FRIENDS OF THE GLYNN VIVIAN

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Newsletter Autumn 2026

Cylchlythyr Hydref 2026

Letter from the chair

My first year as chair year has seen a lot happening. Our long-standing and much valued president Andrew Green stepped down to fulfill other commitments. He is replaced by Kirstine Dunthorne. Her previous experience with both The Friends and the Glynn Vivian Gallery will prove invaluable going forward and I would like to extend a warm welcome.

The work of our membership secretary Chris Bird-Jones to streamline our application process and database management has resulted in us taking our first automated registration which will become standard from now on. We have expanded the committee further to include another ordinary member Delyth Thomas and general secretary Jacqui Webb.

Once again, I'd like to extend a big thank you to all the Glynn Vivian staff who have worked closely with The Friends on things like this newsletter, the talks at the gallery, providing meeting spaces, providing expertise and guidance and of course for putting on fantastic exhibitions. I look forward to another equally fulfilling year.

Melvyn Williams
Chair

Cover Photo: Kyffin Williams, Cottages, Gwalchmai, courtesy of Peter Wakelin

Curtator's Report - Karen MacKinnon

During this busy period, we presented many exhibitions and supported a significant number of artists from Wales, across the UK and beyond. With the help of many partners, including the Friends of Glynn Vivian, we were able to commission and acquire work for the permanent collection, and embed our programmes more deeply in our city through our learning and engagement programmes with a wide range of audiences and communities.

Exhibitions included Tigers and Dragons: India and Wales in Britain; Linder, Danger Came Smiling and Lucia Jones for the Wakelin Award. Tigers and Dragons included new commissions by many Welsh artists alongside those from Indian and Pakistan. Also on display were historical art works from Glynn Vivian and Amgueddfa Cymru's collections. The curators - our exhibitions officer Katy Freer and Dr Zehra Jumabhoy - received a highly commended honour at the Association for Art History 2026 Curatorial Prizes. This year's Walkelin award was won by Cardiff based artist Lucia Jones; selected by Elysium Director Jonathan Powell. The Wakelin Award is an invaluable partnership between the Wakelin family and the Friends of Glynn Vivian which allows us to purchase works for the collection.

Glynn Vivian's team also helped set up the first exhibition in Y Storfa, the newly opened central Library and resource centre in the old British Homes Stores (BHS) building in the city centre. We announced our partnership with National Gallery, London/Contemporary Art Society to partner on their residency programme which resulted in a work gifted to our permanent collection by Singaporean artist, Ming Wong. Hayward Gallery announced the British Art Show 10 which tours to 5 cities across the UK and comes to Swansea in February 2027, returning to Wales for the first time in 20 years! Arguably the largest and most significant survey of contemporary art in the UK, Glynn Vivian is lead venue and will host the exhibition alongside our partners; Elysium, GS Artists, Mission, Swansea Museum and Volcano Theatre. There will also be community projects at Y Storfa, Swansea Market and Dylan Thomas Centre as well as a broader "fringe" of activity celebrating Swansea's cultural life!

Photograph by Polly Thomas 2018.

Image: Adeela Suleman, Detail from Imperium Amidst Opium Blossoms: A Kashidakari on the era of the East India Company, 2025, courtesy of the Glynn Vivian; Lucia Jones, I can't fit into this dress anymore (2023); Y Storfa, courtesy of Swansea Council

A few highlights of our busy learning programme this year included the creation of a memorial to the 1905 Elba Mining Disaster which brought together people from different generations to remember those who lost their lives. It was collectively made by Gowerton Art break and Primary School and Glynn Vivian's Welcome: Mosaics group and will be permanently displayed at St Johns Church, Gowerton. The Friends, in partnership with Glynn Vivian, presented 10 public talks in relation to Tigers & Dragons, and also included talks by Artes Mundi's director Nigel Prince, and an in-conversation between artist Linder and curator Gillian Fox for Danger Came Smiling.

All were very well attended and provoked fascinating discussions. Nearly 100 works from our ceramics collection have been shared via ArtUk's digital database, making cherished items from the Glynn Vivian ceramics collection more accessible for people online. Glynn Vivian was a recipient of the BFI Screen Heritage/ National Lottery to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of film works within the gallery's Permanent Collection. Lots of good press during this time including The Guardian, Western Mail and The Times whose article written in partnership with GWR trains about places to visit on their train routes; described the Glynn Vivian as a 'must see'!

I hope this gives you an overview of what we have been doing lately and a taste of what's to come! We very much appreciate all the support given to the gallery from the Friends committee and members over the years and look forward to seeing you all at the gallery soon!

