FRIENDS OF THE GLYNN VIVIAN

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Newsletter Spring 2026

Clylchlythyr Gwanwyn 2026

Hello!

As we welcome May 2026, we're excited to share the latest edition of the Friends of the Glynn Vivian newsletter. This issue highlights a rich selection of exhibitions, events, and stories, showcasing the gallery's vibrant programme and the creativity flourishing in Swansea and beyond.

In this edition, we lead with Lives in Motion, a touring exhibition from the National Portrait Gallery exploring migration in Britain from the 11th century to the present day, and Art in the Sky, an ambitious celebration of international contemporary kites. We also look forward to the Swansea Open 2026, the annual showcase of local artists and makers, reflecting the breadth of talent across the City & County of Swansea.

Beyond the Glynn Vivian, we feature Gwen John: Strange Beauties at the National Museum Cardiff, marking the 150th anniversary of one of Wales' most remarkable artists.

We hope you enjoy exploring the exhibitions, events, and stories in this issue, and we thank you, as always, for your continued support of the Glynn Vivian.

Alice Jones
(Editor and Designer)

Cover Photo: Mo Farah by Kate Peters, 2012
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LIVES IN MOTION

Exploring Migration in Britain from the 11th Century to Today
Through 51 Portraits of Movement and Belonging

Lives in Motion is a major touring exhibition from the National Portrait Gallery, bringing together 51 portraits that explore nearly a thousand years of migration to Britain. Migration has long shaped Britain's national story. Whether temporary or permanent, voluntary or forced, the movement of people has influenced culture, politics, identity and everyday life. Spanning from the 11th century to the present day, this exhibition traces those journeys through portraiture, revealing the individuals behind the broader historical narratives.
From William the Conqueror to Malala Yousafzai, the exhibition moves chronologically through time, including royalty, figures of fame and contemporary commissions by the National Portrait Gallery. While each story is deeply personal, together they reveal shared experiences of displacement, adaptation, contribution and belonging that resonate across centuries.
The exhibition is further enriched by a carefully curated selection of portraits from the Glynn Vivian's own collection. These works highlight local and regional stories of migration, offering a more intimate perspective that sits alongside the national narrative. By bringing these collections into dialogue, the exhibition invites reflection on how global histories are always lived and felt at a local level.
Organised by the National Portrait Gallery, whose collection uses portraiture to tell the story of Britain through the people who have shaped it, Lives in Motion offers an opportunity to consider migration not as a single moment in history, but as an ongoing and defining force in national life.

20 March - 28 June 2026, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Room 3

Image: Judith Kerr with her cat Katinka, March 2011 © Sam Pelly / National Portrait Gallery, London

STRANGE BEAUTIES

Image: Gwen John, The Pilgrim, Oil on canvas, 1920, Yale Centre for British Art

Marking 150 years since her birth, this landmark exhibition celebrates one of Wales' most extraordinary and quietly influential artists, Gwen John. Bringing together rarely seen works from Amgueddfa Cymru alongside loans from major international collections, it is the first large-scale survey of her work in over forty years - a rare and significant opportunity to experience her art in depth.

Gwen John's work is distinguished by its intimacy, restraint and psychological intensity. Best known for her contemplative interiors and solitary female figures, she developed a distinctive visual language defined by muted tones, subtle shifts of light and a profound attentiveness to mood. Her paintings reward slow looking: compositions that may at first appear modest gradually reveal extraordinary sensitivity and emotional depth.

This exhibition offers new perspectives on John's life and practice, situating her within both Welsh and international art histories while also reconsidering her role as a modern artist. Through paintings, drawings and archival material, visitors are invited to engage more fully with her process, influences and enduring legacy. The exhibition reveals an artist whose commitment to observation and interiority continues to resonate with contemporary audiences.

Rather than spectacle, John's work offers something quieter yet equally powerful - an invitation to pause, to look carefully, and to encounter the subtle drama of everyday life. In an age of visual overload, her art feels strikingly relevant.

Organised in partnership with National Galleries of Scotland, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Yale Center for British Art, this is a major collaborative achievement and a highlight of the cultural calendar.

