

NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2019

BRITISH ART NETWORK



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MARTIN POSTLE

CONVENOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the new-look December Newsletter, in which we aim to provide an update on what is going on across the British Art Network, together with contributions from individual BAN members on specific initiatives. We hope you find it an informative and enjoyable read.

It's certainly been a busy few months for the British Art Network team, since the Paul Mellon Centre and Tate formed a new partnership, marked by a re-launch in May 2018 at Tate Britain. In early summer I took on the part-time role of Convenor for the forthcoming year, working closely with BAN Coordinator Jessica Jukes, and Freya Stannard, Manager of National Partnerships at Tate. Since that time we have worked closely together with the BAN Steering Group and colleagues across BAN to build a new dynamic network with a broad-ranging programme of seminars, workshops and events.

Among the most significant developments has been the formation of the new Early Career Curators Group, made up of fifteen curators from across the UK, who have been provided with bursaries to enable enhanced networking, research and career development. On 18 September the Group met at the Paul Mellon Centre to interrogate the meaning of 'British art' within the context of the curatorial role, together with guest speakers Susan Pui San Lok, Elena Crippa, Hammad Nasar and Cedar Lewisohn, who shared their own curatorial and research experiences. In the current newsletter, Tor Scott, Collections and Research Assistant at National Galleries of Scotland, discusses her involvement in the current cohort of ECCG curators and how she thinks it is helping her to shape her own research and curatorial practices.

During the autumn the three BAN seminar series were also taking shape: Art Science Nature; Imperial Subjects – (Post)colonial conversations between South Asia and Wales; and Decolonising British Art. And in early November Jessica Jukes and I visited Emma Roodhouse in Ipswich to learn more about the Art Science Nature series, visiting Ipswich Museum and Christchurch Mansion, where we also took advantage of the opportunity to see the wonderful *Ed Sheeran: Made in Suffolk* exhibition, which runs until 3 May 2020. In the current newsletter, Emma Roodhouse tells us more about the Art Science Nature seminar series and what it aims to achieve over the forthcoming months.

This year has also seen an expanded cohort of BAN sub-groups, growing from seven to eleven in total. Joining the existing sub-groups are British Genre and Narrative Painting 1750-1870, Group Work: Contemporary Art and Feminism, Post-War Painting in Regional Collections, Queer British Art, and British Art in Historic Houses. In the current newsletter, Peter Moore, Curator of Collections and Interiors at English Heritage, discusses the new Historic Houses sub-group, providing background on how the group came about, who is involved, what sort of activities are scheduled and its intended outcomes.

As I write, we are engaged in working out details of the major one-day BAN conference next spring, Research and the Museum Ecosystem, which is to take place at National Museum Cardiff on 19 March. As we set out in the recent Call for Papers, the conference is intended to provide a new initiative, investigating how the concept of the museum ecosystem – which is still unfamiliar to many of us – might augment or offer an alternative to existing, and more traditional, frameworks for curatorial practice and research. In order to develop the conference, in late September Jessica Jukes and I visited National Museum Cardiff, where we met Nick Thornton, Head of Fine & Contemporary Art, and his colleagues. This newsletter features an interview with Nick on his own experience of BAN, and why the conference in Cardiff is so timely. Recently, we also discussed the core concept of the conference with Emily Pringle, Head of Learning Practice and Research at Tate, whose own research and recent publication, *Rethinking Research in the Art Museum*, has made a significant contribution to the development of the concept of the museum ecosystem.

Martin Postle
Convenor, British Art Network

NICHOLAS THORNTON



Nicholas Thornton is Head of Fine & Contemporary Art, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.

When did you first become aware of the British Art Network and in what ways do you think is it relevant to your own role and your institution?

I was aware of the British Art Network from the beginning, but the opportunities it could create within the sector became more real when colleagues at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales established a sculpture sub-group. This generated really interesting discussions around how display, conservation and research into sculpture has often been marginalised within UK museums in comparison with other art forms. The Network is so important because it gives a much-needed support structure and focus for research into British art at a time when many museums and galleries are finding it increasingly challenging to find time and resources for research.

National Museum Cardiff will be hosting the British Art Network's conference on Research and the Museum Ecosystem in March 2020. Why do you think NMC is a particularly suitable venue to host the conference?

researched these kinds of collections tend to be compared with those in museums and galleries. All too often, art works in historic houses seem to be overlooked as 'part of the furniture', or are simply seen as a backdrop to other stories. Narratives of people and places are often privileged over those of artworks and artists.

English Heritage is not always thought of as an organisation with a fine art focus or agenda, yet its holdings of British art are exceptionally strong. It has a remarkable collection of paintings, prints, drawings, photography and sculpture, and these art works have the potential to be examined much more rigorously. The activities we have scheduled for 2020 are centred on three English Heritage collections: Audley End, Wrest Park and Brodsworth Hall. A series of study days at these properties will explore a diverse range of subjects; from portraiture and lineage to the influence of the Royal Academy; from sculpture, photography and amateur art to more complex display strategies arising from historic houses that no longer retain their original collections.

