



En fête

With Mayfair Art Weekend and London Art Week both kicking off on the last Friday in June, the 2018 summer art season continues with vigour, the uncertain future seemingly posed by Brexit being sloughed off in an extravaganza of shows, events and openings at both commercial and public galleries, not to mention luxury goods retailers across the West End and all taking place on a grand scale.

The Mayfair Art Weekend – including St James's – has really expanded in size and scope, its close co-operation with the **Royal Academy**, (celebrating its 250th birthday this summer also – see Coda), which is acting as the event hub, giving it particular heft.

With some 35 participating organisations, talks and walks, workshops and performances, it reveals the underlying resilience of the London art world, its ability constantly to renew and re-invent itself.

In all the excitement don't lose sight of the more Old Master/Antiquities oriented London Art Week which seems also to have upped its game with some 40 galleries taking part this year – and proving that, with good connoisseurship and artistic flair, this once increasingly sleepy area has now proved to be very far from a dying market.

Trust artists

So concerned with the immediate 'here and now' of making, artists can often be somewhat neglectful of what happens to their work, and consequently, their subsequent artistic reputation, trusting simply that someone, somewhere will pick up the critical baton and run with it. It doesn't work like that however, things have to be made to happen. Even with somebody as celebrated as Henry Moore, a huge element in his continuing worldwide celebrity unquestionably comes down to the shrewdness and financial weight with which his Foundation was first established in 1977, some nine years before his death.

These thoughts were provoked particularly by two exhibitions involving the Wilhelmina Barns-Graham Trust. Established in 1987 some 17 years before the artist's death, this operates, like all good trusts, on a number of levels. At base there is the ongoing support and promotion of the artist's work. In this instance it is sponsorship of a superb retrospective loan exhibition at the Hastings **Jerwood Gallery**, 'Wilhelmina Barns-Graham: Sea, Rock, Earth and Ice'. It takes as its focus her 'Winter Landscape 1952', while exploring some four decades of the artist's profoundly poetic and nuanced abstract take on the landscape, above all that of her

beloved Cornwall and St Ives. The show goes on to Graves Art Gallery in Sheffield later in the year.

Beyond this has been the establishment of a Trust office in the artist's native Edinburgh which not only houses a considerable collection of her and others work for loan and research, but also administers grants and bursaries in art and art history to Scottish art schools, in short the artist as benefactor of other artists.

This opens up another intriguing line of enquiry, the scope and role of art and artist trusts and foundations in a much wider sense which, as it happens, forms the basis of a fascinating show and conference at the **Mall Galleries** entitled 'The Art of Collecting'. Curated by Selina Skipwith it looks at the work of some four such bodies, the Barns-Graham itself along with the Fleming, Jerwood and Ingram Collections, how they began and the wide range of bursaries, awards and events they support, all with a particular emphasis on women artists' work.

Having been involved in another, albeit rather more modest (financially speaking) trust, the Evelyn Williams Trust for some 25 years now, I can vouch for the fact that it is never so much a question of financial muscle as thought, imagination and love that makes these bodies really work. And that trusts really are for the many not the few.

Paper trail

A long-time Cork Street stalwart and a personal favourite, Art First moved out some time before the developers moved in on 'The Street', and they have enjoyed a somewhat peripatetic career ever since before finally seeming to settle in their current Lambeth space. Despite that, they have always sustained an extremely loyal and coherent stable of artists, all five in their latest 'residency' show, entitled 'Paper Matters' at Emma Hill's **The Eagle Gallery** having been showing with them more or less since the gallery first opened.

All of them – Jack Milroy, Christopher Cook, Simon Lewty, Bridget Macdonald and Will McLean – are well established figures with long records as art school teachers and a body of work in public collections. Over the years they have also formed connections and enjoyed dialogues with each other while exhibiting at Art First.

Between them they give a subtle resonance of feeling to a show in which the implied theme is essentially that of a narrative, each piece telling a story of some kind that, like poetry, is left wide open for our interpretation.

Fifty fifty

For a comparatively small space like the **Thackeray Gallery** to be

celebrating its 50th birthday (this month) is a remarkable story at every level. Opening in that troubled year of 1968 by the redoubtable and delightful Priscilla Anderson, it has stayed put in the same Kensington space through countless economic booms and recessions, quietly doing the things it has always been very good at doing, above all nurturing some pretty distinguished painters' careers. Kyffin Williams and Scottish Modernist Alberto Morrocco's reputations would be nothing like they are without the enterprising and enthusiastic promotional skills of Priscilla and her (just) two successors Anne Thomson and Sarah Macdonald-Brown since the early 70s.

That tradition continues to the present day, their current celebratory show featuring special new works by all the artists in their stable – the names, like Jennifer McRae, Judy Buxton, Vanessa Gardiner and Christine McArthur, telling their own story. And an historical link here also to the Mall Galleries' show – it was Priscilla Anderson who first got The Fleming Collection going.

Australia abroad

There's a nice symmetry about **Australia House's** latest show for their 2018 centenary celebration of the building's opening, in that it features an unusual family of four Australian sculptors, Michael

Cartwright, his wife Shona Nunan, and their two sons Sollai and Jacob Cartwright, all of whom have long plied their trade in Italy and Germany. It is sponsored by The Sidney Nolan Trust, itself the legacy of an artist who for much of his life, famously painted Australia from afar – in England!

Entitled appropriately enough 'Journeys', the family's exhibition reflects the myriad journeys, real and metaphorical, that are implied in their individually very different but very distinguished careers; Shona is essentially a modeller/caster focussing on the human figure, Michael's carved and modelled work is more abstract in character, Sollai is a stone carver, while Jacob works across media, from wood and stone to sound and photography.

Nicholas Usherwood

AND FINALLY...

It was 36 years ago this month of June that Galleries magazine was first published – that's 420 issues and 36 volumes. Quiet celebrations all round.

from left
Jacob Cartwright 'Rising' Australia House
Jennifer McRae 'Self Portrait with Blue Jay' Thackeray Gallery
Will MacLean 'Homage to Gerrard Winstanley' Art First at The Eagle Gallery
Henry Moret 'La Chaumière et La Rivière Blanche' Stoppenbach & Delestre, Mayfair Art Weekend
Wilhelmina Barns-Graham 'Three Rock Forms' Jerwood Gallery