



NEW PERSPECTIVES ON VICTORIAN ART HISTORY

An introduction to the next seminar by Alison Smith, Lead Curator, 19th-Century British Art, Tate Britain

The British Art Network was set up with the aim of organising forums at which those involved in the study of British art could meet to share and develop their expertise in British art collections. Many of the museums and galleries involved in the Network house extensive collections of Victorian art, built in the main through gifts, bequests and purchases made during the nineteenth century. While many Victorian artworks have come to attain iconic status both in Britain and overseas, the reputation of others has suffered as the category 'Victorian' took on a lower cultural status during the twentieth century and as other schools assumed priority when it came to display. Restrictions on space and budget and the closure of many curatorial positions in recent years have added to the problem with the consequence that many works now languish in storerooms and basements with little chance of exposure. At the same time, historians of British art have started to look afresh at overlooked artists of the period in order to re-establish reputations and a broader understanding of the conceptual divisions separating historic from modern (see Martina Droth's contribution on Victorian Sculpture below). The Network's forthcoming seminar on neglected Victorian artists at Manchester City Art Gallery thus presents a unique opportunity for curators, conservators and academics to pool their knowledge of artists and artworks in order to nurture a more nuanced understanding of the Victorian art world and the ways in which collections were assembled in the past. It is hoped that all participants will feel willing to contribute in some way, either by bringing along examples of works they have been studying or joining the discussions that accompany each session, thereby fulfilling another key aim of the network: the lively exchange of ideas and knowledge between partners.



OVERLOOKED VICTORIAN ARTISTS SEMINAR

Next British Art Network event

Manchester City Art Gallery
 Thursday 16 January 2014, 11.00-16.45

This seminar looks at the case of Victorian artists, male and female, who were well-known in their day but have since come to occupy a marginal position in the history of British art. We will examine the historiographic and museological reasons for their neglect and consider how far new approaches to curating and research may help rehabilitate reputations. The seminar will take place at Manchester City Art Gallery, home to the work of some of the most famous artists of the period as well as largely forgotten figures, and will be based around discussions of artworks on display as well as presentations on some of the key themes pertinent to the subject. These will range from case studies that foreground the challenges involved in researching and re-establishing reputation, to broader questions concerning periodisation, media, the art market and public display. Led by Elizabeth Prettejohn, Professor of Art History at the University of York, Rebecca Milner, Curator, Manchester City Art Gallery, and Alison Smith, Lead Curator, 19th-Century British Art, Tate Britain, the seminar is open to curators, academics and researchers with an interest in promoting the lives and works of overlooked artists from the period.

To reserve your place at the seminar and to request travel funds please contact [Helen Woodfield](#), Network Coordinator for British Art.

For further information please visit the [British Art Network events webpage](#).



FORTHCOMING BRITISH ART NETWORK SEMINAR Events in 2014

Joseph Wright of Derby and the single artist collection

Museum and Art Gallery, Derby
Monday 30 June 2014, 11.00-17.00

Derby Museums is home to the world's largest collection of Joseph Wright's work. His decision to remain in Derby led contemporaries to dub him 'Wright of Derby', yet he maintained a national exhibition profile, and a wide, sometimes international, base of clients. This seminar aims to explore aspects of the national-provincial dichotomy, and the challenges and successes associated with administering single artist collections. Sharing their individual experiences and case studies are speakers from Gainsborough's House, Watts Gallery, York Art Gallery, The Hepworth Wakefield, and Derby Museums, alongside independent scholars with research interests in the field.



In addition, there will be an opportunity to visit the exhibition *Joseph Wright in Bath* (on show at the Museum and Art Gallery, Derby, from 25 May to 30 August 2014, and produced in partnership with the Holburne Museum, Bath).

Seminar programmed by Lucy Bamford, Keeper of Art, Derby Museums, and Alison Morton, Joseph Wright Projects Manager, Derby Museums, in collaboration with Martin Myrone, Lead Curator, Pre-1800 British Art, Tate Britain.

For further details please visit the [British Art Network events webpage](#).

AUDIO-RECORDINGS OF BRITISH POP ART SEMINAR Past British Art Network event

The British Art Network's second seminar, themed around British pop art, was held at Tate Britain on Monday 23 September. Programmed by Marguerite Nugent, Head of Curatorial Services, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Gemma Yates, Curator, The Hepworth Wakefield and Frances Guy, Head of Collections and Exhibitions, The Hepworth Wakefield, in collaboration with Chris Stephens, Head of Displays and Lead Curator Modern British Art, the day encompassed a range of themes from the atomic bomb to the social and cultural histories of the 1950s, and a number of proposals were offered for specific areas that can still provide a rich seam for research or exhibitions.



Presentations were made by Brendan Flynn, Monument Fellow, Wolverhampton Art Gallery; Flavia Frigeri, Assistant Curator, Tate Modern; Anthea Hamilton, Artist; Marco Livingstone, Art Historian; Simon Martin, Head of Collections & Exhibitions, Pallant House; David Mellor, University of Sussex, and Marguerite Nugent, Head of Curatorial Services, Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Audio recordings of a number of the day's presentations can be found on the [British Art Network webpages](#).

