

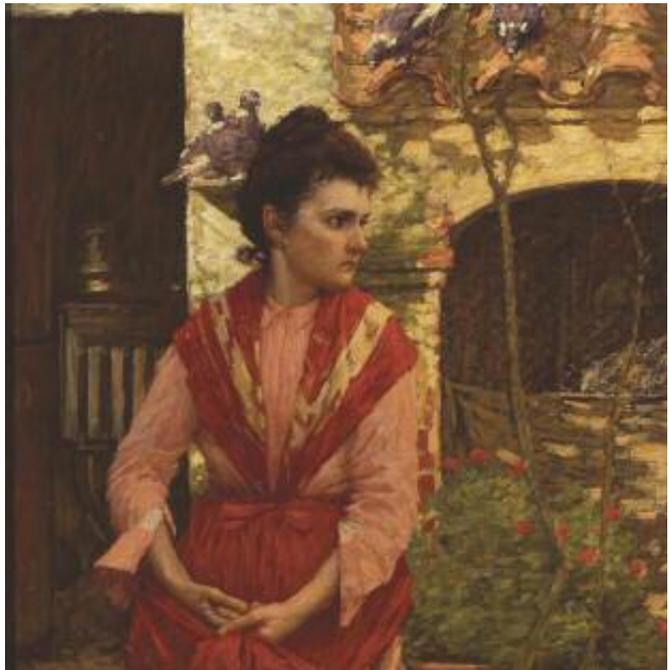


FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

Supporting the Arts in Eastbourne

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2011



News Reviews Interviews Events

- Coming attractions
- Education Project
- Events at Towner

New look all colour edition

www.friendsofthetowner.org.uk

A message from the Chairman

Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

We are about to have a new life. What do I mean by that? Well, after some time trying different venues which has not proved easy after the stable and settled existence in that beautiful and elegant venue we had for the whole of our previous life, we see light at the end of the tunnel!

So we are delighted that on October 13th our organisation will be launched into an exciting and startlingly impressive new building. The Birley Centre. (Part of Eastbourne College, across the road from Towner Gallery)

The Friends of the Towner begin a new era. Onwards and upwards. Exciting things to come with performing conditions that will add to the artistic life of our town that we could previously only dream about. The right size. 150 fixed seats – the perfect size for recitals and lectures with a possibility of raising the capacity to 300.

The future looks very positive indeed.

On October 13th the international guitarist Dimitris Dekavallas (back by demand after his acclaimed appearance three years ago) will be our first notable performer. We plan a VIP evening when we hope that Eastbourne will flock in to enjoy this new centre with its state of the art facilities.



On November 4th we will present the winner of the Nora Sande Award. This is Eastbourne's prestigious international piano competition and the date will be announced in the next newsletter.

We will also decide on a regular Friends' evening that will stay constant. I envisage that our membership will grow even bigger to be able to enjoy this new venue and the top class events planned. I and your hardworking committee hope very much that you will support us in these enterprises to make our new beginning an enormous success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Elizabeth'.



Artists impression of the Birley Centre

Cover Picture: La Provencale, Henry Herbert La Thangue (1859 - 1929)
Oil on canvas. English realist rural landscape painter associated with the Newlyn School.
Gift presented by Arthur and Helen Grogan through the Art Fund.
Currently on display in 'The Art of Giving' in the Collection Gallery

**TOWNER FRIENDS
HEAR AUTHOR AND
BROADCASTER
ZINA ROHAN**

ZINA ROHAN's first novel won the Author's Club First Novel Award; and Eastbourne's Under Ground Theatre was the setting for her Towner Friends talk about the latest book she is working on, which will tell the story of her family. That could sound rather mundane, until one learns that her ancestors were deeply involved in the politics of Russia before and during the Revolution that gave birth to the first Communist super-state.

Michael Kaye, himself a distinguished broadcaster, introduced the speaker. He also became the voice of sundry Russians who lived (and died !) during that remarkable time. From one side of the stage Zina illuminated the mysteries of the Tsar's rule, and described the influence of the giant pseudo-monk Rasputin, who exerted so powerful an influence on the Tsarina, and who proved so hard to kill when the wealthy assassins plied him with poison and bullet.



From the other side, Michael spoke the words which in various ways sent the mighty Russian Empire spinning, leading to the assassination of the Tsar and his entire family, and to a totally different tyranny.

Zina's family (one of whom held the highest "parliamentary" position under the Tsar's rule) fled westwards, and ultimately this led to her living in Britain, where, like so many descendants of displaced immigrants, she became a valued contributor to English society. Her coming book, of which the Friends were privileged to have a preview, is not to be missed.

