



SIZE DOES MATTER

An Introduction to the next British Art Network Seminar, by Jenny Gaschke, Curator of Fine Art, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

'It certainly beats the rotas, holiday planners and stern health and safety announcements that many workers stare at on their office walls. In Bristol's archaeology department they have a 28ft-high altarpiece by William Hogarth' (Guardian, 23 June 2011.) Every few years the story of Hogarth's Triptych for St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol, depicting Christ's Resurrection and Ascension and considered to be 'one of the most splendid pieces of religious art to have been executed by an Englishman since the Reformation' (Edward Croft-Murray), bubbles up in the national media. Commissioned in 1755, removed from St Mary Redcliffe in 1859 and eventually accessioned by Bristol Museum and Art Gallery in 1955, the altarpiece has been installed at St Nicholas Church in Bristol since 1973. Since 2000 the building serves as office space and public access is nominal. Hogarth's work has been condemned to the occasional 'rediscovery' by local and broadsheet journalists. Each time, the public imagination is briefly captured by the 'lost' or 'hidden' masterpiece, only for the three paintings to disappear from the collective art-loving consciousness after a few calls to restore the enormous canvasses back to their rightful position in British art history – and the 'public' domain.



Even to secure the altarpiece for the continued academic and curatorial attention it deserves has so far proven difficult due to the lack of a more suitable display space and the formidable costs of conserving and moving it. But would the perception of Hogarth's art and the course of British art history be any different if the triptych hung in a gallery? Is our problem really only one of funding? Do curators even have to find a solution?

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery is certainly not alone in trying to grapple with the prevailing challenges exceptionally large paintings in public collections pose for conservation, display and interpretation. Many if not most art galleries and public collections represented in the British Art Network will have huge religious and historical British paintings of all periods, but especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, either rolled up in store or practically irremovable on display, preventing conservation, research and any new interpretation and public offer. What can we learn from successful (inter-)national projects to restore and redisplay the largest of these 'forgotten' pictures and what are the true constraints? The next British Art Network seminar, details below, will offer the chance to discuss these issues in greater depth and explore ways in which these rather big problems can be turned into new and innovative opportunities.

WILLIAM HOGARTH'S TRIPTYCH FOR ST MARY REDCLIFFE: HOW TO DEAL WITH ENORMOUS ARTWORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Next British Art Network seminar

10 October 2014, 11.00 – 17.00
 St Nicholas Church and Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

This seminar in Bristol will focus on the prevailing challenges exceptionally large paintings in public collections pose for conservation, display and interpretation. It is aimed at curators of British art, conservators and interested academics. The event will take its starting point from William Hogarth's Triptych for St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and the mismatch between its great art historical relevance and almost complete absence from public and even academic



consciousness. Hogarth's popularity as a painter, printmaker and satirist has never ceased, but rests almost entirely on his 'gallery-sized' work. Yet, reintegrating the altar into the canon by at least including it in temporary exhibitions has turned out to be too great a challenge in terms of finance and logistics and prevented any such project from getting beyond proposal stage. What can be done?

Speakers will introduce a number of case studies, ranging from the Rijksmuseum's highly successful new displays of seventeenth-century Dutch masterpieces, such as Rembrandt's *The Night Watch*, to the National Trust's recent conservation of painted ceilings in Kingston Lacy and Ightham Mote. We hope that the seminar, which will be held at St Nicholas Church and Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, will inspire new ways of thinking about an old problem.

Programmed by Dr. Jenny Gaschke, Curator of Fine Art, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery in collaboration with Martin Myrone, Lead Curator, pre-1800 British Art, Tate.

To reserve your place at the seminar and to request travel funds please contact [Helen Woodfield](#), Network Coordinator for British Art. Please note the seminar will take place across two venues and will involve walking, if you have any access issues please notify Helen Woodfield ahead of the event.

