'Although I've visited a lot of galleries over the years I'm pretty ignorant about art and art history, so when the opportunity came up to be a volunteer in the new Collections Access area, I thought why not give it a go. I am learning more about the Whitworth collection and will be able to help others do the same. I've always known the collection had some wonderful pieces in it, but the depth and range is also stunning. I like the fact I can give something to the Whitworth and its visitors whilst getting something for myself.' *Robert also writes about the FOW website in this edition - see panel to the right.*



Robert Sabin and Liz Black appreciating the textiles



Amy George chats to the volunteers about the Niki de St Phalle wallpapers



Freda Moody and Carol Hardie and 'Pirelli' sweater 1984, Patricia Roberts

Online Auction

The Friends of the Whitworth online auction of original art works has so far raised a welcome £5000, which will be used towards the design and purchase of bespoke furniture and fittings for the Collections Access Area. This new facility should become a first point of call for visitors entering the new Gallery building from the park.

It will show rapidly changing displays from the collections – objects will be displayed in wall cases, browser drawers and glass topped tables with access to books and computers in a relaxed setting. Groups will be able to book sessions with members of staff and also the volunteers. The auction continues – you could find a wonderful Christmas present for the person who has everything! Go to our website for more info:

www.friendsofthewhitworth.org.uk

Time for a makeover

It's time to update our website writes Robert Sabin

The Tuesday team sees a big opportunity to deliver more interesting and involving content both to members and potential future members. At the same time there will be further streamlining of administration of membership subscriptions, event management and other Friends' activity.

The make-over of the website is being led by a small team with web designers TOMAS who designed and have maintained the existing site. The aim is to launch the new site in time for the reopening of the Whitworth in 2014.

For members who are used to shopping sites, reading news on line, and maybe interacting with others over Facebook or on-line blogs, the revamped website will provide the kind of speedy and involving content they expect from a modern site. It will be possible for members to manage all of their bookings and membership fees, as well as joining in on-line discussion and debate.

The content will cover all the activities of the Friends plus plenty of news and opinion. We'll be aiming to make the website an important part of our recruitment drive and make the Friends appeal to as wide a range of people who access the site as possible. Meanwhile, for those members who prefer to rely on receiving their FoW news by mail, your *Friends' Perspective* and events programme will continue to be sent to you as normal ...and don't forget you can book online for events.

Whitworth Prize Winner - poets and poetry competition

Helen Tookey is this year's winner of the Whitworth Prize

The inspiration for the entries had to be the Whitworth Art Gallery itself or works of art in the Gallery.

Helen was inspired by Beryl Korot's work. She explains – 'what initially attracted me to Beryl Korot's artwork Text and Commentary in the Whitworth was the visual effect of the five parallel videos, the way in which the close-up shots of the cloth itself and of the artist's fingers weaving and knotting the threads turned into abstract images which in turn began to suggest all kinds of other associations to me as I watched. An aspect that also struck me (in the context of planning a poem) was that the one medium conspicuously not used by Korot in the work is written or spoken language.'

Manchester's Carcanet Press publish Helen's first full-length collection Missel-Child in January.



Five Windows

I

(– words being, it seems, the one thing not required by this elegant/eloquent translating machine, & that being understood, proceed! –)

II

[text: woven cloth][commentary: weaver's notations]
[text: notations][commentary: weaving process]
[text: weaving][commentary¹: film recording]/[commentary²: woven cloth]
¹[text: film][commentary: five-channel video installation]
[text: video][commentary: pictographic video score]
²[text: woven cloth][commentary: –]

Does it begin with pencil on paper, or with the knotting of the threads?
Does composition take place at the loom, or in the editing suite?
Can there be any telling which is not also a making?

III

Five windows. No, five screens. A north German city. A cold lake and white façades. Flags flying. Tall windows fluttered by muslin. Baltic breeze. Jungfernstieg. Creak of timber. Fingers threading. Wooden ceilings. Ionic scroll. Columns of thread. Naked feet. White façades. Varnished slats. Five windows. No, five screens.

IV

The reel-to-reel in the attic room plays
'Mr Tambourine Man'. Floorboards
under your feet and the thick taste
of plaster dust. Hollow knock
& creak of wood on wood
and the leader tape flapping
like the broken-winged bird
at the window –

V

Sign: that it is a language, full of grace
says Pinsky, quoting a student poet
from the Illinois Schools for the Deaf
who'd been asked *if you could write*
one great poem, what would you
want it to be about? – no, not about but
she wants to show that rhyme can be
seen, one gesture's knock
against another, the knot & scroll
of fingers, five windows,
five screens, the telling,
the weave – .