Special Offer - Summer Season Ticket



Eastbourne's foremost arts organisation, 'Friends of the Towner', takes pleasure in offering a special Summer Season ticket.

July 1st in The Under Ground Theatre at 7.30pm
MAGGIE GEE (novelist) & **NICK RANKIN** (Biographer/Historian)
In "***Truth is Stronger than Fiction***" The married authors dispute the merits of fiction & non fiction in public for the first (and last?) time. Tickets £8 (Members £7)

July 27th in The Under Ground Theatre at 7.30pm
HELEN RUFUS-WARD (Art Historian at Sussex University)
Helen's areas of interest include Early Christian & Byzantine art. Her talk is entitled "***Wonderful Things - Byzantium through its Art***". Tickets £8 (Members £7)

September 14th in The Under Ground Theatre at 7.30pm
JAZZ - 'BRANDY & BEER' Karen Sharp & Robert Fowler,
sax stars of the Humphrey Lyttleton band, have joined together to re-create the fantastic sound of two giants of the tenor saxophone, Al Cohn & Zoot Sims. Tickets £12 (Members £11)

September 30th in the Towner Gallery at 7.30pm
Dr. GEOFF QUILLEY presents '***Great Works of Art in the National Maritime Museum***'. Tickets £8 (Members £7)

***The Friends offer these four prestigious events for the special price of £34 (Members £30)
Book now with Wendy Bishop on 01323 731607***



Robin Gregory



LLEWELLYN OF TATE

Robin Gregory reviews talk by Tate's (not, we gather The Tate's) Head of Research. There is a trend toward the elimination of definite articles. Eastbourne's fine new gallery, The Towner, is now Towner; and, we learn, The Tate is now Tate. At least there is some logic in the latter example, in that the word "Tate" implies all four galleries: Tate Britain, Tate Liverpool, Tate Modern and Tate St Ives.

Nigel Llewellyn, Towner Friends' speaker at the Under Ground Theatre on May 10th 2011, is Head of Research at Tate (= at all four establishments), and his erudite address left no doubt that he fits the post as perfectly as he filled his former professorship in art history at The University of Sussex. Declining to use the microphone (possibly the best in Sussex) he strode purposefully back and forth across the light-beam of his powerpoint

presentation, his voice always audible, detailing the history of Tate (indeed of Tates), and then presenting a unique insight into art research generally and into specific research projects under his direction. He described the links with universities, and made clear the areas of research which he felt were specially suited to the skills of his ninety-or-so staff, namely research which keeps the public in sharp focus. His teams by no means have their heads in the clouds or buried in their archives: indeed, their success is judged by the beneficial effects they bring to existing and potential users of galleries.

So much was covered that it is possible only to highlight a few salient points which came as flashes of understanding to this reviewer at least. It had never struck me, for instance, that most of their great collection is permanently on view at the National Gallery, whereas a mere three per-cent of Tate's stock can be displayed at any one time. Tate must, therefore, be forever changing their exhibitions; and Nigel's researchers influence the choice of displayed items. Then, if I caught the figure correctly, Tate's vast collection of Turners comprises some 30,000 items.

Continued over

The research teams are spending five years producing a complete on-line catalogue. We heard a clear explanation of the reasons for preferring this electronic format to shelvesful of volumes.

Watching the speaker become successively either a silhouette or brilliantly-lit (with words across his jacket) raised questions about the usefulness of powerpoint notes when one hears a master of the spoken language such as Nigel Llewellyn. Neither he nor we needed them, and the screen might better have been used to show more pictures.



I urge anyone planning to address a sizeable audience either to be sure they can match Nigel's audibility or to practise using the microphone (and screen?) to good effect. That said, it was a joy to hear an academic subject covered with such brilliance and depth; and (since Nigel lives in Lewes) I hope he will be invited to visit again.

CALLING ALL E-MAILERS

Your Committee is drowning in paper and we thought we might take a step or two towards joining the paperless society. If we could please have your e-mail address it would be a great help to us and would also go some way towards keeping costs down. We would use it to let you know about special events and any late news that may have missed the Newsletter, to remind you about a coming event and just to keep in touch in the way that Friends do.

The list of e-mails will be data protected and would at no time be given to anyone else. This is a vital and necessary way of communicating, and the Committee would be very pleased if you'd co-operate with this initiative. Simply send an e-mail to our Membership Secretary stating your name, address and phone Number. If you do not have a computer, you need do nothing and the usual service will continue.