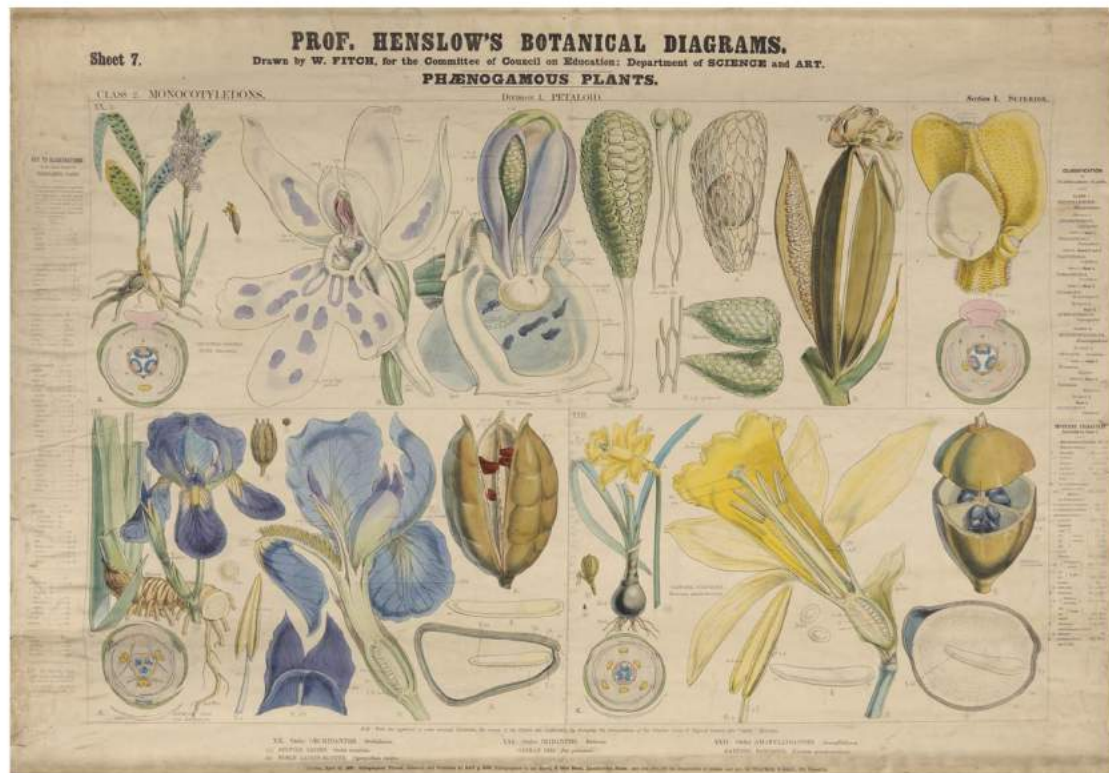
It was important to me that this should not be a sub-group defined by periodisation or genre, but one characterised by a phenomenological approach to British art, encompassing all kinds of object types and cutting across historic, modern and contemporary contexts. In a similar vein, the sub-group is not positioned as one exclusively for people working in historic houses, or for those studying British art in this context. On the contrary, the ambition is that those who do not normally operate in this sphere will find value and interest in studying artworks in places they might not normally think to look.

I'm delighted to be joined in this endeavour by my fellow English Heritage Curator Eleanor Matthews, along with Susannah Avery-Quash from the National Gallery and Kate Retford from Birkbeck, University of London. Although we work in different parts of the cultural sector – heritage, museums and galleries, and academia – we have many common interests, and we hope that the collaborative spirit in which we have formed this group will characterise the membership we attract and the discussions we provoke through our activities.

Peter Moore

Curator of Collections and Interiors, English Heritage

ART SCIENCE NATURE



'Nature is the fountain's head, the source from whence all originality must spring.' John Constable, 1802

This first of the new British Art Network [seminar series](#) comprises four events exploring art, science and nature running from January until March 2020 and hosted across a range of venues: Ipswich Museum, Firstsite in Colchester, and Flatford. There will be collections to view, exhibitions to engage with, knowledge to be shared and new conversations to be started.

As well as attracting scientific engagement, the natural world has always been a source of inspiration for artists. The intersection between science, nature, art and antiquities became the foundation of many museums during the 19th century. The idea for the seminar series is to explore these historical connections and their contemporary relevance to the re-interpretation of collections.

In 1846, Ipswich Museum was founded with the aim 'to promote the study, and extend the knowledge, of natural history in all its branches', and of the arts and sciences generally. It was so important

that the words 'Art' and 'Science' were sculpted into the new frontage of the Museum in 1881, along with depictions of Isaac Newton and William Hogarth, and the tools of science and the arts.

