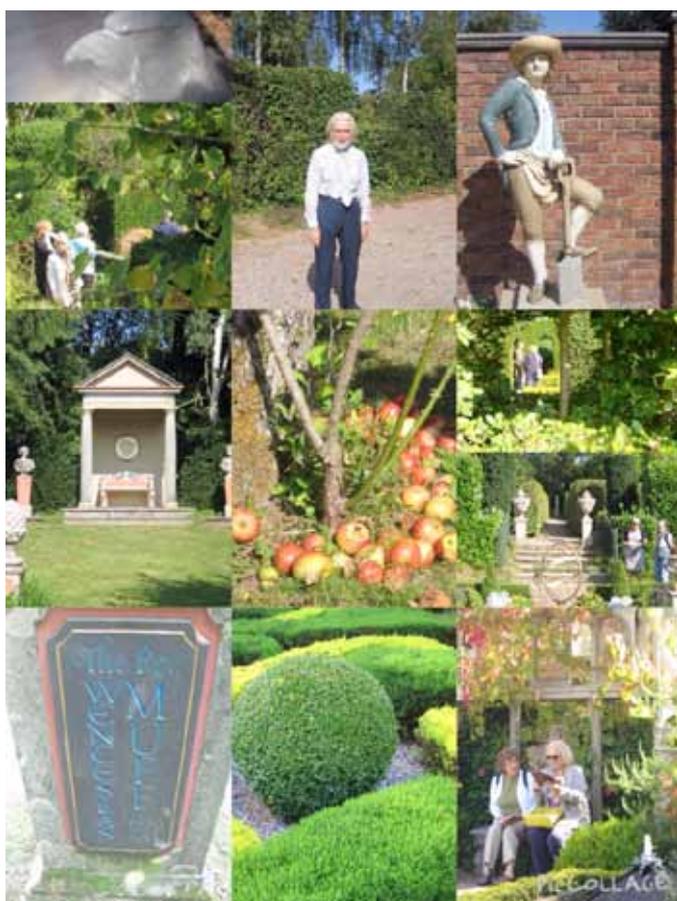


Friends Visit to Laskett Gardens and Monnow Valley Art Gallery



Laskett Gardens
© photo. Judy Barnes, Russ Harris, Angela George, Hilary Rose

Twenty five Friends arrived at Sir Roy Strong's Herefordshire home for our visit to the Laskett Gardens. After the up-to-the-minute Dutch-produced audio guides were dispensed we set off in different directions to explore. A calm descended as we floated around the 'rooms' of the gardens, a mixture of poignancy and peace prevailed. We hardly glimpsed our fellow Friends as we wandered the paths of this four acre site. A soft autumn sun gently caressed our skin, and now it is a distant memory as winter chill sets in; a memory filled with warmth and affection.

According to our Vice Chair, Russ Harris "It was probably THE best day of summer" as our intrepid group of FoGVAGers set off to find Laskett Gardens and Monnow Art Gallery. Sir Roy was just leaving to record *Desert Island Discs* as we arrived at

Laskett, but it did not diminish our enjoyment. The intricacy of the gardens was belied by its small acreage.

After lunch we made our way to Monnow Valley Arts Centre (via reverses into various ditches) and received a warm welcome with cups of tea and an informed talk by Rupert Otten on their exhibition *Edward Ardizzone (1900-1979): The Creator of Little Tim and Friends*, who also illustrated an edition of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. In the lower studio was a marvellous touring exhibition *Words Set Free* which showcased an array of typographers, calligraphers and font designers on the theme of Free Speech. We also had the opportunity to explore the tranquil sculpture gardens in its stunning setting with the backdrop of the Abergavenny hills.

After such enjoyable visits, in perfect sunshine, we were reluctant to board the coach to return home, but everyone was in good spirits and agreed it was a wonderful trip.



Laskett Gardens
© photo. Angela George

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A garden at Monnow Arts Centre
© photo. Hilary Rose

Since visiting the Gardens, Sir Roy's Desert Island Discs were aired, and a Friend alerted us to an article in the Daily Telegraph saying that Sir Roy Strong offered the garden to the National Trust, for them to take over after his death. But the Trust declined because the gardens failed to 'reach the high rung of historic and national importance'. So Sir Roy has said that the garden should remain open for a year after his death and then destroyed - not bulldozed as such, but personal aspects would be taken away, and the house sold.

© Judy Barnes and Russ Harris 2014

Friends News

Membership Increase

Thank you to all those members who have amended standing orders to account for the increase in membership fees: a thank you, also, to all members who pay by cheque for remembering the increase. May I remind those who have not yet paid the increase or amended their standing orders to please do so.

Membership Renewals

Could I also remind anyone who has not yet renewed their membership for 2014-2015 to do so please.

Your continued support for the Friends is much appreciated and valued.

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Gustav and Janice Planitzer of Pembrey.

Paul and Hazel Dixon of Killay.

Margaret McCloy of Swansea Marina.

Kim Collis of Swansea.

Michael Freeman of Manselton.

Roger Parmiter, whose wife, Ruth, has been a member for many years.

Daniel Trevidy of Skewen.

Julian Caruana, whose wife, Marilyn, has also been a member for many years.

Jane and Kim Harrison of Clydach.

We hope you enjoy your membership of the Friends and look forward to meeting you at our Events.

We receive a standing order from Dawn Newton Williams but have no record of her address. Please notify me should you know this member.

Former Friends

Mrs Mary Lloyd, a longstanding member of the Friends, formerly of Langland and now living in Mumbles Bay Court has resigned due to lack of mobility. We thank Mary for her support and commitment over many years, and wish her well.

Hilary McKenzie, a former Chair of the Friends, has not renewed her membership due to health problems, and we send Hilary our best wishes

for the future. Although I didn't know her personally, I am told that she was a driving force during her term 1990-1993, and we are sorry that illness prevents her from attending now.

