

Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS)

Report to Norwich Area Museums Committee, July 11th 2017

NCAS update

When I last reported to the Committee in September last year I concentrated largely on the fact that 2016 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society, which was set up in 1956, initially chaired by Lettice Colman, in order to encourage the Castle Museum to acquire work in the modern idiom to balance its fine collection of the nineteenth-century Norwich School of painters. Since then the Society has acquired its own art collection which forms the basis of holdings in post-war art in the Castle. Among the items the NCAS has lent to the Castle are works by Edward Barker, Jeffrey Camp, Prunella Clough, Eduardo Paolozzi, Graham Sutherland and Colin Self. Pieces that the Society has purchased and then given to the Norfolk Museums Service include works by Derrick Greaves, Howard Hodgkin, L.S.Lowry, Mary Mellor and Derek Morris.

To mark our 60th there has also been an exhibition, opened in the Timothy Gurney gallery last year on Monday, 26th September, by James Colman, a descendant of our original chair, of those NCAS-funded works in the Castle collection. This has proved very popular and remains open for several more months - if you haven't already seen it, do go! For anyone who is interested there is a full inventory on our website (www.n-cas.org.uk) of all the artworks in our 'Castle collection', including other works visible around the City, such as the George Fullard *Mother and child* sculpture in the Cathedral Close and Bernard Reynolds' *Parrot head* in the Castle Gardens.

Throughout the year, though, we have continued our programme of events and exhibitions which are aimed at pursuing the object of the Society, namely, 'to advance the education of the public in the appreciation of the arts and in particular the creative art of the present day in all its branches'.

Over the past year our talks - usually in the Auditorium at the Forum - have included, to name but a few, last November, Simon Dell on the status of land art in the British Isles from the 1960s onwards, with particular reference to the work of Richard Long (currently on view at Houghton), then in January, in association with Norwich 20 Group, Eamonn McCabe on his life in photography, plus, more recently, among others, Rosie Snell (whose work *Stalker 2005* is in the 60 Years On exhibition), on her work and her interest in militarised landscapes and, most recently, a fascinating talk on Kettle's Yard, Cambridge by its director Andrew Nairne.

Exhibitions have included our biennial members' art exhibition last September in the Forum, while this summer you can still enjoy two lovely outdoor exhibitions in beautiful

settings, namely, the NCAS exhibition *Abstracted* in the cafe and grounds of Mannington Hall by five local artists, and, in partnership with the National Trust, *The Makers*, a contemporary art exhibition at Felbrigg Hall. Details of these and all our events can be found on our website: www.n-cas.org.uk. Still to come this year are more talks and then, in November, our biennial auction - an event not to be missed if you're looking for good contemporary art at reasonable prices (and our major source of funding for the grant-aiding of Castle purchases, for example, awards to outstanding NUA students, etc).

And finally, my thanks on behalf of the Society for all the help we've received from the Museums Service officers, especially with our 60 Years On exhibition, and congratulations on the recent award of Arts Council funding: we know how hard everyone's worked to achieve this, it's truly richly deserved!

Brenda Ferris DL,

Chair, Norfolk Contemporary Art Society