

Norfolk Contemporary Art Society

Report for Norwich Area Museums Committee, June 16 2015

The Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS) was founded in 1956 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, including works by many leading figures in British contemporary art.

Recent acquisitions

The most recent acquisitions we have helped with since my last report to the committee have been a work by Frances Kearney from her exhibition *Running Wild* at the Castle and Mary Webb's *San Filippo IV (version 2)*.

Other NCAS activities

With a membership of around 430 we continue to act as a local ginger group for contemporary art generally, with a programme of excursions, talks and fundraising activities, including our forthcoming auction in November.

Co-operation with the Castle

We have worked closely with the Castle's contemporary curators over many years and they have all been co-opted members of the NCAS committee, most recently Harriet Godwin and Hannah Higham, who have worked with us on events, talks related to exhibitions, etc.

The past year, however, has seen two very significant examples of that co-operation which we in the Society believe has raised our productive working partnership with the Castle Museum to an even higher level.

Ana Maria Pacheco at the Castle

Our major exhibition this year has been in fact a series of four interlinked exhibitions of work by internationally renowned Brazilian sculptor Ana Maria Pacheco at four locations in the City, namely, the NUA Gallery (*The Banquet*), the Catholic Cathedral (two heads of *John the Baptist*), the Anglican Cathedral (*Shadows of the Wanderer*) and, on the mezzanine floor of the Castle Keep, *Enchanted Garden*, a brand-new series of eight polychromed alabasters. These exquisite works – alongside the Castle's own fine collection of ancient alabasters that inspired them – will be on show until 31 August, a real coup for the Castle which the NCAS is very proud to have brought about.

Exhibitions Officer post

NCAS has always particularly valued the Exhibitions Officer post. This was under threat following the Government austerity measures that necessitated the loss of Norfolk Museums staff. Following an imaginative approach from the Director we were therefore very pleased to be able, in conjunction with the East Anglia Art Fund, to help save Heather Guthrie's post, even if only for one year, by pooling our financial resources and raising the necessary £20,000, thus building on our traditional strong relationship with Norwich Castle.

Brenda Ferris DL
Chair, Norfolk Contemporary Art Society