We also send our condolences to Janet Thomas whose husband, Christopher, formerly of Westfa Road, Uplands, sadly recently passed away.

Twitter/BBC Your Paintings

We have been asking Friends to browse the collection and choose a painting from the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, BBC Your Paintings website, saying, in as few words as possible, why the painting particularly appeals. I will then tweet it.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/search/located_at/the-glynn-vivian-art-gallery-7565_locations

Please have a look at the Collection and email me with your choice or telephone if you are not on email so that I can merrily tweet!

Membership Drive

We are actively canvassing for members, so if you know like-minded friends or neighbours, could you play your part and encourage them to join please? Application forms can be downloaded from our website or I can provide them.

Zena James, an active member, invited us along to the Glynn Vivian 55+ Club to talk about the Friends. Our Vice Chair, Russ Harris, visited the group, which resulted in new members joining the Friends. Russ has also talked with the U3A Art History class, and has visited the U3A Art Appreciation class.

I met the Black Kettle Collective in September: a lively group, enthusiastic and keen on art and art talk. The Collective works in association with the Glynn Vivian, engaging and responding to their programme of exhibitions, collections and activities and meet at the YMCA. The group captures a younger following and hold Events throughout the city. They've created a community lending library at the Glynn Vivian offsite home in the YMCA. If you are passing, pop in.

Art Fund Cards

The Art Fund cards are for use by members of the Friends and if you would like to borrow them please contact me.

Judy Barnes, Membership Secretary

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A Child's Christmas in Wales

An exhibition at Swansea Museum by John Upton

As we come to the end of 2014 most people's thoughts will be turning to Christmas but, for me, Christmas has become an all year round obsession. Back in 1993, when I launched my first range of local, Welsh Christmas cards, I was surprised at the positive response from shop owners, gallery managers and the general public alike. The designs seemed to strike a chord with people who were drawn to my traditional painting style, the attention to detail and the warmth and humour of the subjects. To ensure the accuracy of the detail I began collecting vintage and antique Christmas decorations, especially old-style Father Christmases. As many collectors will testify, collections have a tendency to grow and grow!



Pressed card Santa standees from 1920s -1930s
© photo. John Upton

Over the following twelve years my greeting card business continued to expand until it became too demanding for me to manage alongside my full-time job as Education Officer at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. Rather reluctantly in 2005, I sold the business but I have (for some strange reason) continued to buy vintage Christmas items for my collection. There is, undoubtedly, something magical about Christmas.

Dylan Thomas, Swansea's most famous son, captured perfectly his memories of childhood Christmases in his much-loved *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. His mastery of language cleverly stimulates our emotions and his eye for detail stirs deep memories of our own experiences. I often wished I could paint as Dylan wrote. Anyway, using what talent I have, I decided to set about creating a series of fourteen illustrations to accompany the text of Dylan's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* in the vain hope that, maybe one day, I might be able to publish my own illustrated version of the piece. These illustrations form the backbone of a new exhibition at Swansea Museum, which runs from November 14th to January 4th 2015. Also featured are fifteen original paintings from which my Christmas cards were created.

In the UK we are probably most familiar with the edition of *A Child's Christmas in Wales* illustrated by Edward Ardizzone but there have been several publications with illustrations by other artists. Many of these are American. Dylan Thomas expert, Jeff Towns, has kindly agreed to display a range of illustrated versions from his personal collection in the exhibition.

Cabinets full of vintage and antique Father Christmas figures, bisque cake decorations and a selection of large, pressed cardboard standees from my collection are also included, together with a range of scarce Victorian and Edwardian Christmas ceramics.



John Upton *Always on Christmas night there was music*
(*A Child's Christmas in Wales*) acrylic on canvas 2006
© The Artist © photo. John Upton

The re-created old Swansea pub that has featured throughout the Museum's centenary celebrations of Dylan Thomas's birth has been decorated with vintage streamers, etc.



John Upton *Baby's First Christmas*
acrylic on canvas 1985
© The Artist © photo. John Upton

What better way to get into festive mood than to visit the wonderful Swansea Museum and enter the magical world of Christmas Past?

© John Upton 2014

Y Tu Mamá También...

I knew the Llandudno festival was coming up, so when my son Charley rang to ask 'Mum, do you fancy a trip?' I could see myself up and down the promenade, seeking out some art, watching him painting his allotted beach-hut, and maybe a trot up the Orme.

'Llandudno? Lovely!'

'No, Chile, actually. A week painting a mural in Valparaíso for Turismo Chile.'

'You know your great-grandmother was Chilean?'

'Really? Well you can go and look up the rellies while I'm spraying.'

So there we were, under the parasol of Turismo Chile from the moment we were first blinded by sunshine and heat as we stepped out of the airport in Santiago, Charley, David Bebbler, a photographer from the Times, and me. Having failed to cram the hotel bathroom into my suitcase – all slate and mirrors, we were driven at first crack to Valparaíso by the lovely hands-free Marcello, who pointed right and left simultaneously as he gave us a potted history of Chile and described the delights of the Casablanca vineyards. Luckily he got interestingly lost in the lower reaches of Valparaíso, so we'd covered the vast Sunday market, the port with its hotchpotch of warships, submarines, container ships and tiny pleasure craft, the financial district, including the Banco de Chile where my Scots grandfather worked, before climbing up one of the forty five hills and finding light and air and our beautiful colonial style hotel, with the Bellas Artes museum just across the street. How handy, because I was on a mission...

Within minutes, a cohort of young Turismo Chilenos and press-people took us off to see the wall that waited for Charley's handiwork. Maybe here I need to explain that as 'Pure Evil' he is an urban/street artist, who also manages to run two adjoining galleries in Leonard Street in Shoreditch, showing his own work and also that of like-minded artists.



