

# THE HOLBURNE MUSEUM

CHANGING LIVES THROUGH ART



## HOLBURNE HIGHLIGHTS

A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2023 FOR OUR PATRONS

## DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

I am enormously proud to reflect on yet another year of outstanding exhibitions and of rich engagement with the community. It is important to say from the outset that the Holburne can only achieve such ambitious activities with the support of our loyal Directors Circle and Patrons, so thank you all for another year of tremendous generosity and commitment.

As you will read in the following report, our 2023 exhibition season has included a diverse range of art and artists and each show has, in different ways, helped illuminate our building, our history and our magnificent collection. For me, each was memorable and a personal thrill: the thrill of hanging masterpieces of the Renaissance by Holbein and others in *Painted Love* and earlier in the show of Dürer's woodcuts; the thrill of seeing brand new work made by Alberta Whittle in direct response to the Holburne; the thrilling beauty of Lucie Rie and Gwen John, and commitment of Sarah Biffin and of Michael Simpson.

As we look ahead to 2024, and with the continuation of our hugely popular Gwen John exhibition, I am again proud to celebrate an all-woman line up of exhibitions for our Spring season. I am very excited at the prospect of Lubaina Himid's *Lost Threads*, 400 metres of brightly-coloured fabric wrapping itself around and meandering through the museum. We have committed to regularly include ceramics in the programme, reflecting one of the strengths of our collection, and there can have been few if any artists who worked with clay in as innovative way as Gillian Lowndes. I was bowled over when I first saw her work a couple of years ago and am thrilled to be bringing a group of great works to Bath.

Of course, much of this year's activity has gone on behind closed doors, whether it is our year-round work with schools and with people with histories of poor mental health; caring for and developing the collection; building our endowment fund; maintaining our historic building and planning for its further redevelopment to enhance and expand our public offer.

Next year, amongst the exhibitions and the rich array of talks, workshops and other events for the general public and for our Friends, Patrons and Director's Circle, please keep an eye out for an important announcement in the coming months. Exciting things are going on behind the scenes which will have a huge, positive impact on the Holburne and what we offer our visitors. We look forward to letting you know more as soon as we can!



Dr Chris Stephens, Dec 2023



## 2023 EXHIBITIONS HIGHLIGHTS

### EXHIBITIONS ENABLED BY SUPPORT FROM OUR DIRECTOR'S CIRCLE AND PATRONS

#### ***Alberta Whittle (January 27 – May 8 2023)***

Contemporary artist, Alberta Whittle was invited to present a suite of newly commissioned sculptures across the Holburne Museum's site and grounds, as well as a series of new text-based works across Bath. The exhibition, Whittle's first in a public museum, continued themes known in her practice including post-colonial healing, pleasure, and hospitality, each manifested through her prism of love, compassion, and kindness.



#### ***Illustrating the World: Woodcuts in the Age of Dürer (January 21 – April 23 2023)***

This was a rare opportunity to view the complete set of woodcuts known as 'The Great Passion', produced by the most famed artist of the German Renaissance, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). During the c15 the woodcut technique became highly practiced throughout Europe, mainly in the form of cheap and mass-produced decorative or devotional images, made in monastic workshops or by independent craftsmen, including playing-cards makers. This show was generously made possible with support of the Schroder Family.



#### ***Painted Love: Renaissance Marriage Portraits (May 26 – Oct 01 2023)***

This was a lavish exhibition that explored the role of portraiture in the process of marriage in Renaissance Europe. Marriage portraits not only documented the legal union of spouses, capturing that key moment in the sitters' lives, intimate and personal as well as public and formal, but also celebrated the union of families, their wealth, power and land, and the forging of political alliances.



**The Times** ★★★★★ "it tugs the heartstrings and stirs the loins"

**The Guardian** ★★★★★





***Unlimited: Art for Everyone in the 1960s***  
***(April 22 – June 4 2023)***

This was the first ever retrospective exhibition devoted to Jeremy Fry's ground-breaking Unlimited, presented at The Assembly Rooms. In 1966, Bath based inventor and entrepreneur Jeremy Fry established Unlimited as an antidote to the exclusivity of the art world by producing unlimited editions of work by some of the leading international artists of the day, including Takis, Liliane Lijn, Mary Martin, Kenneth Martin, Lygia Clark, Michael McKinnon, Susan Tebbi and Mo McDermott.



***Michael Simpson***  
***(May 6 – Sept 17 2023)***

This exhibition was the first to focus exclusively on the artist's work on paper, exploring Simpson's approach to drawing as a route to what a painting might be. Made in a range of different media on a variety of materials, these drawings revealed how Simpson's ideas emerge and grow over time. His primary concern is with 'the mechanics of painting'. He says, 'despite the subjective references in my work, I believe a painting must move beyond its subject and, for me, formal considerations are paramount'.