VICTORIAN SCULPTURE: CRAFT, POWER, INVENTION Martina Droth, Head of Research, Yale Center for British Art

For a field so little studied, it is perhaps surprising how entrenched the characterisation of Victorian sculpture seems to be. In the historiography, Victorian sculpture represents a fragmented field, and has long appeared to constitute two distinct halves: an early phase that largely perpetuates the neoclassical tradition, roughly comprising the 1830s through the 1860s; and an innovative later phase, marked by an eclectic and decorative aesthetic, beginning in the late 1870s and reaching a peak of creativity in the 1880s and 1890s. This latter phase, which has garnered the most attention from scholars, is commonly labelled the 'New Sculpture', and is so insistently associated with newness that it has swept all that came before into a large category thought of as its opposite – sculpture that appears old-fashioned, outdated, and somewhat redundant. In this divisive picture, large tranches of art production have been left completely unexamined, and even the most innovative and prominent artists of the period – such as John Bell and Henry Hugh Armstead – have been largely ignored.

The exhibition opening at the Yale Center for British Art in September

2014, and then travelling to Tate Britain in February 2015, will look at sculpture across the whole of the Victorian period. Our key themes are craft and reproduction, innovation and technology, through which we examine the central role that sculpture played in Britain and in the former empire. We have looked not so much for names, but for the most interesting works and dominant themes. In that process we have rediscovered the substantial oeuvres of artists whose most important works may not be on display in a public art gallery, but held in storerooms, or in institutional sites, such as the Houses of Parliament, in a cathedral, a private club, or a school. We have artists who are celebrated in their local town – such as Thomas Wallis of Louth – but are now virtually unheard of anywhere else. A diverse range of objects represents the breadth of the sculptor's profession. As well as celebrated virtuoso works in marble and bronze, the exhibition showcases sculptures and reliefs cast in silver, zinc, gesso, plaster and ceramic, or carved in ivory, wood, and even moulded in leather. As well as objects, we have assembled images that capture the different roles that sculpture played in public spaces, in educational forums, and in popular entertainment arenas. Through historic newspapers, photographs and films, we examine the way in which monuments and statues were deployed as imperial icons, celebrated in elaborate ritualistic ceremonies, and later, sometimes also attacked. The exhibition thereby seeks to capture the ubiquitous place of sculpture in the Victorian era, as well as demonstrating the richness of production throughout the period, showing that innovation, creativity, and newness are qualities that define the period from the 1830s to the 1860s as much as the final decades of the century.



OTHER VICTORIAN ARTIST ACTIVITY, EVENTS & RESOURCES

Beyond the British Art Network

Alexander Bassano: Victorian Photographer
Until Sunday 10 November 2013
Room 28: Case Display, National Portrait Gallery

This display commemorates the centenary of the death of Alexander Bassano (1829–1913) who established one of the most important photographic portrait studios of the Victorian era. His sitters included royalty, aristocracy, politicians, and leading names from the military, sciences and arts.

For further details please visit the [National Portrait Gallery's website](#).

Victorian Visions: Pre-Raphaelite watercolours and drawings
Until Sunday 10 November 2013
Wixamtree Gallery, The Higgins, Bedford

Drawn entirely from the Cecil Higgins Collection, this exhibition features work by the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the artists they influenced.

For further details please visit [The Higgins, Bedford website](#).

Characters and Caricatures: Photographs by Herbert Watkins
Until Sunday 17 November 2013
Room 24: Case Display, National Portrait Gallery

This display is the first to be held at the National Portrait Gallery to celebrate the life and work of Herbert Watkins, and draws together a selection of important albumen prints from the rarely-exhibited Herbert Watkins album, acquired by the Gallery in 1985.

For further details please visit the [National Portrait Gallery's website](#).

Victoriana: The Art of Revival
Until Sunday 8 December 2013
Guildhall Art Gallery, London

Bringing together twenty-eight major contemporary artists who encapsulate the many forms and motivations of modern takes on Victorian style, including Yinka Shonibare, Grayson Perry, Paula Rego, Dan Hillier, Paul St George, Rob Ryan, Kitty Valentine and Jake and Dinos Chapman, *Victoriana: The Art of Revival* explores work inspired by the nineteenth century and created over the last twenty years, highlighting the ongoing influence of the Victorian age.

For further details please visit the [City of London website](#).

Victorian London: High Culture and Low Life



Seminar Room One, Sackler Centre, Victoria & Albert Museum
11.00 – 15.30 Monday – Thursday, 21 July – 7 August 2014

A three-week short course organised by the V&A and King's College London. Learn about the world-changing cultural, social and political history of the nineteenth century's largest metropolis: London. Explore public institutions such as the monarchy, parliament and the press, alongside the more hidden worlds of popular entertainments, private members clubs and poverty and crime.

For further details, including how to book your place, please visit the [V&A's website](#).