Image: Kyffin Williams, Cottages, Gwalchmai, courtesy of Peter Wakelin

THE WAKELIN KYFFIN

In 1959 Dick and Rosemary Wakelin bought a painting by Kyffin Williams from the Howard Roberts Gallery in Cardiff. It was a landscape in Anglesey titled Cottages, Gwalchmai and had previously been exhibited in 1957 in Kyffin's exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in London. Dick and Rosemary's son Andrew has donated the painting to the Friends to be sold in aid of the Wakelin Award, which purchases work each year by an artist or craftsperson not yet well represented in public collections. It is due to go to auction with Rogers Jones in their Welsh Sale on 22 November. We hope it will raise enough for the Friends to continue to make the Award for several years to come. The painting is a fresh and characteristic landscape dating from the first half of Kyffin's career, when he was in his late thirties. The title refers to the village of Gwalchmai in central Anglesey, where Kyffin painted frequently. It shows a huddle of cottages built of stone from the boulder-strewn hillside. They grow out of the landscape with varied angles, sturdy chimneys and limewashed roofs. Three Welsh Black cattle feed on rich pasture under a leaden sky. It is painted in Kyffin's typical palette-knife impasto touched in by brush. Staff at the Glynn Vivian gave the painting and frame some care and conservation before exhibiting it last year. Look out for more information about the 22 November sale in the Rogers Jones catalogue and website.

WAKELIN AWARD 2026

Image: Portrait of Hannah Walters, courtesy of Hannah Walters

The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery is delighted to announce Hannah Walters as the recipient of the Wakelin Award 2026, with her work purchased for the gallery's permanent collection in partnership with the Friends of the Glynn Vivian.

The annual award recognises an artist living and working in Wales, supporting the development of the Glynn Vivian's collection while celebrating the work of contemporary Welsh artists. Previous recipients include Brendan Stuart Burns, Catrin Webster, Helen Sear, Richard Billingham, Anya Paintsil and Lucia Jones.

This year's selector was Catherine Spring, Curator at Oriel Myrddin in Carmarthen, who praised Walters' exceptional craftsmanship and the humour and playfulness within her work. She was particularly drawn to the way Walters' practice is influenced by her parents' antique shop and the historical ceramics she grew up around, bringing these references into a contemporary setting with warmth and originality. Walters said she was "over the moon" to receive the award, describing it as an important way of highlighting Welsh artists at key points in their careers. She is particularly excited to see her work enter the Glynn Vivian's collection, where it can create new connections with the gallery's existing collection of traditional ceramics.

Walters' sculptures explore the relationship between the functional and the sculptural, drawing on personal memories alongside the rich history of clay and porcelain. Her work offers an engaging contemporary perspective on traditional craft and has a strong connection with the Glynn Vivian's ceramics collection.

The award is administered by the Friends of the Glynn Vivian and generously supported by donations made in memory of Richard and Rosemary Wakelin and their son Martin, who were artists and active supporters of the arts in Swansea. The award continues the Friends' commitment to helping build and develop the collection for the people of Swansea.

SWANSEA OPEN '26

Celebrating a rising photographic talent: Jessica Cooper

Image: Jessica Cooper with her winning piece, Market Day.

For Swansea-based freelance photographer Jessica Cooper, photography has become a way of capturing the energy, people and stories that shape the creative life of South Wales. Working across events, live music and production stills, Jessica was recently named the winner of the 2026 Open Award from the Friends of the Glynn Vivian, recognising her work and emerging contribution to the region's creative community.

Having first discovered photography through family holidays and her dad's small digital camera, what began as a hobby gradually developed into a professional career. An unexpected opportunity to work as a stills photographer on Dance Passion Swansea in 2024 proved to be a turning point, inspiring Jessica to pursue photography professionally and seek out new opportunities across the creative industries. A fluent Welsh speaker and Media and Communications graduate from Swansea University, Jessica is particularly passionate about documenting the cultural life of Swansea and South Wales, and the people helping its creative scene continue to grow. We caught up with her to talk about her journey into photography, winning the 2026 Open Friends of The Glynn Vivian Award, the importance of documenting a place through images, and where she hopes her career will take her next.

Could you tell us a little about yourself and how you first became interested in photography?
I'm a freelance photographer based in Swansea, mainly

specialising in events, music gigs and production stills. Photography is something that just gradually became really important to me. When I was younger, my summer holidays would consist of travelling with my family in our motorhome. My dad had a small digital camera that he would bring along to photograph the trip. I guess one day, I decided to give it a go myself, and from there, my interest in photography just continued to grow.