***Lucie Rie: The Adventure of Pottery***  
***(Jul 14 – 7 Jan 2024)***

This major exhibition celebrated Lucie Rie (1902–1995), one of the most accomplished and influential potters of the twentieth century.

Featuring work produced across six decades, this display followed the evolution of Rie's distinguished career, from some of her earliest ceramics made in her native Vienna to striking pieces from the last years of her life.

***"Sheer pleasure everywhere you look"***

**Ali Smith, The New Statesman**

***Gwen John: Art and Life in London and Paris (Oct 21 – April 14 2024)***

This exhibition brought together paintings, watercolours, drawings and sketches to chronologically trace Gwen John's 40-year career. The exhibition placed her art in relation to the two cities where she chose to live and work: from her early years at the Slade School of Fine Art in London and subsequent training under James Abbott McNeill Whistler at the Académie Carmen in Paris, to her permanent move to Paris in 1904 and the life she built as an artist there.



***Sarah Biffin (Sept 29- Jan 14, 2024)***

This exhibition was the first major museum exhibition to examine Biffin's life and work. Her remarkable story has been largely overlooked by historians and we hoped to correct this. Biffin was born with the condition "phocomelia", described on her baptism record as "born without arms and legs". She went on to train as an artist, using her mouth to draw, sew, write and paint watercolours in miniature. In her early twenties, she was contracted to Mr Dukes, who ran a travelling sideshow, and her talents astonished the crowds who turned up to see her work.



***Jann Haworth & Liberty Blake: Work In Progress (July 4 - April 30 2024)***

This seven-panel mural depicting 130 women from British history and culture was commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery as part of a three-year project to enhance female representation in its collection. The mural was inspired by the absence of women in the album cover for the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, which Haworth co-created in 1967. We were delighted to collaborate on the mural through a series of workshops with our Pathways to Wellbeing participants, led by Haworth and Blake on Zoom from their home in Salt Lake City, Utah





# LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

## HOW YOU HAVE HELPED US SUPPORT SCHOOLS & CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

With thanks to the generous funding from our supporters, we are pleased to share that the Holburne's ambitious Learning Team have once again delivered an outstanding programme of learning and engagement activities for school children, families, and young adults from a broad range of backgrounds living in Bath and the Southwest, over the past twelve months.

Such achievements include strengthening our established **Partner Schools' Programme** by developing more in-depth relationships with the six local primary schools which we support, including Three Ways School, Widcombe Church of England Junior School, St Philip's Church of England Primary School, St Michael's Junior Church School, St Saviour's Church School, and Paulton Infant School.

We are now in the third year of working closely with these schools which serve areas of lower socio-economic prosperity. Our aim is to provide targeted creative opportunities for children and families who come from areas of Bath (and rural communities) that are not currently represented in our audience demographic due to social or economic barriers.

Total number of free school workshops delivered for our Partner Primary schools:

11 free school workshops across the year, plus:

- Teacher CPD afternoon at the museum
- In school artist talk on Lucie Rie
- Black History month assembly
- Pop-up exhibition of partner school artwork
- Free access to Private Views and shows for partner school staff

A total of 516 children have benefitted from our School Partnership programme in 2023.



### **Face to Face – a Portrait Competition**

This popular competition was open entry for children and young people (5 – 25yrs) over the summer. We received over 40 entries and exhibited the artwork in the Clore Learning space over the holidays when the room was open to the public every weekend.

We were delighted to welcome over 70 people to the private view and awarded 5 winners prizes (including a much-coveted family ticket to Longleat and vouchers from Minerva art supplies) Many of these families hadn't previously engaged with the Holburne but were delighted to discover it and see their work on display in a museum.

*"T (name) is autistic but loves making art and has recently discovered watercolour painting. So having her work in the exhibition has been brilliant for her to keep being encouraged to be creative"*

Parent of a young person who entered 'Face to Face'.

*"Paulton would really love to come to another workshop and visit the exhibitions. Yes, yes, yes please! I really value our partnership with you and The Holburne Museum; it's priceless".*

Partner School staff member

# PATHWAYS TO WELLBEING

## DEDICATED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME LED BY HOLBURN MUSEUM



This year we've worked intensely with over 100 people who attend our groups on a weekly basis to support their mental health and wellbeing.

We have developed our networks with GP's surgeries throughout Bath and are now a trusted part of the network of organisations who people are referred to through social prescribing.