A Highland Romance: Victorian Views of Scottishness

Until September 2014
Manchester Art Gallery

In the lead up to the referendum on the independence of Scotland taking place in autumn 2014, this display will look at Scottish national identity through nineteenth-century painting. Using works from the Galleries' historic collection, Scottishness will be examined from the point of view of both Scottish and English artists.

For further details, including how to book your ticket, please visit [Manchester Art Gallery's website](#).

The Victorian Gallery

Reading Museum
Permanent

The art collection of Reading Museum was founded in 1892 with the bequest of paintings from William Isaac Palmer of Huntley & Palmer biscuits. A small selection of the Museum's Victorian paintings are displayed in the Victorian Gallery on the second floor. These are displayed as 'open storage' in this gallery rather than as a conventional exhibition.

For further details please visit [Reading Museum's website](#).

OIL PAINTING EXPERT NETWORK (OPEN) NOW ART DETECTIVE

By Andrew Greg, University of Glasgow

Members of the British Art Network have already been introduced to the Oil Painting Expert Network (OPEN) by Nigel Llewellyn, Head of Research, Tate, and OPEN Steering Panel member, in the August Newsletter.

As a representative of OPEN's academic partner, the University of Glasgow, I thought it would be useful to update members on progress with the project.

First of all, a change of name! The Public Catalogue Foundation (PCF) is intending to further its digitisation and web publication work beyond oil paintings into, in the first instance, sculpture, and then perhaps other collection areas. The acronym OPEN is thus already outdated. The BBC/PCF website [Your Paintings](#), which I am sure you all are familiar with, has a facility called Art Detective, which enables users to submit information and comments about works featured on Your Paintings to the PCF with the aim of enhancing museums' and the site's core databases. After discussion, the project's Steering Panel has agreed that the name of the new project should also be Art Detective, thus broadening its appeal and seamlessly integrating it with the existing facility.

The project's timetable will be later than that indicated by Nigel in August. Internal testing of the Art Detective interface and website will now take place in December/January with a live but private testing of the beta version, with real queries and suggestions and real groups of experts, taking place in January/February. The six specialist areas that have been selected for the pilot are: portraits, Italian Renaissance, Scottish paintings and subjects, military painting and history, marine painting and maritime history, and dress and textiles. Curators with special interests in these areas who would like to offer their expertise and take part in the pilot are asked to contact me. If any curators have oil paintings in these areas in their collections that they would like expert advice on please send the url of the painting on the Your Paintings website (go to the painting's page on Your Paintings and copy the url from the top of browser window) and a summary of existing knowledge and documentation about the works directly to



[Andrew Greg](#).

Privacy (of both discussions and contributions) has been the subject of consultation and of discussion by the Steering Panel. The default position will be that discussions about subjects, attributions, dating, authenticity, etc., will both be publicly visible and open to public involvement (by registration). It was strongly felt that there would be enormous educational benefit from such discussions being made public (see for example the BBC TV series Fake or Fortune) and that the views of participants would be likely to be taken more seriously if they are identified rather than being anonymous. Sensitive curatorial issues such as valuations and conservation will not be publicly discussed. All proposed subjects for public discussion on Art Detective will be approved in advance by the PCF/GU project hub and all subsequent contributions to discussions will be similarly monitored. Your views on this issue are still welcome.

Should you have any comments or wish to contribute to the content of the next newsletter please email BritishArtNetwork@tate.org.uk.

The British Art Network is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.



If you have any questions or want to update your contact details please contact [Helen Woodfield](#), Network Coordinator for British Art, via Helen.Woodfield@tate.org.uk.

- Top image: Arthur Boyd Houghton, Lady with a Book c.1860, Oil paint on canvas, support: 241 x 190 mm, Presented by Mrs E.C. Davis 1926 © Tate
- Second image: Sir Edwin Henry Landseer, High Life 1829, exhibited 1831, Oil paint on mahogany, support: 457 x 349 mm, Presented by Robert Vernon 1847 © Tate
- Third image: Joseph Wright of Derby, Sir Brooke Boothby 1781, Oil paint on canvas, support: 1486 x 2076 mm frame: 1740 x 2315 x 90 mm, Bequeathed by Miss Agnes Ann Best 1925 © Tate
- Fourth image: Richard Hamilton, My Marilyn 1965, Screenprint on paper, image: 518 x 632 mm, Acquisition Presented by Rose and Chris Prater through the Institute of Contemporary Prints 1975 © The estate of Richard Hamilton
- Fifth image: Sir Alfred Gilbert, Mother Teaching Child 1881, Marble, object: 1035 x 673 x 660 mm, 505kg, Bequeathed by H.L. Doulton 1931 © Tate
- Sixth image: Charles Napier Hemy, London River 1904, Oil paint on canvas, support: 1206 x 1829 mm, Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1904 © Tate
- Last image: British (?) School 19th Century, A Painter's Self-Portrait date not known, Oil paint on canvas, support: 597 x 495 mm, Bequeathed by Lady Haversham 1929 © Tate

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