Charley at work on an image of Pablo Neruda below the Paseo Atkinson, Valparaíso
© photo. Mary Uzzell Edwards



Charley leaving his tag below the Paseo Atkinson, Valparaíso
© photo. Juan Jaegar

The wall was huge, 30m x 10m, wedge-shaped, newly painted grey-blue, a great base. It was just below the Paseo Atkinson, a terrace of coloured houses on a promenade with very English front gardens. Roses in full bloom in November! A blessed lack of traffic, as most of the streets ended on the edge of a ravine.

Monday morning out by nine, Charley being filmed as he clanked his way (spray-cans) through streets, up steps, through alley-ways. Every spare inch of wall, lamppost, pavement, even roofs are covered in intricate murals, figures, quotations, messages – such life in it all, such celebration, and of course the Municipality have decided that this is a huge draw. I've never seen such a positive attitude to graffiti.

So Charley began three hot strenuous days, roped to the terrace railings above, assisted by a kind little man who wedged the ladders and shaky scaffolding (doubly watchful after the lunchtime pisco sours) and retrieved cans as they broke loose and headed for the port. He was never short of onlookers. A young Chilean muralist, Vale Clave, helped him with a townscape of Valparaíso, an iconic patchwork of multi-coloured houses (paint but not labour comes with the Unesco Heritage status). Pablo Neruda was the main star of the wall, plus some Escher-like shapes, a stream of flying Pure Evil bunnies, a tiny tribute to the black stray dog who had adopted him, and his trade-mark inscription 'Your heart is a weapon as big as your fist. Keep fighting. Keep loving' In Spanish of course!

The wall and its camp of photographers, tourists, the Mayor, his entourage, the friendly wall-watchers from the houses opposite, who played Charley's choice of music, whose babies and dogs hung perilously out of the windows – this was my base as I walked the length and breadth of Valparaíso. Apparently the girls here have the best legs in Chile. Mine just screamed at me.

But back to my mission... I had heard that there was a painting by my great-uncle Enrique Swinburn (1859-1929) in the Bellas Artes Museum, the Palacio Barburizza. Architecturally, I have never seen a more fanciful building. It dates back to 1916, firstly commissioned by the Italian Zanelli family. Pascual Barburizza, a nitrate millionaire originally from Croatia, bought it in 1925, and made some 'modifications and retrofits'. The original city art gallery came unstuck in the earthquake of 1906 (when my grandparents' house collapsed and they moved to Wimbledon) and after many moves and homes it came here to the Paseo Yugoslavo on Alegre Hill.

I love unexpected, un-researched galleries in far-away places. On a par with a Christmas stocking. Passing the roses and a tree with enormous pale pink trumpets, the house gleaming white in the sun, the rooms shady, quiet, not



Bellas Artes Museum, the Palacio Barburizza, Valparaíso
© photo. Mary Uzzell Edwards

enormous - it felt like a house, a home. Even more so when I made a beeline for a rather Italianate smallest room, which said 'No Pasar' and had no door, which I thought was awkward. Realising it was too stylish for the likes of me, I looked elsewhere, passing through a marble-walled bathroom, complete with 'toning shower' from 1910. Ah-hah, they were exhibits. That could have been embarrassing.

The first painting I saw was a little Boudin *Party on the Beach* which I greeted like an old friend. After that, I was in a house of strangers. The roll-call of names was confusing, but oh so Chilean: Hassan, Helsby, Somerscales, Cheney, Lundstedt, Jim Mendoza Mc Ray, Jonkhind, through to the gloriously named Carlos Pelikan Rotter and Alf Tutt Madsen.

Barburizza's own collection covers paintings of the mid 19th C. to the early 20th, mostly European, charming, but nothing to blow your socks off, apart from the Russian Ivan Chultse *Sun on Snow* painting, which I loved. Chilean art follows, up to the 1970's, figures and landscapes, much Impressionism –

Paris seemed to be on most painters' itinerary. And then there is 'Valparaíso through the Ages', celebrating the city as it grew so rapidly, which I found more interesting, knowing the streets a little better by now. Lastly there was a strong, lively contemporary collection of painting, printing and sculpture, seemingly based on award-winners of various art prizes. The sculpture was large, sometimes brutal, products of the 70's, as well it might be. All styles of painting are here, great vivacity and experimentation.

I found four of my great-uncle's work– very meticulous, a great sense of light, sky and weather. A sailing ship in moonlight, one of the port with a weird cumbersome floating dry dock, (illus.), a storm at sea and a landscape with a tiny peasant, working away. I looked around the room, and felt moved and proud, and rooted - mission accomplished!

For further information visit: <http://vimeo.com/m/111189399>



Enrique Swinburn *Antiguo Muelle Prat* 1920
© photo. Mary Uzzell Edwards

© Mary Uzzell Edwards 2014

100 Club News

Thank you to everyone who helped the 100 Club reach 95 members. As a result £700 was handed over to the Friends of Glynn Vivian. Do you think we could have 5 more members next year to make it truly a "100 Club"?

The prize winners since the last report are:-

September	number	67 17	Eurfron Coyle William Lewis	£25 £10
October		28 37	Stephen Foot Ros Castell	£25 £10
November		92 64	Lyndon Morris A.B. and S.M. Wood	£25 £10
December		01 72	H.M. Mackenzie Margaret B. Jones	£25 £10

© Hilary Rose 100 Club Promoter
16 Kilfield Road, Bishopston, Swansea, SA3 3DL. Tel. (01792)232808

The visual culture of south Wales since 1910

A Three-Part Survey based on the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery collections

by Ceri Thomas – a version of the public lecture given in Swansea on 17 April 2014