A rare opportunity to see Gwen John's work at scale, this exhibition will appeal equally to long-time admirers and those discovering her for the first time.

7 February - 28 June 2026, National Museum Cardiff, Cardiff

SWANSEA OPEN 2026

Showcasing the creativity of local artists and makers across the city

Image: Installation shots, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. Photographer: Polly Thomas.

The Swansea Open returns this summer as an annual celebration of art and craft from across the City and County of Swansea. Open to anyone who lives or works within the SA1-SA9 postcode areas, the exhibition brings together a diverse range of submissions from both professional and non-professional artists and makers.

Selected works will be exhibited in Room 3, offering a snapshot of the creativity, talent and cultural energy of the region. Each year, a new panel of invited selectors brings fresh perspectives to the process, ensuring the exhibition reflects a wide spectrum of artistic practices and critical voices.

For 2026, the selectors are: Sue Williams - internationally recognised artist, Artes Mundi shortlisted artist, and Professor and Course Director of Fine Art at Swansea UWTSD.

Ceri Jones - Head of Art at Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales and Creative Director for CELF.

Three prize-winners will be chosen from the exhibited works, with awards of £250 (first prize), £150 (second prize) and £100 (third prize). In addition, the Friends of Glynn Vivian Art Gallery will present a £200 prize for a selected artwork - continuing their valued support of local artists.

Submission Days: 2, 3 and 4 July, 11:00am-4:00pm.

The Swansea Open remains an important platform for showcasing the breadth of artistic practice in the city - and a chance for audiences to discover new voices alongside established practitioners.

Saturday 18 July 2026 - Sunday 20 September 2026, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Room 3

ART IN THE SKY

Art in the Sky is an ambitious and uplifting exhibition celebrating the kite as a culturally democratic and accessible form of sculpture. Bringing together international contemporary Art Kites, the exhibition invites audiences to encounter these extraordinary kinetic works both in flight and at rest — revealing the sculptural, engineering and imaginative possibilities of a form often associated with play.

At the heart of the exhibition, large-scale, site-specific works by Kadek Armika (Bali) and Anna Rubin (Austria) will be suspended within the gallery's central Atrium. Installed using the aerial rigging system, these monumental kites will evoke the sensation of flight, transforming the architectural space above visitors' heads. Viewable from both the mezzanine and the gallery floor, the works promise a striking and immersive experience.

Rooms 8 and 9 will present a rich and varied display of contemporary and traditional kites from around the world, alongside works by leading contemporary kite artists and key loans. Together, these works explore the kite as an artistic medium that crosses cultures, generations and geographies — from ritual and celebration to experimental contemporary practice.

Curated in partnership with Swansea-based creative producer Isabel Griffin, Art in the Sky offers a joyful and visually dynamic exploration of movement, craft and global artistic exchange.

18 June - 27 September 2026
Atrium, Rooms 8 & 9

Image: Anna Rubin (c) Delwedd drwy garedigrwydd yr artist. Image courtesy the artist.

NEURO EXPRESSION: DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Celebrating the creativity, depth, and diversity of neurodivergent artists

Neuro Expression is a compelling group exhibition featuring artists who identify as neurodivergent, selected from the results of a national open call. The show brings together a wide range of creative practices, with each artist exploring and expressing their sensory, emotional, psychological, and physical experiences.
From painting and sculpture to mixed media and experimental approaches, the works on display challenge conventional ways of seeing, thinking, and making art. This exhibition offers a rare opportunity to engage with perspectives that are often underrepresented in mainstream galleries, highlighting the richness and individuality of neurodivergent creativity.
Neuro Expression celebrates the power of art to communicate experience, provoke thought, and expand our understanding of difference, making it an essential and thought-provoking visit for anyone interested in contemporary practice and diversity in the arts. Featured artists include: Benedict Phillips, Ceris Dyfi Jones, Jen Gash, Joshua Jones, Molly Wickett, Natasha Toms, Rebecca F Hardy, Mandy Lane, Tessa Gray, and Yasmin Crawford.