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

FORTHCOMING BRITISH ART NETWORK SEMINAR Events in 2014

Basic Design and the Hatton Gallery: Researching, displaying and sharing archival resources

**21 November 2014, 11.00 – 17.00
Hatton Gallery / Newcastle University**

There is nothing like the encounter with archival material to find one's bearing relative to a specific history, to locate oneself in time and to activate one's imagination and produce new insight. Over the past decade, the interest in the notion, use and presentation of the archive as the site of living history and dialectical exchange has burgeoned.

This British Art Network seminar, supported by the John Ellerman Foundation, will take the revolutionary teaching known as Basic Design and the related display on view at the Hatton Gallery as a starting point for a day of presentations and discussion on the way in which researchers, curators and art institutions use, present and share archival material with their audiences.

Invited speakers will discuss their research into the history of Basic Design teaching, addressing the methodological challenges they encountered and the insight they gained from working with archival material. There will be short case study presentations from academics and curators who will examine the way in which their research, curatorial projects and education activities have been shaped around the archive as a living, nonlinear and discursive site. The day will also offer a chance to discuss different approaches to making archives accessible via exhibitions, digitisation, publication and learning and participation activities.

Programmed by Elena Crippa, Curator, Modern and Contemporary British Art, Tate, in collaboration with Rob Airey, Keeper of Art, Hatton Gallery.

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](#).

JOINT SUBJECT SPECIALIST NETWORKS SEMINAR Invitation to Participate

**12 – 13 March 2015
Tate Britain, The National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery**

This two-day seminar is a collaboration between the British Art, [European Paintings pre-1900](#) and the [Understanding British Portraits](#) Subject Specialist Networks. The seminar will aim to examine and



investigate a range of subjects relevant to museum professionals and their collections through three overarching subjects: the role of cataloguing, research partnerships and disseminating research findings. We welcome the input of British Art Network members and invite proposals for 15-minute presentations by the deadline of **Friday 5 September 2014**.

More information about the Joint Subject Specialist Networks Seminar and details on how to participate can be found on the [British Art Network events webpage](#).

If you have any queries or require any further information about the Call for Participation please contact [Helen Woodfield](#) Network Coordinator for British Art.



A REFLECTION ON THE RECENT JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY AND SINGLE ARTIST COLLECTIONS SEMINAR By Penelope Curtis, Director, Tate Britain

Joseph Wright provided an excellent case study for a wider consideration of the single artist collection. We learnt from Lucy Bamford, Keeper of Art, Derby Museums, that it was Derby's successful Designation attempt which finally persuaded the local authority to provide more funding, proving that national approbation, rather than criticism, is the more effective lever. Very nearly all the Wright collection is now on show in Derby, but although the Museum has, throughout its history, been constant in its search for Wrights (and not quite Wrights, as they are termed locally), recent funding bids have been rebuffed on the grounds that the collection already represents a given area more than adequately. This touched on the question germane to the topic more generally: how valuable is a single artist collection in its own right, and when does it need putting into context? Does the single-minded focus on a local hero impede the development of collections more generally? The new study room in Derby raised the question of audience, catering as it does for the very focused scholar as well as the local enthusiast and the general public. It was interesting to note how there can be a certain schizophrenia in trying to put the Derby back into Joseph Wright, while at the same time trying to take Wright out of Derby.



Mark Bills from Gainsborough's House spoke almost literally of bringing place – the landscape itself – through the window of the museum. Alice Insley's account of the early years of Derby Free Library and Museum showed how the museum's identity was from the beginning (1882) associated with the artist, and how this mirrored later attempts at biographical branding, as in Wakefield's Hepworth. She also made the persuasive link between the civic developments in Antwerp, with Rubens, and in Derby with Wright. Etty too has been steadily and regularly acquired by York, but he is less immediately associated with the city, and his works will be integrated into the wider collections display when they reopen. Nicholas Tromans reminded us of the clarity of decision-making in relation to developing single artist collections, whilst suggesting at the same time that the moral or ethical values associated with an artist's life can get in the way. He suggested an intriguing mix of the homely and the international in his reading of Watts, and to a degree this admixture characterises the problematic of any solo artist museum.