Part Three (1980-2014): 'Our' Art Scene

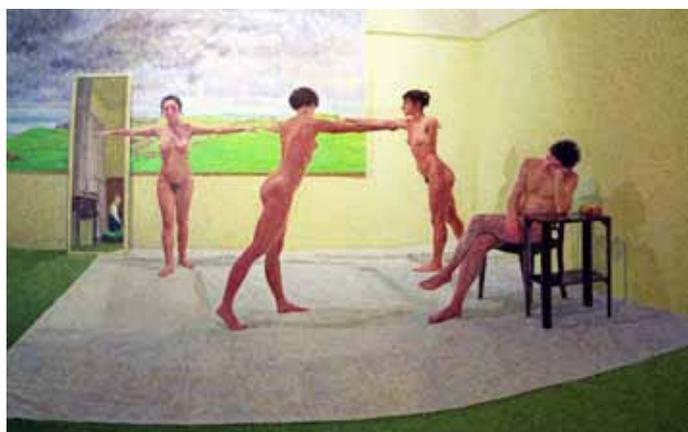
This third phase in the visual culture of south Wales takes us out of the historical period and into our own times whose fuller significance is yet to be established. It has seen major changes in art theory and practice together with the rise of the female curator at the Glynn Vivian, a foretaste of which had been provided by Kathleen Armistead in the Sixties. Her successor John Bunt left in early 1982 and he was succeeded by Hilary Woolley who remained in post for the rest of the decade. The Gallery's principal female curator in the Nineties was Robin Paisey and she was eventually followed by the current curator Jenni Spencer-Davies.

Hilary Woolley had trained at Manchester Polytechnic and helped establish the Cooper Gallery in Barnsley. Her specialist interest lay in plastics, mass-produced items and wooden-soled shoes. In her first year, another change was heralded. This came in the form of a retrospective by the young English artist Pete Ellis (b 1950). It included an installation titled *Living Room* which had been commissioned by the Welsh Arts Council for the *Amser Dyn/About Time* exhibition in 1979 and which the Gallery purchased in 1982.

Ellis's work indicated what was becoming a major shift away from the established artform of painting which had dominated contemporary art practice and art collecting across south Wales for much of the twentieth century. His installation stands in marked contrast to two other acquisitions from 1982, both of which were paintings: a kind of photo-realist work titled *The Corridor* (1982) by Harry Holland (b 1941) and a sumptuous abstract *For Macsen* (1980) by Glyn Jones (b 1936).

In the following year, expressionist works by the south Wales-born but north Wales-based painter Peter Prendergast (1946-2007) entered the Gallery's collection. Some of these had been included in the Welsh Arts Council touring group exhibition *The Dark Hills, The Heavy Clouds*.

Prendergast and the Rhondda-born Jones had studied at Cardiff College of Art and the latter, like the London-trained Holland, became a lecturer there. Holland did not teach for long whereas Jones did and so too did the London-born CND supporter Terry Setch (b 1936) much of whose work has been influenced by his beachcombing on the south Wales coast close to his Penarth home. Examples of his Eighties work entered the Gallery's collection in 1984 and 2007.



(fig.1) William Wilkins *A Dance* 1983
© The Artist

Also purchased in 1984 were two brand-new abstract works: a sculpture titled *Shotton* (1984) by the young Lancashire-born metal sculptor Robert Harding (b 1954) and a colourful painting *Cliff Path* (1984) by the evergreen Glynys Cour (b 1924). More recently, others works by Harding have been acquired by the Glynn Vivian as a result of his winning the inaugural Wakelin Award in 2000.



(fig.2) Shani Rhys James *The Mirror* 1994
© Shani Rhys James. All rights reserved, DACS 2014

However, south Wales environmentalist paintings did continue to be produced and collected too. These came in realist and expressionist versions by senior and younger painters such as David Carpanini (b 1946), Nicholas Evans (1907-2004), Valerie Ganz (b 1936) and Will Roberts (1907-2000).

Like her predecessor, Robin Paisey hailed from England – from Manchester to be precise – but, unlike Woolley, she was raised in Cardiff. Her curatorship spanned from 1989 to 1997. She oversaw the acquisition of indicative paintings by two Swansea-born artists, Michael Freeman (b 1936) from Manselton and Jack Jones (1922-93) from the neighbouring Hafod. Freeman's *Angel Visiting a Shipwreck* (1990) alludes to his fascination with the Gower coast and the Helvetia shipwreck as recurring starting points for his inspiration – or as he has put it: “the giant rondo of seed, wood, ship, shipwreck and barnacle orchestrated by a colourful ensemble of weather and tides...”.

One of Freeman's contemporaries at Swansea College of Art was the Suffolk-born William Wilkins (b 1938) who is perhaps best known for having gone on to mastermind the National Botanic Garden of Wales and Artes Mundi. One of his meticulous, pointillist paintings *A Dance* (1983) (fig.1) was acquired by the Glynn Vivian in 1993. It primarily features the female figure which has been central to the work of another English-born artist who has put down roots in south Wales and approaches the body and experience in quite a different way. This is the Cornish-born Sue Williams (b 1956) two of whose graffiti-style, beach paintings were acquired in the same year and who went on to be the Wales representative at Artes Mundi in 2006.

The autumn of 1993 saw the largest solo exhibition ever held in the Gallery. This was the huge and visually very rich multi-media installation entitled *Some Organising Principles* by the filmmaker Peter Greenaway (b 1942) who was born in

Newport, south Wales, and trained at Walthamstow College of Art. It extended into all corners of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery and members of the public were provided with a truly memorable set of new, gallery-going experiences.

It was followed, in the main gallery space, by the touring exhibition *Blood Ties* by the Australian-Welsh artist Shani Rhys James (b 1953) whose self-portrait painting *The Mirror* (1994) (fig.2) was acquired by the Gallery at this time. Over the twenty years since then, Rhys James has become a major figure on the Welsh and (to a certain extent) the British art scene due to her sheer determination and commitment and the growing importance of the Martin Tinney Gallery in Cardiff.