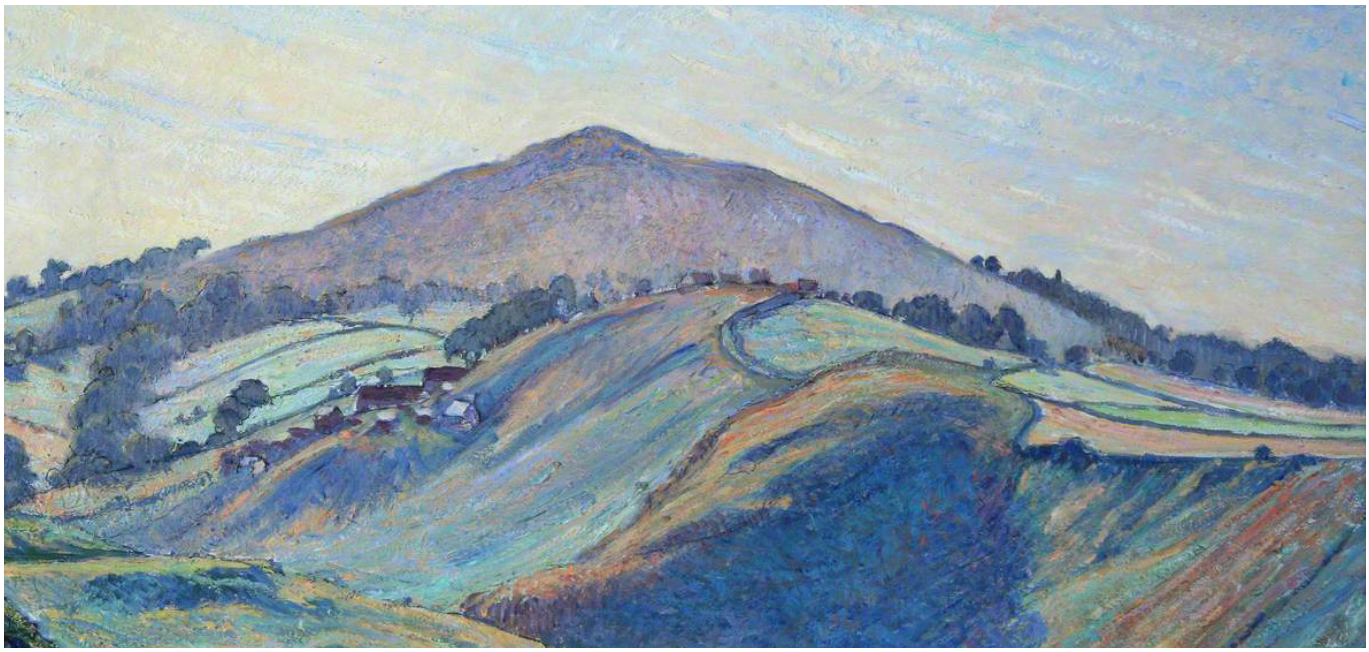
10 April - 16 May 2026
Elysium Gallery, Swansea

Image: Neuro Expression, Group Exhibition, Benedict L Phillips et al., Elysium Gallery, April-May 2026

Rufus Lewis a Chasgliad Glynn Vivian: Hanes a

Llinach Deuluol

Wedi'i ysgrifennu gan Gwenllian Beynon



Manylion yr arlunwaith: Lucien Pissarro (1863–1944), Cefn Bryn, Gŵyr, 1933. Olew ar gynfas. Credyd: Cyngor Abertawe, Casgliad Oriel Gelf Glynn Vivian.

Ar ymweliad diweddar â'r Glynn Vivian, roedd yn ddiddorol gweld enw un o'm cyndadau ar waliau'r oriel. Nid oedd yn artist ond yn noddwr a gyfrannodd at gronfa i brynu celf Gymreig ar gyfer Neuadd y Ddinas newydd yn Abertawe, a agorwyd yn 1934. Y paentiadau a arddangoswyd yn ddiweddar oedd gwaith Lucien Pissarro (1933), Cefn Bryn; Oliver Hall (tua 1930), Welsh Mountains; a Will Evans (1939), Gower Coast. Mae gan bob un o'r paentiadau hyn, ynghyd â dau arall - un gan Augustus John (1934), Arenig Mountain, ac un arall gan Fred Appleyard (1938), St David's Cathedral - blac sy'n nodi iddynt gael eu cyflwyno gan Rufus Lewis, Esq.

