

# Newsletter

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- illustrated history of the Society, its objectives and support for the arts
- programme of all activities for the year
- complete archive of our acquisitions since the Society's inception, with an easy search facility
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- details of membership - including on-line application
- useful links to contact officers, museums and galleries

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## THE YEAR IN BRIEF

Hugh Jones *CASW Chairman*

We can look back on another year full of a variety of activities organised by members to add to our knowledge, give us pleasure and raise funds to advance our aims. The programme commenced in January with a study day at the National Museum and Gallery, Cardiff in conjunction with the John Gibbs exhibition.

In the same month, the evening lectures held at the School of Architecture continued the 2004/2005 season with the theme of Eisteddfod Gold Medal winners. Professor Alistair Crawford discussed the Gold Medal in the 1980s; in February Dr Peter Wakelin conducted a discussion with recent medal winners, including Tim Davies, Iwan Bala and Shani Rhys James, and this was followed in March by Mike Tooby, Director National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff on "*A Hall of Fame? Reflections on winning artists and absent names*". Finally in May, Professor Malcolm Parry talked about "*Prizes in Architecture*". Meanwhile the Society dinner was well supported in Aberdare Hall when we listened to a lively talk about his early life by Charles Burton our guest speaker. Our thanks to Peggy Rees Mathews and Sonia and Gareth Davies for their efforts in making this a success.

Our first Lisvane lecture "*Ernest Zobole: a retrospective*" was given in March by Ceri Thomas. In April, Margaret Pyke introduced us to "*Art in Andalucia*" prior to the Society visit, later in the month, with Bryan and Elizabeth Hibbard. There was a trip in May to Stratford on Avon, with visits to locations of interest in the area, organised by Tudor Jones and Alan Spiller.

In June, Chris and Dan Evans planned a visit to the Old Stile Press to view a fascinating and extensive collection of books, prints and paintings.

The 2005 A.G.M. took place in July at the home of Debra and Neil Confrey in Hen Ysgol yr Eglwys in Llandyfaelog, Carmarthenshire, where we received a warm welcome from our hosts and the residents of that village. The day included lunch at the village hostelry, the A.G.M. itself in the village hall, at which David Thomas, the landlord of the Red Lion gave us a talk on the history of the village and paid tribute to people raised locally who had achieved fame in their chosen profession. The day concluded with a presentation by Neil of his purchases for the Society in 2004/2005 in the impressive surroundings of Hen Ysgol yr Eglwys. All who attended had a most enjoyable day, and a new experience to add to the variety of venues for A.G.M.s held over the past years.

At the A.G.M. Gareth Davies' term of office as our Secretary came to an end. For ten years, Sonia and Gareth have made an enormous contribution in carrying out the numerous tasks involved in the running of the Society, and we recorded our appreciation and thanks to them both for all their efforts. They spearheaded many changes which were of great benefit to us all. Debra and Neil Confrey will be the new Secretaries. We welcome them into the affairs of the Society, and look forward to working with them in the future.

The meeting elected Ken Spurlock as Vice-President in recognition of his long service as Membership Secretary of the Society. Prof. Bryan Hibbard agreed to stay on as Vice-Chair; three members Mrs Madge O'Keeffe, Dr. Anne Price-Owen and Mrs Peggy Rees-Mathews were re-elected, and we welcomed two new members, Jean Williams and Peter Davies. The presentation of the David Tinker Award was made by Stan Jones to Justine Gardiner of the Swansea Institute of Higher Education. Justine addressed the meeting and exhibited her prize-winning work.

In August, Prof. Peter Walcot gave a lecture in the Lisvane Hall on "Venice the Mistress of the Seas" preparatory to the Society visit, run once again by Elizabeth and Bryan to the Venice Biennale at the end of the month. Our thanks to them for all the effort they put into making this again such a success and, in particular, to arranging for Mike Tooby, Director the National Museum and Gallery of Wales to welcome us to Venice and to the Wales Pavilion. On our first day, Mike gave us an introduction to the Festival in the Giardini Biennale, took us on a tour of the main pavilions and recommended what we should see in the rest of the area. At the end of the visit, Mike and his wife hosted a reception for us in the Wales Pavilion, and our final day was spent viewing the colourful annual Venice Regatta from boats at the side of the Grand Canal, near the Rialto Bridge.

On the operational side, it was decided to establish an independent Society website, although the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language has asked the National Library of Wales to examine the potential for a National Digital Gallery for Visual Arts, in which CASW would be included.