The question of biography, of an artist's perceived local good works, or good character more generally, raised the spectre of artist as role model, as is now the case of Hepworth in Wakefield. The single artist collection can be as much, if not more of a problem for a large mixed collection, as is the case with Charles Towne and the Walker Art Gallery, or of course for Turner at Tate. Alex Kidson made an eloquent case for the value of understanding the nuances of difference within one oeuvre, even if he was pessimistic that more than a couple of the eighty-eight works now attributed to Towne in Liverpool would ever be seen. In closing Sam Smiles evoked an image of single artist collections as 'black holes', and spoke of his preference for the 'republic of art' over any single monarchy. This put me in mind of all those artists who protested at the possibility that Moore would be accorded his own rooms at the Tate, and to wonder where they are now?

A selection of the audio recordings from the seminar can be found on the [British Art Network webpages](#).

THE ROYAL ACADEMY'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2018

Charles Saumarez Smith, Secretary and Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Arts

In 2018, the Royal Academy will be 250 years old. We want the celebrations to be as wide-ranging as possible and to involve other institutions besides the Royal Academy itself. Hence this appeal for help from all those people involved in the study of British art, and in particular the network of museums and galleries across the country. At the moment, we are hoping to extend our summer exhibition in 2018 in such a way as to cover its history as well. The suggestion is that we will cover its eighteenth-century history in the John Madejski Fine Rooms (as designed by Kent) and its nineteenth-century history in the Sackler Gallery. We will be doing this jointly with Mark Hallett, Director of Studies at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, and Sarah Turner, the Assistant Director for Research. But we are considering wider ways of marking the 250th Anniversary. One suggestion is that we might encourage regional collections to highlight every RA whose work is represented by adding RA after the artist's name. We also hope that museums and galleries might consider celebrating the anniversary by doing RA-related exhibitions in 2018. We are planning to organise an event at the RA next year to consider how best to coordinate proposals. Meanwhile, it would be very helpful if you could contact either [Charles Saumarez Smith](#) or [Tim Marlow](#) with your suggestions.



OTHER BRITISH ART RELATED NEWS AND EVENTS

Beyond the British Art Network

Art Detective

Featured in previous newsletters, [Art Detective](#) provides a public forum for discussions around publicly owned paintings in the UK. Since launching in April 2014, Art Detective has made a number of discoveries; most notably a painting entitled *London Bridge* at the Atkinson Art Gallery has been attributed to Jacques-Emile Blanche. We have also had sitter attributions, such as *Portrait of an Unknown Rheumatologist* at the Royal Free Hospital, was found to be First World War Doctor, Charles Brehmer Heald (1882–1974).

More discovery stories can be found on the [Art Detective webpages](#).

Acceptance in Lieu Allocation – Frank Auerbach works

A major group of works by Frank Auerbach from the estate of Lucian Freud are now available for allocation to UK collections through Arts Council England's Acceptance in Lieu Panel. A selection of twenty works are currently on display at [Manchester Art Gallery](#) until 10 August 2014. All the works by Auerbach in the collection are then to be displayed at Tate Britain from 25 August - 2 November 2014.

The deadline for applications is Friday 21 November 2014. See the [Arts Council England](#) website for further information.

