

Norfolk Contemporary Art Society

Introduction

The Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS) was founded in 1956 by, principally, the late Letitia Colman, mother of Sir Timothy Colman, as a charitable association that promotes the interests of contemporary art in Norfolk, but also with the express purpose of building a holding of contemporary art that was publicly accessible in Norwich. Since then we have purchased, and/or helped to purchase, a wide range of contemporary works that are either on permanent loan to the Castle or were gifted to it. These include works by Graham Sutherland, Ceri Richards, Eduardo Paolozzi, Alan Davie, Prunella Clough, Michael Andrews, Wyndham Lewis, Bridget Riley, Howard Hodgkin, and Maggi Hambling, a roll-call of leading figures in British contemporary art.

Recent acquisitions

In partnership with the curators at the Castle, and in the last two years alone, we have acquired, or helped to acquire, new works by five significant local artists, Derek Morris, Mary Mellor, Mark Edwards, Francis Kearney and Mary Webb. Two of these have been or will be shown in exhibitions in the Castle's new Colman Project Space. In the case of Mark Edwards, for example, in December 2012 NCAS helped to purchase the Castle Museum's first ever photographic light box for its collection, in this instance to house the artist's *River Bungay, 2010*.

Co-operation with the Castle

We have worked closely with the Castle's contemporary curators over many years. They have all been co-opted members of the NCAS committee, have worked with us on events and talks related to exhibitions, and have co-curated shows with us e.g. the *Surprise* exhibition in 2004 of major works from local private collections, an event we are planning to reprise in 2015.

Other NCAS activities

With a membership of over 500 NCAS acts as a local ginger group for contemporary art generally, with a programme of excursions and talks – for example Hilary Spurling on Matisse in November, prior to the Tate exhibition – a biennial auction to boost its funds for acquiring new art (in the past this has included Bernard Reynolds' *Parrothead*, now on Castle Green), and an on-loan collection for public spaces of local art-works.

In conclusion

We at NCAS are very keen to continue our productive working partnership with the Castle Museum, and we hope that our aim of making contemporary art locally available to the public will continue to be embraced in the future. To that end we shall also be continuing to keep a watchful eye on the use of the

Timothy Gurney Gallery since it serves as the county's major display space for contemporary art.

Brenda Ferris DL