She was one of the exhibitors in the *Intimate Portraits* group exhibition mounted by the Glynn Vivian to coincide with the election of Swansea as the 1995 United Kingdom City of Literature and the opening of Tŷ Llên, the Dylan Thomas Centre. Two fellow exhibitors were the Cardiff-based artists Tony Goble (1943-2007) who produced magic realist paintings such as *Water Crossing* (n.d.) and Emrys Williams (b 1958) who had a solo exhibition, *Sunny Spells*, in the main gallery, in 1996.

In the late Nineties, the exhibitions officer Alison Lloyd who had put together *Intimate Portraits* served as an able acting curator. On her watch, more works by David Carpanini and Jack Jones entered the collection. The decade ended with the acquisition of the Sir Alex Gordon Bequest (which included works by Ceri Richards, Ivor Roberts-Jones and Kyffin Williams) and the second Sir Leslie Joseph Young Artist Award which went to the Valleys painter James Donovan (b 1974) who had trained in Swansea.

The ending of the millennium was a turning point. 1999 saw the inauguration of the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff and the arrival in Swansea of the Port Talbot-born Jenni Spencer-Davies as curator of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. She had served as the last head of Oriel, the gallery space in Cardiff which the Welsh Arts Council had opened in 1974 and which closed down in 1994. Over the last fifteen years, she has been implementing her ambition plans to: "redevelop the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery building to meet the needs of our 21st century audiences" and "increase participation and engagement with the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery collections, exhibitions and learning programmes in a local, national and international context for Swansea and Wales".

Her vision and drive recall those of the Gallery's first curator a century ago, William Grant Murray, but the contemporary artforms have moved on. In 2000-02, the Gallery acquired avant-garde metal and wood sculptures by, respectively,



(fig.3) Peter Finnemore *Eve of Destruction* video still 2004
© The Artist



(fig.4) Anthony Shapland *Only Your Eyes Are Unclosed* video still 2009
© The Artist

Robert Harding and the internationally acclaimed north Wales-based sculptor David Nash (b 1945). It also collected, through the Wakelin Award, landscape-based images by the Pembrokeshire-based expressionist painter David Tress (b 1955) and the Cardiff-born photographer Pete Davis (b 1947).

In the mid 2000s, a range of works were acquired. For example, a wall-mounted, mixed media image by Ebbw Vale-born David Garner (b 1958) was a 2004 Wakelin Award acquisition. Titled *Politics Eclipsed by Economics* (1997), it dealt with post-industrialised south Wales and marked the start of Garner's shift away from painting and towards objet trouvé installations and an increasingly internationally politicised sensibility. Likewise, the Solva-born and Swansea-based artist Tim Davies (b 1960) has embraced either new media, as evidenced by his video-piece *Flags over Solva* (1992), or a continental perspective, as in *European Drawing (Paris)* (2005). Both these entered the Gallery collection thanks to the Wakelin Award in 2005, the year after Davies was the Wales representative at the inaugural Artes Mundi art competition.

2006 saw the arrival of important examples by practitioners of various ages. These ranged from Richard Monahan (b 1979) who was the fifth winner of the Sir Leslie Joseph Young Artist Award, and whose *Portrait with Pencil* (2005) was gifted by the Friends, to the Rhondda artist Ernest Zobole (1927-99) whose posthumous retrospective had toured to the main gallery space in the previous year. His visionary nocturne painting *Painter and Subject Matter no. 7* (1993) was donated by the Contemporary Art Society for Wales. In contrast to these artists working on canvas there was the series of *Ffarwel Rock* large photographs by Aled Rhys Hughes (b 1966) which had just won him the fine art gold medal at Swansea National Eisteddfod.

Works of another lens-based, Welsh-speaking Carmarthenshire artist acquired contemporaneously were videos of performance pieces by Peter Finnemore (b 1963) who represented Wales at the 2005 Venice Biennale. They carry titles such as *Eve of Destruction* (2004) (fig.3), *Forest Fire* (2004) and *Armageddon* (2005) and Finnemore has described them as follows: "These filmic theatres of the absurd contain a delicate balance between control and chaos. The flux and flow of life as it happens unexpectedly and independently in front of the camera adds to the drama of anticipation."

In 2007-09, the Glynn Vivian secured work by Brendan Burns (b 1963), Anthony Shapland (b 1971) and Catrin Webster (b 1966). Both Burns and Webster had trained at the Slade and both are painters who take aspects of the Welsh environment as a starting point for their highly abstracted works on canvas. Coastal Wales is important to them, but more so for Burns. The Pontypridd-born Shapland is interested in location as well but he prefers to use video to make his visual, conceptual statements, as illustrated by *A Sign* (2005) and the poetic *Only Your Eyes Are Unclosed* (2009) (fig.4). The latter was filmed in sixty locations around Swansea, starting sixty minutes before sunrise and taking a line from Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* as its point of departure.

From 2010 onwards, some significant small-scale sculptures, mixed media works and video have been selected to represent contemporary visual culture in south (and mid) Wales.

The youngest maker is the Swansea-trained Jonathan Anderson (b 1977) whose *Concrete House with Coal Seam* (2010) belongs to his *House* series gifted by the Friends. He won the 2010 Wakelin Award and the artist Tim Davies, a former tutor of his, wrote: "Anderson describes coal as 'a dark, mysterious, almost mythical material'. By tainting everyday objects with this evocative and malevolent substance he plays with archetypal forms that resonate within the human psyche."

A more established figure is the Irish-born and -trained Claire Curneen (b 1968) who concentrates upon the human body in her ceramic pieces, such as *St Sebastian* (2009) which was gifted to the Gallery by the Contemporary Art Society for Wales in 2011. Also acquired in that year, via the Friends, was the animal-inspired *Small Ghost* (c.2008) and three other ceramics by Meri Wells (b 1946). She trained in south-east England but has been based in the Aberystwyth area for the last thirty years. Andrew Green, the selector for the 2011 Wakelin Award, has written that her work deals with the "...forgotten imagery of childhood stories and our cultural myths."