The increase in subscription proved effective and financial support was given to the National Eisteddfod, Snowdon and

the Borders, 2005 which was used by the Bangor Museum and Gallery to acquire works for their collection. The Wales Pavilion in its second Venice Biennale, was also supported financially. Help was given to the Swansea Institute of Higher Education for a multi-disciplinary project "Precipitating the Fall" conducted by Peter Greenaway, the film director, and various events were held in both the Institute and the Dylan Thomas Centre.

In September, a new series of evening lectures commenced under the title "Wales - Art - World", opened by Iwan Bala speaking to that title, followed in October by Karen Mackinnon, Curator of the Wales Pavilion in the Venice Biennale, "Here and There - Art from Wales at the Venice Biennale 2005". Dr Peter Wakelin lectured in November on "Blood and Pain: ethnic cleansing, asylum seekers and new art" when he talked about artists who had sought refuge in this country and the contribution they had made to art in Wales. Our thanks are due to Chris Evans, Gareth Davies, Peter Wakelin and Margaret Pyke for organising these programmes, and to Bryan Hibbard and Dan Evans for the skills they use at each event in projecting illustrations for the talks, in a lecture theatre which has proved to have a rather temperamental system.

A weekend trip was made to Waterford in S.E. Ireland at the end of October to coincide with the Waterford Art Festival and the Wexford Opera Festival. A final lecture was given by Bernard van Lierop in Lisvane in November entitled "Is Tracey Emin's Bed ART?", with the accompanying convivial lunch. Our grateful thanks to our President, Betty Evans, and to David for all the work they put into planning and providing such an enjoyable conclusions to the talks.

Again, our thanks are due to all those members who have worked so hard to keep the Society on the move, to those who have spent many hours planning and organising events for the education and enjoyment of members, and for those who, behind the scenes, carry on the work so necessary for the continued existence of our organization. Once more the members of the Executive Committee have used to great effect their various skills and expertise to carry forward the work of the Society.

## **A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS**



Mihrab Arch - Cordoba

## **ART IN ANDALUCIA** **Seville, Cordoba, Granada, Malaga** 13th-22nd April 2005

### **IMPRESSIONS AND MEMORIES** *Rozanne Hawksley and Audrey Walker*

We were "first-timers" on a CASW trip and we approached it with the same doubts running parallel with excited anticipation. Would we be shepherded around on every occasion? Would we be talked at for hours whilst standing in sun or pouring rain? Would our energy hold up during a ten day itinerary? Looking back now, how absurd were those fears. We have only the happiest of memories of glorious things seen, great conversations and new friends made.

## Audrey:

Flying over Southern Spain into Malaga, over mile upon mile of folded hills and valleys – soft greys, pinks and rich terra-cotta soil interspersed with rich green patches of cultivation or forest. All our coach journeys reinforced these first impressions – the subtlety of the colours and the man-made ordering of the landscape with millions of olive trees in lines which define the contours of the earth. I was reminded of the background landscapes in early Italian paintings and another layer was added to the understanding of those paintings.

I came on this tour for two main reasons. Firstly, the realisation that I was woefully ignorant of Islamic Art, the great works seen in books or on the television but never in reality. Secondly I was eager to see some of the works of Catholic ritualistic art which Rozanne has described to me and which underlie much of her own work. She has told me about the dressing and processing of life-size statues of the Virgin Mary during Holy Week and of the enormous decorated platforms which require at least fifty strong men to carry them. I knew that sumptuous, decorative embroidery would be an important part of these rituals and a glorious aspect of Textiles history.



Our first stop was at Antequera to visit the Iglesia del Carmen, with its astonishing carved wooden altarpiece (*illustrated*) filling the whole of the East end, every inch of it decorated and populated with saints and a throng of cherubs. Centrally, the Virgin dressed in fine silks and jewels. This seems to be the epitome of High Catholic Art, but it was surpassed two days later by La Macarena in Seville, in the church of La Esperanza Macarena. Words are inadequate to describe these extremes of ornamentation, which dress and surround this weeping Virgin – fine silks, intricate lace, emeralds, pearls and gold on every available surface.

And the huge scale of her golden platform! Display cases were stuffed with gold and silver artefacts and truly mind-boggling embroidery which encrusted the garments, fans and purses offered to the Virgin. I am even more intrigued now by the concept of such opulence surrounding a grieving Madonna – the enigma remains for me.

Seville is El Alcazar! and nothing had really prepared me for the scale and subtlety of the buildings, courtyards and gardens. Light and shade, reflections of water, blue, red, black and white patterning and gold shimmering everywhere. Underlying everything, geometry which gave order and structure to every aspect. Visions of paradise in the amazing golden ceilings and indications of earthly pleasures in the remaining tiny flecks of brilliant colour on the carved doorways. Could I imagine these places lived in? I thought of carpets and cushions, silk garments, slippers footsteps, whispering, singing (by birds and women) and dancing... later, similar thoughts when we visited the delightful and intimate Pilate's House, seen in early evening light.