Progress

Foundling Museum
Until 7 September 2014

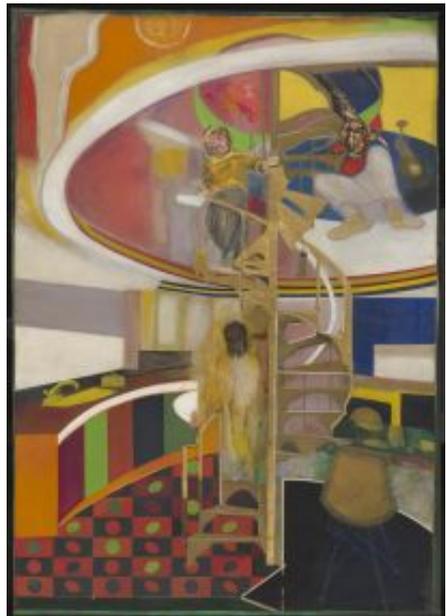
To mark the 250th anniversary of Hogarth's death, the *Progress* exhibition brings together for the first time three great contemporary responses to his eternally modern moral tale, *A Rake's Progress*. Exploring issues of sexuality, race, class, vice, temptation, youth and urban living this exhibition both highlights Hogarth's continuing relevance and allows us to consider the idea of 'progress'.

For further details please visit the [Foundling Museum website](#).

Basic Design

Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University
20 September - 13 December 2014

This exhibition explores the role that Basic Design - a new radical approach to training in arts schools - played in revolutionising art education across Britain, and particularly in Newcastle, in the 1950s and 60s. Through the work of some of its key teachers including Richard Hamilton, Tom Hudson, Victor Pasmore, Terry Frost and



Harry Thubron, and their students, the display will survey the main features of Basic Design as they emerged and were taught in Britain, with accompanying archival material and video documentation. In partnership with Tate Britain.

For further details please visit the [Hatton Gallery website](#).

The First Georgians: Art & Monarchy 1714-1760

The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace
Until 12 October 2014

To mark the 300th anniversary of the beginning of the Georgian era, *The First Georgians: Art and Monarchy 1714-1760* exhibition explores royal patronage and taste in the reigns of George I and George II as a product of a time when Britain was the world's most liberal, commercial and modern society. It brings together over 300 works in the Royal Collection from royal residences across the UK.

For further details please visit the [Royal Collection Trust website](#).

Body & Void: Echoes of Moore in Contemporary Art

Until 26 October 2014
Perry Green, The Henry Moore Foundation

Featuring work by Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread and Antony Gormley this exhibition explores current interpretations of some of Moore's central themes - *Mother and child*, *Internal and External forms* and *Figure in a Landscape* - and present an alternative trajectory for contemporary art contrasting with the historically accepted view of post-war Avant Garde. New, site specific works by artists Richard Deacon and Richard Long have been commissioned as part of the exhibition.

For further details please visit [The Henry Moore Foundation website](#).

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](mailto:Helen.Woodfield@tate.org.uk), Network Coordinator for British Art, via Helen.Woodfield@tate.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7887 3930.

- Top image: William Hogarth, Triptych for St Mary Redcliff, Bristol, 1755–1756, Oil on canvas, © Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
- Second image: Sir Stanley Spencer, The Resurrection, Cookham 1924–7, Oil paint on canvas, Support: 2743 x 5486 mm, Presented by Lord Duveen 1927, © Tate
- Third image: Richard Hamilton, Chromatic spiral, 1950, Oil paint on plywood, support: 543 x 485 mm, Presented anonymously 1998, © The estate of Richard Hamilton
- Fourth image: John Simpson, Head of a Man (?Ira Frederick Aldridge) exhibited 1827, Oil paint on canvas, support: 733 x 562 x 18 mm, Presented by Robert Vernon 1847, © Tate
- Fifth image: Joseph Wright of Derby, A View of Catania with Mount Etna in the Distance c.1775, Oil paint on canvas, support: 660 x 886 mm frame: 908 x 1134 x 122 mm, Purchased 1971, © Tate
- Sixth image: John Singer Sargent, Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose 1885-6, Oil paint on canvas, support: 1740 x 1537 mm frame: 2185 x 1970 x 130 mm, Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1887, © Tate
- Last image: Frank Bowling, Mirror 1966, Oil paint on canvas, Support: 3100 x 2168 mm, Presented by the artist, Rachel Scott, and their 4 children: Benjamin & Sacha Bowling, Marcia & Iona Scott 2013, © Frank Bowling

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