We have delivered:

- 153 supported, creative sessions taking inspiration from our permanent collection and temporary exhibitions.  
Every session has been delivered by a specialist art practitioner with additional mental health support always available.
- 13 outreach sessions, working in Care Homes and community settings such as Bath City Farm
- 4 exhibitions of Pathways to Wellbeing participants work including Jann Haworth's 'Work in Progress' Mural which 17 participants contributed to and an exhibition at Bath Artists Studios at the end of the Fresh Art project.



We have worked with:

- 10 specialist artists and 3 support workers working with ceramics, textiles, printmaking, silversmithing and painting, teaching skills equivalent to A level/ Degree course level.
- We have offered support, mentoring, training and reflective practice opportunities for these creative practitioners, building a community of committed Pathways to Wellbeing socially engaged artists.
- Birmingham University is conducting an academic evaluation of Pathways to Wellbeing over the next 3 years as part of a larger UK analysis of Creative Health work in Museums.



# COLLECTION CARE & ACQUISITIONS

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023 COLLECTION CARE ACTIVITIES & ACQUISITIONS

One of the Holburne's main purposes is to preserve the things that have been entrusted to our care. Previous generations have created and left behind beautiful and fascinating objects in the hope that future generations will be able to enjoy and learn from them too. Over the Spring a new display of miniatures, works on paper and fans went up in the Posnett and Fletcher galleries. Mount-maker Mick Lapsley assisted the curatorial team in the correct fixing and pinning of the objects. The new displays showcase previously unseen works from the Jaffe Collection of miniatures and presents the fan by Thomas Loggon that was conserved thanks to the Finnis Scott Foundation.



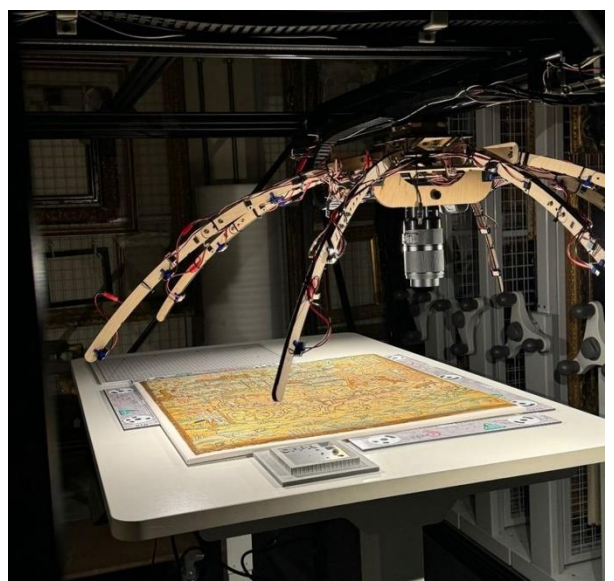
In the Autumn, we began work with researchers from UWE Bristol to explore the potential of 3D imaging in the conservation of historic textiles. Dr Xavier Aure Calvet, Research Fellow at the Centre for Fine Print Research at UWE, scanned several collection textiles throughout November with the assistance of the curatorial team. A scanning lab was set up in the picture store for the duration of this stage of the project.

We hope that developing digital scans will help us bring these rare and fragile Stuart embroideries to life, so that we can share more widely.



In the Summer we welcomed the arrival of the first batch of 50 etchings which form part of a major new acquisition for the Holburne, known as The 2023 Fund. The etchings date between 1900 and 1950. In November the first print went on public display of Derek Jarman by Maggi Hambling, 1998.

We are grateful to two local donors who have bequeathed this unique print collection to the Holburne Museum.





## PATRON EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### A SUMMARY OF SOME OF OUR ART ADVENTURES TOGETHER

In January, Chris Stephens and our supporters were fortunate to have the opportunity to enjoy an exclusive curator-led tour of *The EY Exhibition: Cezanne* at Tate Modern and visit to *Lynette Yiadom-Boakye: Fly In League With The Night* at Tate Britain, accompanied by an introduction from the curator, Dr Isabella Maidment. The exhibition at Tate Modern was a once-in-a-generation exhibition of paintings, watercolours and drawings by Paul Cezanne (1839-1906). Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's solo exhibition was a major survey of an acclaimed contemporary British artist that has returned to Tate Britain after being cut-short during lockdown.



We were delighted to invite a group of Patrons and donors for a special cultural excursion to two locations in nearby Salisbury over the summer.

Our visit began with a guided tour of the New Art Centre at Roche Court Sculpture Park with a private lunch in their Design House. Set within the rolling Wiltshire countryside, the New Art Centre is a commercial gallery specialising in 20th and 21st-century art, with sculpture sited in the gardens.

This special trip was followed by a curator-led tour of *'To Be Free: Art and Liberty'*, a contemporary exhibition at Salisbury Cathedral.