The sixty founding members of the Museum wanted to ensure that this was a place for topical scientific debate. As a result, a set of lithographic portraits of honorary members of the Ipswich Museum was commissioned from Thomas Herbert Maguire, including John S Henslow, Charles Darwin and John Gould. The Arts and Science schools both found their home in the building and artists have used the collections for drawing, inspiration and creativity ever since.

The present seminar series aims to promote research and knowledge sharing about the longstanding links between British art and science, and how a closer examination of those links could impact how we interpret and make accessible collections. A key element of this series is collaboration with colleagues focused on natural science collections, ensuring that dialogues can be created across a range of disciplines. The seminars are open to members of BAN and the Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA) to encourage this cross-collaboration.

One current exhibition here in Ipswich that has encouraged such collaboration is *Art Forms in Nature*, which opened on 23 November 2019 and runs until 23 February 2020 at Ipswich Art Gallery. At the core of the display are 40 photogravures by the German photographer Karl Blossfeldt from the Hayward Gallery Touring scheme. This display has provided an opportunity to show for the first time together fungi illustrations, herbarium sheets, depictions of birds and contemporary botanical drawings.

Emma Roodhouse

Collections and Learning Curator, Colchester and Ipswich Museums

TOR SCOTT



Tor Scott is Collection and Research Assistant at National Galleries of Scotland.

In the summer of 2019, I was lucky enough to be accepted into the Early Careers Curators Group of 2019-2020 and was awarded a bursary from the British Art Network. Since accepting my place, I have attended – together with fourteen other individuals from institutions across the UK – a series of career development workshops (catered with an array of fabulous sandwiches and cakes) to discuss the opportunities and the challenges that come with being emerging and aspiring curators.

The ECCG was brought to my attention by a colleague and I jumped at the chance to apply. Though I have worked in museums and galleries for several years, I had never been in a position where I was able to focus time and resources on personal research projects. During my time as a student at the University of Glasgow, I was fascinated by Surrealism. However, for my undergraduate dissertation I chose to examine the ethics of repatriation in public and private collections, before focusing my masters thesis on the superstitious charms and amulets of Scottish history. This, unfortunately, didn't leave much room for my interest in Surrealism! So, when I accepted my current role as Collection and Research Assistant at the National Galleries of Scotland, I was delighted to be joining an institution with a world-class collection of Surrealist art and archival material.

The bursary from the British Art Network has given me the financial assistance needed to begin my research project into a little-known British Surrealist called Edith Rimmington, whilst the career development workshops have provided a chance to network with other ECCG members. These workshops have been enlightening, accessible, structured around topics decided on with input from each member of the group, and filled with enthusiastic conversation.

Since being accepted onto the programme, I have used my research grant to fund visits to archives in Paris and London, and private collections in East Sussex, as well as purchasing research materials, helping me to build a foundation of knowledge on this much-neglected Surrealist artist. I am thrilled that I have already discovered previously unknown works by Rimmington and have negotiated the acquisition of a small amount of archival material relating to the artist for the National Galleries of Scotland's collection. These were new experiences and opportunities for professional development, and it is a privilege to be part of the ECC Group – I'm excited to see what the next workshop holds!

BAN EVENTS CALENDAR



The British Art Network's programme is ever-evolving and as such the event details below may be subject to change. Further detail will be available in due course.

When bookings open for seminars and conference events, BAN members will receive an email from the British Art Network and information will also be made available on the British Art Network's webpage.

To join a Network sub-group, receive updates on sub-group meeting plans and register to attend sub-group events, please email the sub-group lead contact listed on the British Art Network's webpage.

JANUARY

Seminar Series: Art Science Nature

- [The Foundation of Art and Science](#): 16 Jan, Ipswich Museum
- [Drawing on Life: National History Illustration](#): 24 Jan, Ipswich Museum

Sub-Group Meetings

- British Landscapes: 13 Jan, Royal Academy of Arts
- Black British Art: 31 Jan, Royal West of England Academy

FEBRUARY

Seminar: Contemporary Public Art in the Urban Landscape

- [BAN and Contemporary Art Society collaborative seminar](#): 7 Feb, Tate Modern

Seminar Series: Art Science Nature

- The Art of Taxidermy: 24 Feb, Firstsite

Sub-Group Meetings

- Queer British Art: date TBC, venues across London
 - Post-War Painting in Regional Collections: details TBC
 - Contemporary Art in Scotland: details TBC
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MARCH