Ten on the Edge

Friends picked up some stunning paintings, jewellery, pottery and scarves at the autumn exhibition of Ten on the Edge at Homestead Farm, Disley. Garry Olson, Mim Butler, Gordon Cooke, Loretta Harmer, Anne Mackinnon, Chris Emck were among those exhibiting.

One thousand five hundred pounds was raised for the Gallery development appeal. Thank you to all concerned!



Gordon Cooke's ceramics



Mim Butler's bowls

A Down of Hares



Stella Sails with some of her felt hares.

A down of hares, a drove of hares, a leap of hares even a kindle of hares – anyway, this is a charming group of felt hares created by a talented Friend. Stella Sails is one of the Tuesday team (she works with the events group) and became passionate about felt when during 1997 and 1998 when studying for City and Guilds Certificates in Ceramics and Creative Embroidery she experienced making felt for the first time. 'The creation of felt vessels seemed to resonate with both disciplines,' explains Stella 'and this soon became a passion. They could be stitched onto or left unadorned. I think this flexibility was part of the attraction for me and I could create very varied pieces.' After completing the C & G courses Stella did further studies in felt making, particularly in 3D, producing vessels, bags, hats and jewellery (note Stella's liquorice allsorts necklace!) and scarves.

So to the hares – 'I have recently become interested in dry needlefelting and in

particular creating small animals and birds.' Stella is a member of the International Feltmakers Association, which promotes felt-making globally and a local group, The Frodsham Friday Felters – so that's Tuesday and Friday taken care of for Stella! She treats her felt-making as an intense hobby, but not a commercial venture, although she will accept commissions.

Her past career was as secretary to the BBC Northern Dance Orchestra followed by teaching in a primary school. 'That was delightful. I was teaching art – we played all day making things!' It was through this work that Stella was enabled to do the City and Guild courses for which she is truly thankful. Now husband Richard, also a talented Friend, became an actor mid career – he is regularly seen introducing the Gina Miller concerts for the Friends and the Gallery and telling the audience about the Capital Development Appeal (for which we are truly grateful).

Book Review: Alastair Morton and the Edinburgh Weavers

Joan Gem gives her personal view of a book on artist designed textiles

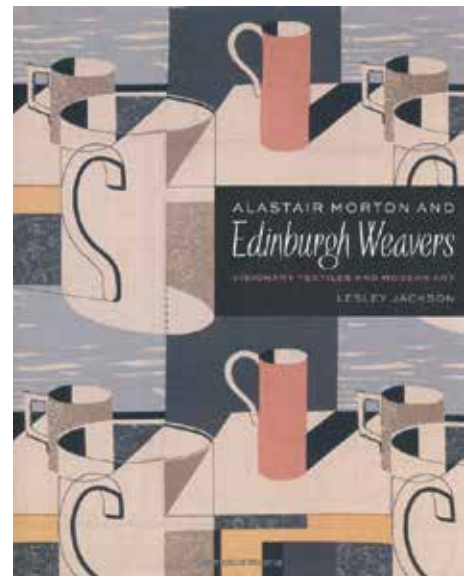
I loved this book. As soon as I opened it I found stories of personal interest. There is a section on British Celanese. My parents met while working in this Derbyshire factory and in 1947/8 my godmother still worked there. Every year she would make me a new dress for my birthday. Did I have an Alastair Morton designed dress fabric that year? I can't quite remember. There are many references to Ben Nicholson and his family. The book shows the closeness of the relationship between Morton and Winifred Nicholson, as well as his close relationship with Ben and also with Barbara Hepworth.

Morton commissioned a number of designs from them and included a lino print from drawings by Ben and Winifred's nine year old son Jake who later, in 1956, joined Edinburgh Weavers as manager of printed textiles and who only left in 1964 when Courtauld's took over the firm after Morton's death. In recent months the Whitworth has exhibited different versions of the iconic textile Vertical, designed by Ben Nicholson and made by Edinburgh Weavers in 1937.

Recently the Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall staged an exhibition of dresses made by Horrockses of Preston. These used stylish ready-to-wear printed cotton fabrics designed by Alastair Morton which were worn by the Queen and Princess Margaret on their royal tours.