Roedd Rufus Lewis yn ddiwydiannwr amlwg yng Ngorsienon ac, yn ôl ei hysbysiad marwolaeth, "Donor of £80,000 Hospital" (Western Mail, 7 Tachwedd 1938). Roedd hwn yn swm sylweddol a ddefnyddiwyd i sefydlu Ysbyty Gorseinon yn y cyfnod cyn sefydlu'r Gwasanaeth Iechyd Gwladol. Mae'n arwr yn ein teulu am wneud hyn.

Mae ysgrifennu'r erthygl fer hon wedi galluogi'r oriel a minnau i roi cyd-destun i'r gweithiau hyn ac i ddeall eu harwyddocâd i Abertawe ac i Rufus Lewis ei hun.

Roedd fy nghefnder a minnau'n awyddus i wybod pam fod enw Rufus Lewis yn gysylltiedig â'r paentiadau hyn, ac, yn sgil ymchwil gan yr oriel, mae gan y gweithiau hyn naratif archifol newydd bellach. Yn y bôn, prynwyd naw o weithiau celf i addurno coridor prif Neuadd y Ddinas yn y blynyddoedd wedi'i hagor yn 1934. Roedd "cronfa £600" ar gael i brynu paentiadau, wedi'i hariannu gan aelodau o'r Pwyllgor Seneddol a Materion Cyffredinol. Ymddengys mai Rufus Lewis oedd un o brif gyfranwyr y gronfa hon, a dyna pam ei fod yn gysylltiedig â phum o'r naw paentiad (Ellie Dawkins, drwy e-bost, 2026). Yn ôl ei hysbysiad marwolaeth a gyhoeddwyd yn y Western Mail ym mis Tachwedd 1937, cyfrannodd Rufus Lewis £500 at y gronfa £600 hon - cyfran fawr iawn o'r cyfanswm.

Rwyf bellach angen atgoffa fy hun o'm perthynas â Rufus Lewis. Gwn ei fod yn gyndad, ond nid wyf ar hyn o bryd yn cofio'r cysylltiad union. Gwn ei fod yn gysylltiedig â mi ar ochr fy mam, wedi disgyn o'r teulu yn Forge Factory yn Llandyfan ger Llandeilo - gwaith metel a drodd wedyn yn felin wlân - ond fel yr amgylchiadau o gwmpas y paentiadau a'u cysylltiad â Rufus Lewis, rhaid imi gasglu fy ngwybodaeth archifol i ddeall fy llinach deuluol iddo.

Image: Cefn Bryn, Gower, Lucien Pissarro (1863–1944), Oil on canvas, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery

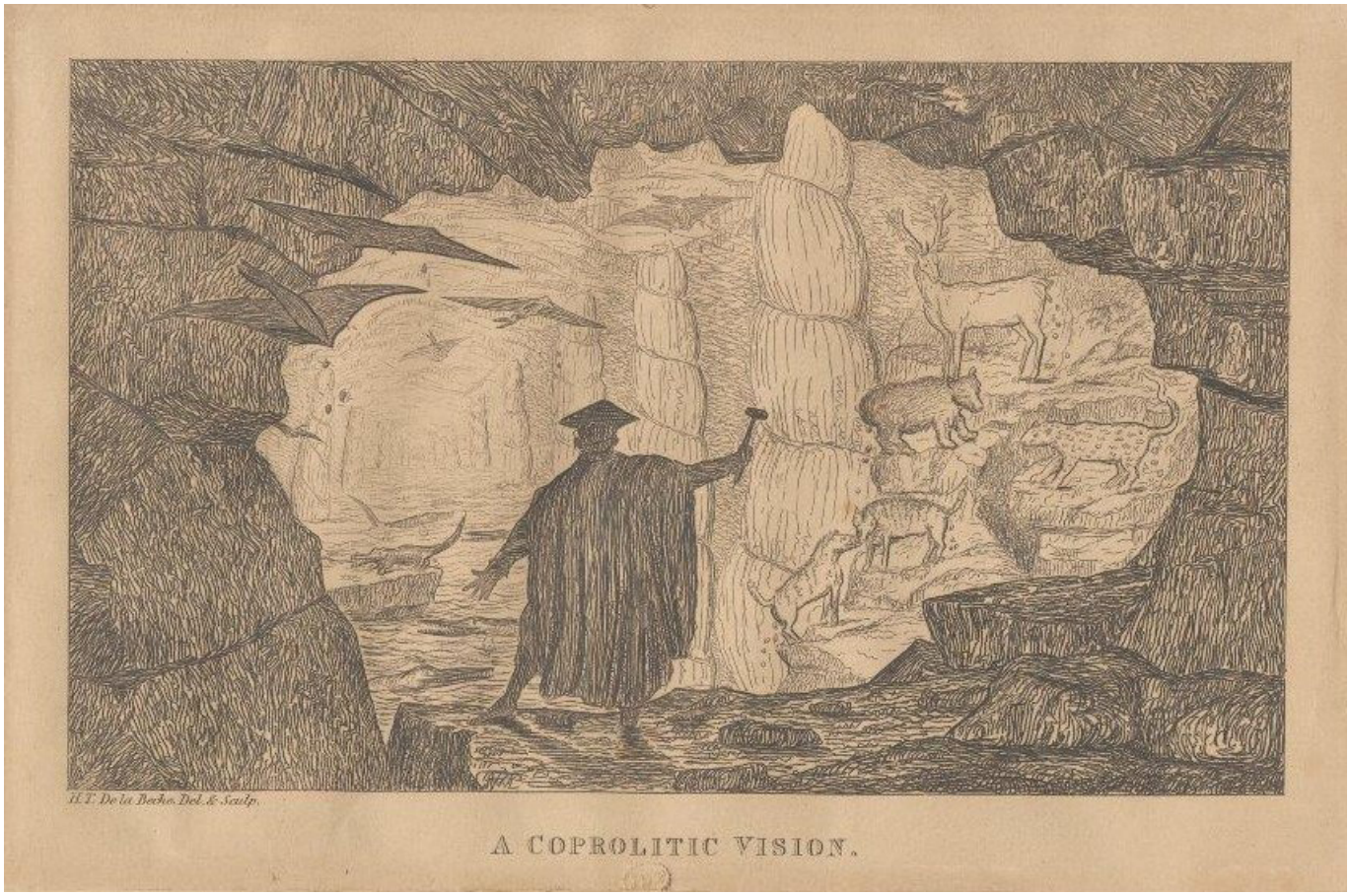


Image: Sir Henry De la Beche KCB FRS (1796-1855) A Coprolitic Vision Ysgythriad / Etching

SWANSEA STORIES: A COPROLITIC VISION

Sir Henry De la Beche was a pioneering geologist and the first director of the Geological Survey of Great Britain. In 1837, recognising the importance of geological research for developing the South Wales coalfield, he relocated the Survey from London to Swansea. By 1844, he had completed a detailed mapping of South Wales, establishing a foundation for the region's industrial and scientific growth.

While in Swansea, De la Beche joined the Royal Institution of South Wales, connecting with leading scientists and engineers. He forged close ties with the Dillwyn family through professional and personal networks, including the marriage of his daughter Bessie to Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn.

Despite his scientific achievements, De la Beche's legacy is complex: he inherited Jamaican plantations run on enslaved labour and publicly argued for the continuation of slavery, reflecting the moral contradictions of his era. This etching, titled A Coprolitic Vision, offers a glimpse into his distinctive approach to geological observation, capturing both the humour and seriousness with which he approached the natural world.

TALKS & EVENTS

Contemporary Conversations
Tuesday 12 May 2026, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

I Remember Myself. At Gorff. Workshop
Thursday 14 May 2026, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Friends of the Glynn Vivian talk with artist, Mark Stewart-Deane
Friday 15th May 2026, 3:30PM - 4:30PM

I Remember Myself. At Gorff. Performance
Saturday 16 May 2026, 11:00 am - 3:30 pm

Contemporary Conversations
Tuesday 26 May 2026, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Contemporary Conversations
Tuesday 9 June 2026, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Contemporary Conversations
Tuesday 23 June 2026, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

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

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