What was it about photography that made you want to pursue it professionally?
My decision to pursue photography professionally truly clicked when I landed my first (and completely unexpected) role as a stills photographer on a TV show called Dance Passion Swansea back in 2024. I had initially been brought on as a production runner, but I was then given the opportunity to shoot some stills for the programme. I agreed, and it quickly became a huge turning point for me! Up until then, photography had been purely a hobby, but this experience made me realise how much I enjoyed working in the industry and how exciting a photography career could be. From there, I began seeking out further opportunities and roles that would allow me to build my experience, develop my skills, and work towards pursuing photography professionally.

You work across events, music, production stills, and more. What types of photography do you particularly enjoy?
Professionally, I'd say my favourite genres of photography are production stills and music photography. Outside of work, my personal interests lie more in travel photography and street photography.

What do you enjoy most about working as a freelance photographer?
The part I enjoy most about freelancing is the variety. Every project brings something different, which means I'm always experiencing new environments, meeting new people and learning something along the way.

When you're photographing an event or live performance, what are you looking for in order to capture the atmosphere and tell the story of what's happening?
When photographing an event or live performance, the main thing I look for is movement. This can be something as subtle as a change in expression or as dramatic as a performer moving in response to the music. Every action helps to capture and preserve the atmosphere and energy of the room exactly as it felt in that moment.

Is there a particular photograph or project you've worked on that you're especially proud of or that has stayed with you?
One particular project that I often look back on is a creative workshop I photographed for Ffilm Cymru Wales. The project brought together a group of Swansea locals to create their own 60-second short film. We travelled to various locations around the city to capture each film, and along the way I had the opportunity to take a series of photographs I'm still particularly proud of today.

You graduated from Swansea University in 2025. How did studying Media and Communications influence your approach to photography?
Studying Media and Communications at university has greatly influenced my approach to how I photograph my subjects. The course taught me to look beyond the image itself and consider the story and message behind it, encouraging me to be more intentional with my own compositions and therefore more thoughtful in the way I choose to represent people and places through my photography.

You're Swansea-based and a fluent Welsh speaker, how important are Swansea and Wales to you as a creative?
Swansea and Wales are hugely important to me as a creative, as they are such a significant part of my identity. Being able to contribute, even in a small way, to helping the growth of the creative scene here in Swansea and South Wales means a great deal to me.

What do you think makes the creative and cultural scene in Swansea and South Wales special?
The people. Over the past few years, I've had the opportunity to see first-hand just how talented, passionate and dedicated the people working across Swansea and South Wales creative industries are. There's a real sense of community here, particularly within Swansea's growing arts, music and cultural scene. It's a community that continues to grow and create some amazing opportunities for both emerging talent and established creatives.

What role do you think photography plays in documenting the arts and cultural life of a place?
I believe that photography plays a crucial role in documenting the arts and cultural life of a place by helping to preserve its identity and history. It documents what a place, its people, art and cultural practices looked like at a particular time, which helps to provide a visual record to look back on in the future.

Are there any photographers, artists or other creatives who have particularly influenced or inspired your work?
When it comes to finding inspiration for my photography, I usually draw it from my surroundings in the moment, as well as from experiences and ideas I've picked up on previous shoots.

As you begin to develop your career, what kinds of projects or opportunities would you love to work on in the future?
I'm always looking to broaden my experience and explore new areas of photography. Alongside the styles I currently work in, I'd like to become more involved in portrait photography and, in the future, possibly explore opportunities within the theatre industry.

" A Chorus of Strangers explores how art can challenge ideas of 'us' and 'them' and encourage greater empathy in divided times."

BRITISH ART SHOW COMES TO SWANSEA

More than 30 artists explore connection, identity and our relationship with the world around us

Image: Nengi Omuku, One Particular Man, 2026. All works courtesy of the artist and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London.

Swansea will welcome British Art Show 10: A Chorus of Strangers in 2027, bringing one of the UK's most significant contemporary art exhibitions to the city. Produced by Hayward Gallery Touring, the landmark tenth edition will visit Swansea from 12 February to 16 May 2027, as part of a five-city national tour.

Curated by acclaimed writer and curator Ekow Eshun, the exhibition brings together more than 30 artists from across the UK, including Okiki Akinfe, Liz Johnson Artur, Jesse Darling, Jasleen Kaur, Lindsey Mendick, Nengi Omuku, Precious Okoyomon, Mohammed Sami and Osman Yousefzada.