The 2013 Wakelin Award winner was selected by Nicholas Thornton, Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales's curator of modern and contemporary art. This was Helen Sear (b 1955) who has based herself at Raglan in south-east Wales and lectures at the University of South Wales. Her video of an illuminated sunflower head, titled *Chameleon* (2013), brings to mind not only Man Ray's *Sunflower* photograph of 1934 and Paul Nash's *Eclipse of the Sunflower* (1945) but also van Gogh's sunflower paintings of 1888. She will represent Wales at the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Sear is representative too of the paradigm shift from a south Wales art world consisting of mainly male painters and male curators to 'our' more representative and diverse contemporary art scene which has seen not only the rise of the female curator but which also now contains significant male and female artists working in new media.

© Ceri Thomas 2014

All images courtesy of City & County of Swansea: Glynn Vivian Art Gallery Collection

Chair's letter

Many thanks to all of you who helped to contribute to what everyone who was there agreed was an outstandingly successful conference of the British Association of Friends of Museums (BAfM) in Swansea in September. In large part the success was the result of careful and diligent preparation, planned jointly by the Royal Institution of South Wales/Friends of Swansea Museum, the Friends of the Glynn Vivian, the Friends of the Egypt Centre and the National Waterfront Museum. None of the Friends worked harder than our Treasurer, Malcolm Hill, and he deserves our special thanks, together with RISW President and Friend, Lyndon Morris. Despite the Glynn Vivian building being closed, conference participants went home with entirely favourable impressions of Swansea and what it has to offer to anyone interested in galleries, museums and historical sites. Many of them said they'd return. One idea that emerged was the possibility of mutual exchange visits with other

aggregated art resources? Our BAfM visitors seemed surprised that there were so many galleries, museums and other public sites to see in what is not a large city. Add the presence of one of Wales's few schools of art (the only major one?), with a world-renowned specialism in architectural glassmaking, and the fact that the Swansea area is the home of so many practising visual artists, established and emerging, and it's hard to escape the conclusion that we're lucky enough to have the pre-eminent concentration of art in Wales. Shouldn't we shout about that a bit more often? Better still, why couldn't Swansea, and especially our Council, promote the city consistently, to residents, tourists, investors and others as a City of Visual Art? The last year has shown how successfully Swansea exploited Dylan Thomas's centenary, and every year the International Dylan Thomas Prize, now under the auspices of Swansea University, maintains Swansea's public status as a City of Literature, first gained in 1995. Isn't it the visual arts' turn to be advertised, marketed and celebrated? A golden opportunity, maybe, would be when the Glynn Vivian Gallery re-opens and gains a whole new public. What do you think? Your Committee continues its discussions about how we can extend the membership of the Friends of the Glynn Vivian, and how we might prepare for the eventual reopening of the Gallery building. We'd welcome your ideas on both subjects, and also on how you'd like to see us develop social activities for the Friends, a new topic for the Committee.

Many thanks for your support for the Friends and the Gallery over the last year. I hope you have a good Christmas break – maybe you'd like to give a year's subscription to the Friends to one of your friends as a Christmas present? – and I look forward to seeing you in the new year.

Hoffwn ddiolch ichi am eich cefnogaeth i'r Cyfeillion ac i'r Oriol yn ystod y flwyddyn aeth heibio, gan obeithio y bydd yn parhau yn y flwyddyn nesaf. Nadolig llawen ichi i gyd. Edrychaf ymlaen at eich gweld eto yn y gwahanol weithgareddau a drefnir i'r Cyfeillion yn 2015.

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andrewmwgreen@btinternet.com



Delegates, Speakers and Volunteers at the 41st BAfM Annual Conference, held at the Marriott Hotel, Swansea

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groups of Friends, for example in Bristol. Let us know what you think.

The conference set me thinking about how people, in and outside the city, think of Swansea and visual art. Perhaps we tend to underestimate our

Friends Visit to The National Botanic Garden of Wales to view *Barcode Sculpture Exhibition* on Saturday January 10th at 12pm

Admission is £2 which also includes entry to the winter Antiques and Collectors Fair. Please contact Sarah Tombs to arrange shared transport if required or meet at the entrance at 12pm.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire, SA32 8HN.

Sculpture Cymru at 'The Garden'

A group of nine sculptors from Sculpture Cymru have been working with the National Botanic Garden of Wales (the Garden) on a collaborative art-science exhibition, making sculpture that responds to the International Barcode for Life Project (www.ibol.org). The Barcode for Wales part of this project is led by Dr Natasha De Vere (the Garden) and Dr Tim Rich (National Museum Wales) along with project partners from several British Universities. The team take herbarium samples of plants and extract tiny amounts of DNA from each specimen. This DNA is amplified and a computer code is formulated and entered onto the Barcode for life Database (BOLD). This open source website can be accessed by both the public and researchers.



Sarah Tombs *Tread Gently* Portland Stone 2014
© The Artist © photo. Sarah Tombs

The exhibition opens on January 1st 2015 and runs until the end of September 2015. There will be a sculpture weekend on June 6th and 7th 2015 with sculpture demonstrations and opportunities to try stone carving and casting techniques with some of the exhibitors.



Kevin Blockley *Invisible Element* Marble 2014
© The Artist © photo. Kevin Blockley

Sculpture Cymru were excited by the notion of creating visible and tangible artwork from science that deals with the substance of DNA - invisible to the human eye. Each sculptor took an aspect of the project as a starting point for their sculpture which ranges from abstract forms in stone, to work in bronze and steel as well as a series of musical pieces inspired by Welsh County flowers. Each piece will be sited in various locations in the Garden for visitors to discover as they enjoy the Garden.