The Membership Secretary is Frankie Robinson:
e-mail: **frankiems3@yahoo.co.uk**

Thank you.

FRIENDS' FUNDING WELL SPENT

ANN GREGORY sees the results of a substantial donation to the gallery

Recently the Friends gave £6,500 to the Towner specifically to support an educational project. Helen McAleer (Towner's Education and Learning Manager) was in charge of the ambitious programme which set out to meet two related aims:

- to encourage families to become engaged with children's learning, especially insofar as this can be fostered by the Gallery
- to support the annual Schools' Exhibition at the Towner.

As often happens when an educational project succeeds, the results on this occasion went far beyond the mere achievement of those aims. Helen involved me at every stage, and I am happy to report that the Friends' donation was used to very good effect.



Three artists were employed for ten days in three schools to bring a professional competence. Parents, school heads and staff were invited to take part in some of the activities, and it was particularly pleasing to see that large and small state and independent schools have become involved, as has a group of local parents who had chosen home-education for their own children.

I met and talked to several of the adults taking part: the group of home-educators who met in Shinewater; the head of a nursery school; fathers and mothers of the many children involved; groups of children (both in school and at Towner); two of the professional artists, and so on. All were excited by what was going on, and the thought that many were involved who might otherwise never have had occasion to visit the Gallery, let alone take part in creating artefacts for display, was particularly rewarding.

I visited Bourne Primary School to see the school-based activities which were guided by artist-educator **Karen Taylor**. A booklet had been created "*Explore Art Together*", and the children took copies home, where they and their parents drew faces, copied patterns, and so on. The results then sparked further work in school and gallery.



Robin and Ann Gregory with Nursery Head at Towner Project

Anyone who sees what Helen and her colleagues have brought to fruition with the financial seed-corn we Friends have provided cannot but feel that the money was exceedingly well-spent. With the right balance between new professional exhibitions, full use of the marvellous Towner collection, and activities to involve a public of all ages the future of the Towner is assured.

Comparable work was being done in Langney Primary with **Saj Fareed**, and in Oakwood Primary with **Ed Boxall**. Coincidentally I have just visited the huge new Turner Gallery in Margate, which has a magnificent site by the sea, but which lacks one great advantage enjoyed by the Towner, namely a Collection. The fine heritage of works which have been freely given to our gallery was shown to children and parents during this project, inspiring remarkable work even by very young children. It is, I'm sure, no coincidence that this year's annual Schools' Exhibition has had many more contributions from a larger number of schools than in previous years.



COMING ATTRACTIONS - BOOK NOW!

All tickets are available from Wendy Bishop (01323 731607) or from the Tourism Information Centre in Cornfield Road. The Enterprise Centre offers parking after 6.30pm at 10p per hour

Maggie Gee and Nicholas Rankin 'Writing and Fighting'

Friday 1 July, 7.30pm

Under Ground Theatre
Admission £8 (Members £7)



Maggie Gee and Nicholas Rankin are both professional writers (and Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature) who have been married to each other for nearly 30 years. They have never appeared on stage together at a literary event before. Who knows what will happen? Romance, or a flaming row?

Maggie Gee has published thirteen books, eleven of them novels, including *The White Family* (shortlisted for the Orange Prize) and *Grace*, set in a thinly disguised Eastbourne, a town she loves. The Times called her writing 'elegant, humorous and surprising'. Maggie's latest book, *My Animal Life*, is a memoir asking how you become a writer if you are not from a literary family, but it is also the story of her love for her husband Nicholas Rankin. Still, two writers in one small house... What's it like? How does it work?

Nicholas Rankin would like to say that he has written fewer books - only four - but sells many more copies. (Here Maggie interrupts to point out that she is published in 13 foreign languages, whereas Nick has only managed three.) The Literary Review described Nicholas Rankin as 'a first-rate historian'. His first book was about Robert Louis Stevenson - with a chapter set on the South Coast - and his third was the best-selling Churchill's *Wizards*, exploring camouflage and military deception. His new war book, coming this October, is called *Ian Fleming's Commandos*. As a writer of non-fiction, Nick adds that all his books are true, whereas his darling wife has made her living writing lies.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Helen Rufus Ward (Art Historian at Sussex University)

Wonderful Things - Byzantium through its Art

Wednesday 27 July, 7.30pm. Under Ground Theatre

Admission £8 (Members £7)

Art historian, university lecturer and passionate promoter of Byzantine art Helen Rufus-Ward's generously illustrated talk will reveal the diverse richness of the material culture of Byzantium – so recently showcased at the Royal Academy's 2008/2009 'Byzantium Exhibition'. The aim is to trace the fascinating story of the Byzantine Empire, which flourished for over a thousand years, through the art of the period. Mosaics, ivory carvings, enamels, holy relics, silverware and icons are just some of the 'wonderful things' to be examined and discussed.