This book is beautifully illustrated throughout with many illustrations of the textiles produced by Edinburgh Weavers – examples of which are in the major textile collections in the U.K., including Abbot Hall, the V & A and, of course, the Whitworth Art Gallery. For those who read this book there will be familiar textiles and stories woven through the lives of anyone who bought fabric during this period and detailed information for students studying design.

This book is also a recommended read for the volunteer access assistants.



Alastair Morton and the Edinburgh Weavers
Visionary Textiles and Modern Art
by Lesley Jackson

"A beautifully illustrated authoritative book that tells the story behind many artist designed textiles" - Frances Pritchard, Curator (Textiles) Whitworth Art Gallery.

Friends in South Africa

Liz Farnworth gives her impressions of the Rainbow Nation

In the weeks leading up to our departure, South Africa had been suffering bad press and we were feeling apprehensive as we landed in Johannesburg. Should we have opted for the more tourist friendly Cape? However our fears were soon allayed as we whizzed around sunny Gauteng in our little red mini-bus under the aegis of our tour manager.

Inspired by Nirvana Rommel's knowledge and love of the country, South Africa soon began to reveal its complex history and culture to us. In the Sterkfontein caves and at the Origins Centre we were introduced to hominids Mrs Ples and Littlefoot and to the mysterious shamanistic rock art of the indigenous San people. At Lesedi and the Ndebele village of Mapoch we familiarised ourselves with the diverse tribes that make up the Rainbow Nation (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Pedi, Venda and Basotho). Modern history was not neglected with visits made to the Voortrekker monument and Pretoria. At Soweto and the Apartheid Museum we experienced at first hand the hardships and horrors of the struggle towards a modern democracy. At Johannesburg Art Gallery we fell in love with the work of painter Gerard Sekoto and sculptor Jackson Hlungwane.

After a brilliant performance of "The Island" at the Market Theatre we were lucky enough to meet the actors Atandwa Kani and Nat Ramabulana. Time was even found for a spot of geology at the 220,000 year old Tswaing Meteorite Crater! Then it was time to head southwards, crossing the High Veldt, on the last lap of our journey into Kwa-Zulu Natal.

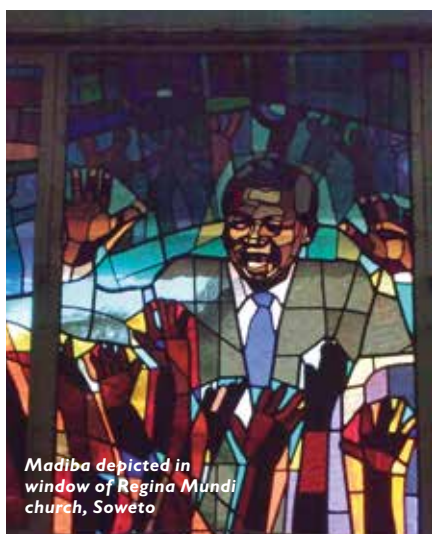
Highlights were staying in Rondavels at Simunye with the Zulus and meeting a Sangoma; trekking high in the Drakensberg to see rock art, some of it 800 years old, and being guided round the spectacular Phanzi Museum of African Art in Durban by the unforgettable Nkosi. It had been a busy mind-expanding 12 days. Everywhere we had been made welcome by friendly, smiling people justifiably proud of their heritage and eager to share it with us. Flying back to freezing Manchester laden with pots, baskets and beads we felt full of optimism for the future of The Rainbow Nation.



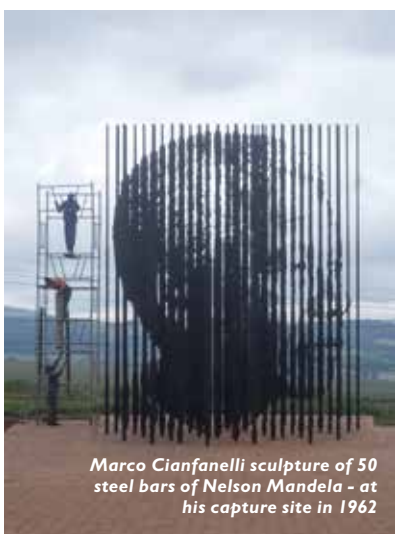
A bead and jewellery maker



Our guide at the meteorite crater



Madiba depicted in window of Regina Mundi church, Soweto



Marco Cianfanelli sculpture of 50 steel bars of Nelson Mandela - at his capture site in 1962



Nirvana shows her expertise at beadwork

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 address below...

Chairman, Friends of the Whitworth, The Whitworth Art Gallery, 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**