Antonia Spowers drawing for *Text* 2014
© The Artist © photo. Antonia Spowers

The project has received support from Arts Council of Wales, National Botanic Gardens of Wales, The Brecknock Arts Trust, UWTSW Swansea, and Sculpture Cymru.

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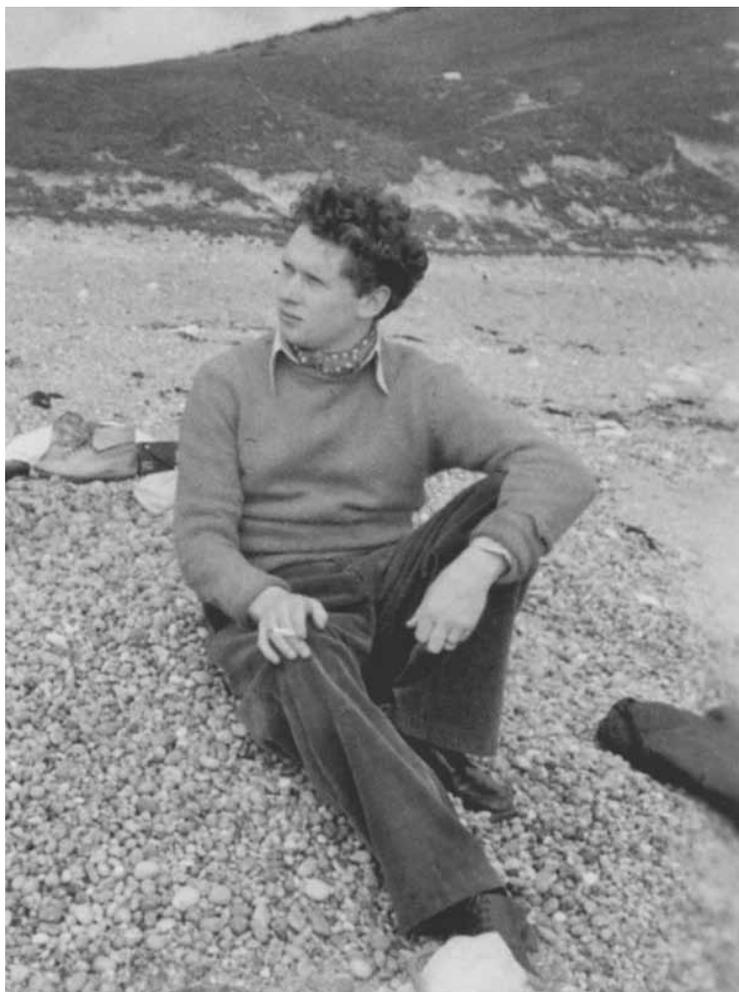
For further information please contact Sarah Tombs on 07713640632 or sarah.tombs@hotmail.co.uk