Along the way the audience will encounter all manner of characters from emperors, empresses, Roman matrons, virgins and whores through a variety of art works from fourth-century buried treasure to tenth-century 'porn' - all with the ability to bring this colourful world back to life. Helen's talk will also touch on the prevalence of negative responses to Byzantine art which gave rise to the term 'byzantine' meaning complicated and confused.



The overall aim of the talk is to discover Byzantium through the splendour of its art, dismissed for hundreds of years as decadent and other-worldly...but now finally receiving the recognition it deserves.

Helen is a member of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies and has recently presented her research on Byzantine ivory carvings to the Society of Antiquaries of London, and to the Wallace Collection. She will have some of her research published shortly. Helen is an associate tutor at the University of Sussex where she teaches and lectures on Late Antique and Byzantine art.

JAZZ EVENING - BOOK NOW!

Brandy and Beer

Jazz Evening

with Robert Fowler
and Karen Sharp

Wednesday 14 September

7.30pm

Under Ground Theatre

Admission £12

(Members £11)



Two of Britain's leading saxophonists, **Robert Fowler** and **Karen Sharp** will entertain us in a programme recalling the magical combination of Al Cohn and Zoot Sims that set the jazz world alight in the 1960s.

The supporting rhythm section includes **Robin Aspland** (piano), **Jeremy Brown** (bass) and **Matt Home** (drums).

Their latest CD titled "**Brandy and Beer**" prompted one critic to remark 'an absolute joy to listen to, from start to finish'

Don't miss this opportunity to listen to some swinging tasteful jazz!

Tickets from Wendy Bishop on 731607 or complete the order form.

Karen trained at the Royal Northern College of Music. She played with the Humphrey Lyttelton band for three years taking her across Europe. In 2006 Karen played at the Ginza Festival in Tokyo and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival in 2007.

Writing in The Observer Dave Gelly described Karen as a remarkable young player "*who seems to have the complete kit - warm singing tone, melodic flair, great sense of swing and an ear for good material*". She was voted No. 1 tenor saxophonist in the latest British Jazz Awards.

Robert Fowler spent ten years with the Pasadena Roof Orchestra before joining the Syd Lawrence Orchestra. Subsequently he joined the Humphrey Lyttelton band and toured with Bryan Ferry. Robert draws on various influences from the 40s and 50s.

Dr Geoff Quilley

Treasures of the National Maritime Museum

Friday 30 September, 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Towner Art Gallery

Admission £8 (Members £7)



Spanish Armada by Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg

The National Maritime Museum holds the largest collection of marine oil paintings in the world. It was originally collected to illustrate the rise of British seapower from the Spanish Armada through the period of colonial expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries. The collection includes portraiture, war art, shipping and port scenes.

The Museum's collection of portraits covering the period 1500 to the present day is unrivalled outside the National Portrait Gallery. It comprises a wide and varied range of both maritime and non-maritime sitters, naval and merchant service officers, scientists, British royalty and non-British sitters. These include the famous series of portraits painted by Sir Peter Lely, the 'flagmen' of the Battle of Lowestoft

(1665) painted for James, Duke of York and, once in the British Royal Collection, portraits by William Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough.

Dr Geoff Quilley is a senior lecturer in art history at Sussex University. His main interest is in British art of the eighteenth century. He is a former curator of fine art at the National Maritime Museum and was responsible for two major exhibitions, *William Hodges 1744-1797: the Art of Exploration* (2004) and *Art for the Nation: the Oil Paintings Collections of the National Maritime Museum* (2006). Last year Yale University Press published *From Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain, 1768-1829*.

EXHIBITIONS AT TOWNER

Masterpieces and hidden treasures tell story of **John Piper's** love of the local land

John Piper in Kent and Sussex

2 July – 25 September 2011

£5.50 / £4 concession
under 16s free

John Piper (1903 – 1992) stood out amongst 20th century British artists for his appreciation and interpretation of the British landscape. He found particular inspiration in the landscape of Kent and Sussex, his love for the counties originating when he cycled their lanes with his sketchbook as a teenage boy. As such, Towner is delighted to host this new exhibition which parallels our own unrivalled collection of depictions of the Sussex land.