A Chorus of Strangers explores human connection, identity and our relationships with others during a time of increasing division and uncertainty. Rather than viewing difference and 'otherness' as something to fear, the exhibition asks how art can encourage empathy and help us imagine new ways of living together.

The exhibition is organised around three themes - Moments of Being, Ways of Living and States of Nature - exploring our inner worlds, relationships with culture and history, and our connection with the natural environment. The themes draw inspiration from writers and thinkers including Virginia Woolf, Stuart Hall and ecological philosopher Timothy Morton.
The Swansea presentation will take place across a number of the city's cultural venues, including Elysium Gallery, GS Artists, Mission Gallery, Swansea Museum, Volcano Theatre and Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, creating a city-wide celebration of contemporary art. Swansea will be the only Welsh stop on the tour, making its arrival a significant moment for the city's arts community.

The programme will also extend beyond the main exhibition venues, with community projects taking place at Y Storfa, Swansea Market and the Dylan Thomas Centre, alongside a broader fringe programme celebrating Swansea's cultural life and creative community.

The exhibition forms part of a wider programme of activity across the city, bringing together galleries, museums, theatres, artists and community organisations and encouraging audiences to explore Swansea's cultural landscape.

British Art Show 10 will tour five UK cities from October 2026 to June 2028, beginning in Coventry before travelling to Swansea, Bristol, Sheffield and Newcastle Gateshead. With its ambitious range of artists and timely exploration of connection, difference and shared experience, A Chorus of Strangers promises to be a major highlight of Swansea's cultural calendar in 2027.

ELYSIUM GALLERY FINDS A NEW HOME IN SWANSEA

A landmark Swansea building has been given a new lease of life with the opening of Elysium Gallery and Arts Centre on Belle Vue Way. The former JT Morgan department store, empty since 2008, has been transformed into a new home for artists and the wider creative community.

The new Elysium opened in June 2026, marking a new chapter for the organisation after almost 20 years of developing artist-led creative spaces across Swansea. The building contains 63 artist studios, providing dedicated spaces for painters, sculptors, writers, designers, photographers and other creative practitioners, with 24-hour access and a mix of naturally lit spaces designed to encourage collaboration.

For the public, the ground floor includes a contemporary gallery, education room and café, alongside a year-round programme of exhibitions, workshops, talks and community activities. The programme includes life drawing, creative writing, family activities and Welsh-language arts and crafts.

The exhibition programme began with André Stitt's Estateless, which opened on 12 June 2026, and Elysium continues to present work by established and emerging artists alongside photography, workshops, talks and community events.

The new Elysium is also an important part of a growing cultural quarter in central Swansea, joining a network of galleries, arts organisations and educational institutions within the city centre. Nearby, the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery remains one of Swansea's key visual arts institutions, while Galerie Simpson supports contemporary and emerging artists. Swansea College of Art brings students, staff and new

Image: Elysium Gallery, courtesy of Wales Online

creative talent into the city, strengthening the connection between education and the wider cultural scene.

Further towards the High Street, Volcano Theatre provides another important creative venue, hosting performances, live music, cinema, exhibitions, events and community activity. The new Y Storfa has also added a significant cultural and community destination to the city centre, housing Swansea Central Library alongside archive, university and community services.

Together, these organisations create an increasingly connected cultural landscape, encouraging audiences to move between different venues and discover the breadth of Swansea's creative activity. Elysium's new building adds to this network by bringing artist studios, exhibition space, education and community activity together under one roof.

The transformation of the former JT Morgan building is therefore about more than bringing an empty building back into use. It represents an investment in Swansea's creative community and adds another significant destination to a city centre where arts, culture, education and community activity are becoming increasingly interconnected.

For artists, Elysium provides valuable space to work, exhibit and collaborate; for visitors, it offers another reason to explore Swansea's growing cultural landscape. As it settles into its new home, the former department store looks set to become an increasingly important part of Swansea's wider cultural quarter.

Elysium Gallery and Arts Centre, 12-24 Belle Vue Way, Swansea, is less than five minutes' walk from Swansea railway station. The gallery and café are open Wednesday to Saturday, 11am-5pm, with exhibitions, workshops and events taking place throughout the year.

TALKS & EVENTS

Friends of the Glynn Vivian artist talk with Hannah Walters
Friday 16 October 2026
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Friends of the Glynn Vivian artist talk with Peter Finnemore
Friday 13 November 2026
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

This edition of the Newsletter was produced and designed by Alice Jones

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