www.sculpturecymru.org.uk
www.gardenofwales.org.uk



Dylan Marlais Thomas

born Swansea, October 27th 1914 – died New York, November 9th 1953



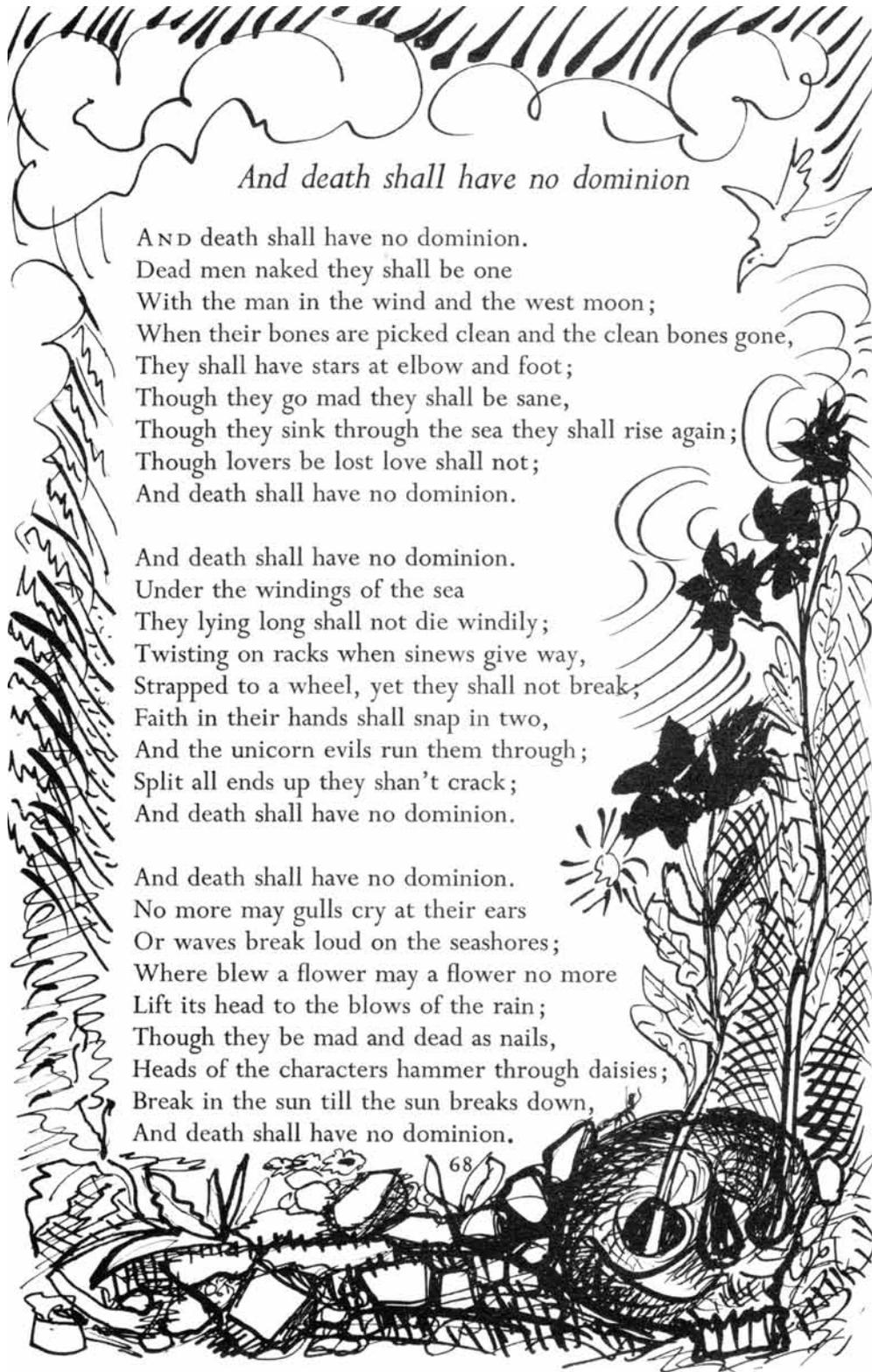
Dylan Thomas on a Dorset beach c.1937

© photo. Nora Summers courtesy of Jeff Towns, Dylan's Bookstore Collection



Dylan Thomas Society of Great Britain, Wreath Laying Service, Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, November 29th 2014

© photo. Malcolm Hill



And death shall have no dominion

AND death shall have no dominion.
Dead men naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
Under the windings of the sea
They lying long shall not die windily;
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,
And the unicorn evils run them through;
Split all ends up they shan't crack;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
No more may gulls cry at their ears
Or waves break loud on the seashores;
Where blew a flower may a flower no more
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;
Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,
And death shall have no dominion.

Dylan Thomas *And death shall have no dominion* written in 1933 and published in *Twenty-Five Poems* in 1936
© The Enitharmon Press 1980

Ceri Richards *And death shall have no dominion* illustration drawn in his own copy of *Collected Poems*
1934 – 1952 between November 7th and 8th 1953
© The artist's estate

Mavericks

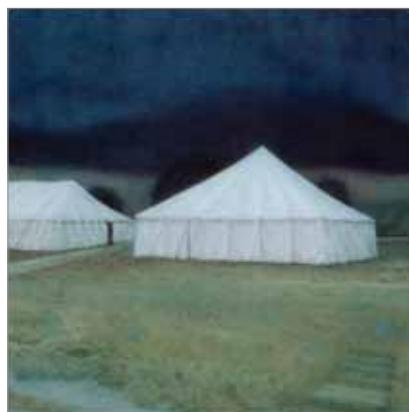


Thomas Jones *Ruined Buildings Near Naples* c.1782 oil on paper
© City & County of Swansea: Glynn Vivian Art Gallery Collection

I must confess a weakness for artists who are driven to plough their own furrow - I mean people like William Blake, Charles Ives, or Giorgio Morandi. I have always doubted the validity of the so-called 'mainstream' in the creative arts. It is a concept formulated by the lazier minds amongst critics and historians. A simple division of the 'maverick' type would be into those who are original by compulsion and those who are original by design. The former would certainly be the more valuable. How would Barnett Newman be able to demonstrate adequately his 'colour field' ideas without their sheer size? Pictures of these works give no idea of their impact. How would Conlon Nancarrow be able to invent intricate rhythmic patterns without the pianola-roll? We must be able to discern a difference between the invention of novelty and the revelation of striking vision. So far so good, but what individuals are capable of recognising, of feeling, that difference? Samuel Beckett warns us against asking the 'old questions' and giving 'the old answers'!

I recently observed that young artists would be advised to think in aeons rather than in hours when they consider the achievements of such as Ceri Richards or Gwen John in the last century. Chasing the latest emissions from London, New York or Venice will not lead to great vision but merely to tired journalism or alternatively to a provincialism of the 'Hymns and Arias' variety.

Dylan Thomas's poem *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower* is greater than *Under Milk Wood* because it is more universal in reference, and in vision. What Welsh painter would teach us this lesson now? Unhesitatingly I would point to Thomas Jones. His Neapolitan cityscapes of the 1780s are a startling revelation. In these pictures Jones is just his own glorious self. They are a climax to an obvious fascination with arches, caverns and mysterious apertures of one or another. His picture *A Grotto at Posillipo* is another example, as are his scenes in the Colosseum. Jones emerged into this urgent imagery from earlier romantic landscapes more comparable to Richard Wilson or James Ward, rather as Ceri Richards emerged from Picasso or Ernst into the urgency of his Debussian visions, with an admirable compulsion rich in allusion and ornate textures. Much the same can be said of Gwen John's obsessive single female figures. They are the work of a maverick. They had to be done. Gwen John's obsessiveness is duplicated in Giorgio Morandi's compositions of wine bottles, anonymous little dishes and their like.



Daphne Hurn *Marquees* watercolour 2007
© The Artist © photo. The Artist

drawing in our time. When Dylan Thomas stands proudly alongside Friedrich Holder and Arthur Rimbaud; or Ceri Richards stands alongside Ben Nicholson we shall be where we belong.

This concentration, obsessiveness, if you like, is lacking from our artists' work today or it degenerates into a mere repetitiousness or self-consciousness. Enrichment or refinement is absent. In this context I would urge the interested to look at the small watercolours of solitary sheds and houses painted by Daphne Hurn. To my mind they encapsulate exactly that kind of commitment and inner vision I miss so much in so much painting and

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a passion for art

Friends 50th Anniversary Publication

This superb book was written by Kirstine Brander Dunthorne to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Friends in 2008. Illustrated in colour throughout, it contains an introductory essay on the history of the Friends and also a complete list of all their contributions to the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery permanent collection over the fifty year period.

Price £4.95p to Friends

To order your copy, please download an application form from the website or contact Malcolm Hill on (01639) 794480 or m.hill23@ntlworld.com