The exhibition features around 100 major and rarely seen works, many of which have been borrowed from private collections for the first time - including painting, printing, photography and collage; stage design, costume design and travel guides; and tapestry, stained glass and church vestments. The geographical theme allows the versatility of Piper's art to shine forth.



Littlestone-On-Sea, 1936

With the poet laureate John Betjeman, Piper was influential in the formation of the Shell Guides, echoing his original 'journey books'; examples of the Kent and East Sussex guides are included. The versatility of Piper's art is further demonstrated through his contribution to stage and church. Opera stage designs and costume designs for Benjamin Britten's operas at Glyndebourne are brought together as are the cartoons and sketches for stained glass and tapestry, his large-scale preparatory drawings now unfurled.

Matthew Rowe, Artistic Director of Towner, said: *"We are delighted to host this exhibition of an important artist whose work so strongly references the themes of our own collection and our location."*

This is a Mascalls Gallery exhibition curated by Nathaniel Hepburn.

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH SCULPTURE

*An exhibition of contemporary British sculpture by
Susie MacMurray, Brendan Jamison, Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva,
Claire Morgan, Jill Townsley, Henry Seaton*

Compulsive, Obsessive, Repetitive

2 July – 18 September 2011
(free)

Compulsive, Obsessive, Repetitive is a group show of six new commissions by sculptors who obsessively use small scale repetitive processes to create large scale sculptural installations.

The common characteristic is the need to compulsively repeat an action (in a labour intensive and painstaking way, often by hand but sometimes manufactured) to create a large scale work composed of multiple elements.

Brendan Jamison (known for his sugar cube scale models) combines elements from the architecture of local landmarks Beachy Head Lighthouse, Redoubt Fortress and the Martello Towers. *Tower, 2011* is 5m high and constructed from over a quarter of a million sugar cubes, weighing over 500kg.



Susie MacMurray questions at what point drawing becomes sculpture, with a new 'sculptural drawing' across one large wall of the gallery comprising rubber tubing extruding from the wall and spilling out onto the floor.

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva often endures months of repetitive and nauseating labour in her process. Her new work will adorn the gallery wall from floor to ceiling, using tiles made out of individually cleaned and preserved salmon skins. The skins of different species are placed by colour, creating a lavish pattern further embellished with gilded fish bones.

In **Claire Morgan's** reconfiguration of *Machine Says No, 2007*, a wild rat, preserved using traditional taxidermy techniques, is suspended and appears to be falling through geometric forms created from stretched pieces of plastic bag. The passage of viewers through the space creates constant and subtle movement.

Jill Townsley's work is repetitive to the point of obsession. *Till Rolls, 2011* is a large floor-based installation consisting of 9375 paper rolls, each extruded from its centre to form vertical cones of varying height (up to 12ft). The result is an undulating structure reminiscent of a three-dimensional graph – but no clue is given as to whether the peaks and troughs of this structure represent good or bad results; the paper is blank.

The Art of Giving - how gifts have shaped The Towner Collection

Collection Gallery

Exhibition on until 9 Oct 11 (Free)

If you have not yet visited this exhibition, do make it a priority! More than 90 items from the vast Towner Collection are on display in the six areas of the collection gallery on level one.

The theme for this beautifully curated exhibition are the numerous and generous gifts and bequests made to Towner since its opening in 1923. This Pandora's box of historic, modern and contemporary works span Towner's 88 year history, highlighting gifts from benefactors and works that have been purchased through external funding.

Eric Ravilious is well represented with a number of works on show including the 1938 design for Wedgwood's Garden Series, purchased last year with funds from the Friends of the Towner and a selection of his Wedgwood china.



Milling Cider Apples
Henry Herbert La Thangue
(Jan 19 1859 - 21 Dec 1929)
Oil on canvas

Gift presented by Arthur and Helen Grogan through the Art Fund

Don't miss the exciting opportunity for a walk and talk round this exhibition with guest curator Terry Henson. Details on enclosed flyer or contact Wendy Bishop on 731607

FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

Patron The Duke of Devonshire KCVO, CBE, DL

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Co-opted Member Philip Anson

EBC Representative Councillor Neil Stanley

Events Committee

Michael Kaye (Chair), Elizabeth Muir-Lewis, Ann Gregory, Robin James, Frances Lloyd, Margaret Whitehead

The Friends of the Towner Newsletter

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Forthcoming Events 2011



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Under Ground Theatre



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Dr Geoff Quilley
**Treasures of the
National Maritime Museum**
Please note venue - Towner

For tickets, please complete the ticket order form. Enquiries regarding tickets only to Wendy Bishop 01323 731607. Tickets are also available from the Tourist Information Centre, Cornfield Road.