Conference: Research and the Museum Ecosystem

- British Art Network Conference: 19 Mar, National Museum Cardiff

Seminar Series: Art Science Nature

- Ecology of Art: 24 Mar, Flatford

Sub-Group Meetings

- British Drawings: 5 Mar, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art
 - British Genre and Narrative Painting, 1750–1870: 11 Mar, Wolverhampton Art Gallery
 - Group Work: Contemporary Art and Feminism: date TBC, Women's Art Library, Goldsmiths
 - British Mural Painting, 1600–1750: date TBC, Chatsworth
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APRIL

Sub-Group Meetings

- British Art in Historic Houses: 24 Apr, Audley End
- Black British Art: 27 Apr, Holburne Museum
- British Women Artists, 1750–1950: date TBC, Ulster Museum

MAY

Seminar Series: Decolonising British Art – Decentring, Resituating and Reviewing Artworks and Collections

- Series of four seminars led by UAL: dates throughout May, locations TBC

Seminar Series: Imperial Subjects: (Post)colonial conversations between South Asia and Wales

- Series of four seminars led by Glynn Vivian Art Gallery: dates throughout May, locations TBC

Sub-Group Meetings

- British Drawings: 11 May, Royal Academy of Arts
 - Black British Art: 20 May, The Whitworth
 - British Art in Historic House: 22 May, Brodsworth Hall
 - Queer British Art: details TBC
 - Contemporary Art in Scotland: Details TBC
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JUNE

Conference: Museum collections on prescription: Political rhetoric, civic responsibility or engagement opportunity?

- Joint Subject Specialist Networks conference: 4–5 June, Tate Britain, National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery

[Paper proposals due 16 December 2019](#)

Seminar: Early Career Curators Groups

- Seminar for the wider British Art Network programmed by the Network's Early Career Curators Group: details TBC

Seminar Series: Decolonising British Art – Decentring, Resituating and Reviewing Artworks and Collections

- Continuation of BAN seminar series led by University of the Arts London: details TBC

Sub-Group Meetings

- British Genre and Narrative Painting, 1750–1870: 9 Jun, Royal Holloway Picture Gallery
- Post-War Painting in Regional Collections: 13 Jun, New Art Gallery, Walsall
- British Art in Historic Houses: 25 Jun, Wrest Park
- Group Work: Contemporary Art and Feminism: date TBC, Kettle's Yard

NETWORK NEWS

[Free talk on Joshua Reynolds \(with mince pies!\)](#)

10 December 2019, 17.15–18.30

Wolfson NB01, Senate House, London WC1 7HU

Facing the Sea: Joshua Reynolds, Artistic Enterprise and Eighteenth-Century Port Cities, Dr Katherine Gazzard

An event organised by Royal Museums Greenwich. All are welcome, no advance booking necessary.

[AHRC-funded PhD – Histories, Collections and Practice: Gender and the Regional Art Gallery](#)

Deadline: 6 January 2020

Applications are invited for a fully-funded PhD project based at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, with the Northern Bridge Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership. This topical project explores gender representation in the collecting, curatorial and educational practices of UK art galleries from the early twentieth century to today. Using Newcastle's Laing Art Gallery as a central case study, it adopts a new-museological approach to uncover the gendered power relations inscribed in the gallery's archive, which continue to influence practice today. The student will be based on site in the curatorial offices of the Laing Art Gallery and work closely with their archives, library and collections. The project will involve a number of placements (for up to six months) enabling the student to develop and apply their research in other national and regional galleries.

[Call for Papers: Paintings, Peepshows and Porcupines: Exhibitions in London, 1775–1851](#)

Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California, 17–18 September 2021

Deadline for submissions: 1 April 2020

This conference will assemble an international group of distinguished scholars to rethink some of our fundamental assumptions about exhibitions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It will focus on London as the center of an exhibitionary culture and as a hub of empire. We anticipate that papers will be 35–40 minutes in length,

and will be presented to the Huntington's larger scholarly community. The generous support of the Huntington's Research Department will cover economy airfare, hotel accommodation, and incidental transport expenses for speakers. Early career scholars and scholars from underrepresented groups are especially encouraged to apply.

BRITISH ART
subject specialist
NETWORK



PAUL MELLON CENTRE
for Studies in British Art

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The British Art Network is led and supported by [Tate](#) and the [Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art](#), with funding provided by the National Lottery through [Arts Council England](#).

First image: Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599-1641), Portrait of Elizabeth Crofts, Lady Cornwallis (detail), photo by Mark Asher, courtesy English Heritage Trust

Second image: Martin Postle, Deputy Director for Grants & Publications at the Paul Mellon Centre, photo by Martine La Roche, courtesy Paul Mellon Centre

Third image: Gallery view, National Museum Cardiff © Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales

Fourth image: Saloon, Audley End House © English Heritage Trust

Fifth image: Professor Henslow's Botanical Teaching Illustrations, 1840s © Ipswich Borough Council Collection

Sixth image: Edith Rimmington, *The Decoy*, 1948. Oil on canvas © The Estate of Edith Rimmington