In the Autumn, we had a very special and rare opportunity to have a guided tour of Edmund de Waal's tranquil studio in South London. Edmund spent time demonstrating his tools, materials, and beautiful environment in which he works, whilst giving unique insight into his creative process and practice. We explored the sounds of the workshops and saw how words, histories and clay intermingled in his pieces.

We learnt how the potter uses the wheel to throw his pots, discover his firing techniques and examine the different effects glazes can produce. Edmund also informed us about his extraordinary life as an award-winning author and broadcaster.



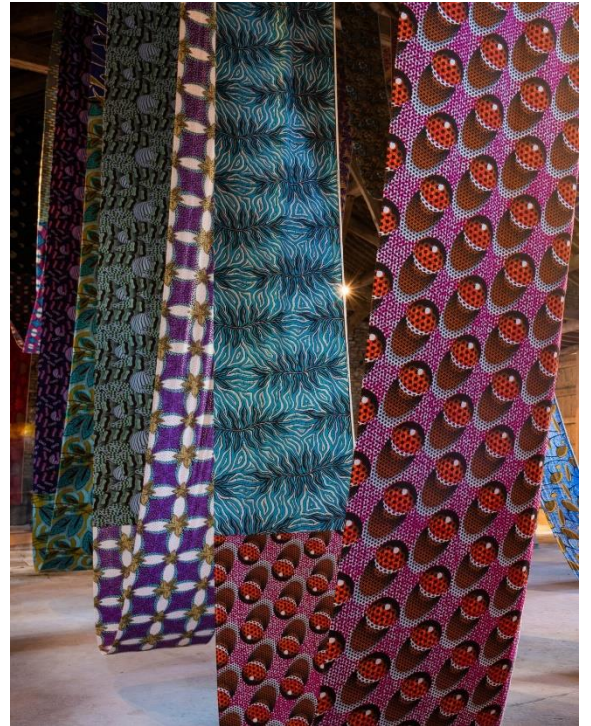
## LOOKING AHEAD

### OUR EXHIBITION PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2025

In early January we will open the new Spring exhibition season with an exhibition by Lubaina Himid titled *Lost Threads*. Born in Zanzibar in 1954, Himid is a British artist who has dedicated her four-decades-long career to uncovering marginalised and silenced histories, figures, and cultural expressions.

Weaving and flowing across the front façade and around the permanent collections, Lubaina Himid's *Lost Threads* will see 400 metres of vibrant Dutch wax fabric transform the spaces of the Holburne Museum.

Our Summer exhibition programme will focus on a retrospective of Henry Moore miniatures, alongside a special artists commission by Mr Doodle. In the Autumn, we look forward to opening a show exploring the 'uncanny' in works by Paula Rego and Francisco de Goya.



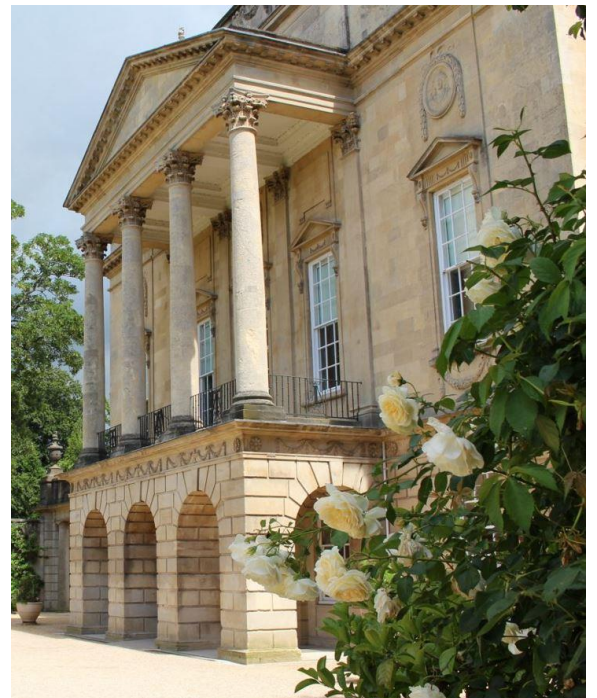
### YOUR SUPPORT & 1882 CIRCLE

It is thanks to our family of supporters that the Holburne can survive as an independent charitable organisation with a wonderful art collection for all.

We are enormously grateful for the support we receive from all our supporters.

Furthering your support by making a one-off donation in 2024 is a fantastic way of becoming even closer to the Holburne. Your ongoing support enables a range of projects from the delivery of our exhibitions to curatorial research, education programmes, conservation, and essential repairs.

Equally, if you are considering leaving a gift in your will to the Holburne, we would be thrilled to hear about it. For further information on the 1882 Circle, our dedicated legacy membership, please do get in touch.



## THANK YOU

Dr Chris Stephens and the Development Team

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