Cordoba – and, overcoming the plethora of trashy tourist shops, it was an extraordinary experience to weave a way through the 800 or so decorated columns and arches which subdivide the vast interior of La Mesquita. Three-dimensional geometry again; what an imagination had conceived it! Through this complexity to the prayer space of La Capilla del Mihrab – the most delicate, subtle use of golden patterning which invited quiet contemplation – “spiritual” is the only word I can find to describe the sensations evoked there. To my mind, the inserted Catholic areas were a horrid intrusion into the original Islamic vision. On the other hand... Islamic, Catholic and Jewish traditions existing together – there's a thought!

Summing up, everything Islamic we had seen was, of course, the glorious Alhambra in Granada. So much to marvel at, from the finest details to the enormous scale and ambition of the whole.

The elements merge together in retrospect – filigree work, fountains, patterning and more patterning, and by contrast the stillness of reflections in the water of the Patio de la Arraynes. I know I could spend years revisiting and still find more to contemplate and wonder at! Granada also had, for me, a totally unexpected treasure house in the Capilla Real – Isabella's collection of early Flemish and Dutch devotional paintings. Small in scale, they have an intimacy that is all the more moving – tenderness and pity combined. Utterly different in time and scale from the Alhambra, and in the portrayal of people and events rather than abstraction, yet both reached out to me with such force.

Malaga – not just the airport for Torremolinos, but a vibrant city and a celebration of art nearer our own time. The handsome, airy Picasso museum, with a special exhibition centred around the Bull, was a joy... I was not just revisiting familiar work but discovering sequences of unfamiliar pieces, and the preparatory studies which informed the work. Alongside, the ancient bull sculptures he used so frankly as “aids” to his own thoughts. And the series of his etchings in his CASA NATAL – delicate yet rumbustious... what a completion of our tour!

*The Alhambra*



*Tiles at Pilate's House*





## Rozanne:

I was returning to Seville and Granada, having been there in the late '80s on a Welsh Arts Council Travel Award with my late husband, Brian. The purpose then was to study the "Catolico Mertecole" – the Spanish Roman Catholic art with its heavy emphasis on death – during and after Semana Santa – Holy Week.

I was at that time, and frequently since, in my work focussed on the dark mysteries of Catholicism and its manifestation in Southern Spain of an overwhelming ornateness. This especially when incorporated into the life size images of the always pretty, ever young, Virgin Mary – "Nostra Senora", Our Lady: emphasising by contrast, it seems to me, the cruelty and lonely suffering of Christ's Crucifixion, depicted particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries, with grim reality.

The almost primitive opulence was reintroduced unexpectedly to me at our first stop in Antequera. Our Lady surrounded by gilded carving, candles, flowers and glitter; dressed in rich embroidered fabrics; bejewelled with her silver and gold crown and halo. There she was standing serenely in her incredible bower in the dark church.



*Courtyard at Pilate's House*

And then – the next morning – Seville!

The almost tangible calm of the amazingly spiritual geometry of El Alcazar and Pilate's House. I had glimpsed a small part of the Alcazar years ago and before the superbly sensitive restoration, but nothing had prepared me for this. I still cannot begin to speak or even think coherently about it, any of it.

As with the Alhambra and Gardens in Granada, the inexplicable feeling conjured up by merely being there goes very deep. The memory of being at peace. The silences, the sounds, the perfumes. The sight of ordered trees and flowers, of rooms, of corridors, of sudden corners. A glimpse of a Paradise Garden on earth.

It was, I realise, that at this point I became increasingly aware of, and indeed envious of, Audrey's way of working. Of the way she makes her selected colours meld and glow, with an often subtle vibrance, underlining a feeling of light particular to her response and manipulation... a sense of order and form – it was all here!

Audrey and I talked about the gentle soothing sounds of water invisibly organised into little fountains everywhere. We imagined the rooms and cool corridors furnished with woven and embroidered hangings, rugs and cushions. The sheer mass of colours; painted stone and patterned cloth against a brilliant sky or gleaming in the darkness. I can still see clearly the ever changing bright points of light sparkling through thousands of small, intricate openings carved out of stone and wood, and their

consequent shadows. The difference of intense light and cool dark. The intelligence of the planning!

In Granada particularly, so often lurked in my mind lines from T.S. Elliott's "Journey of the Magi" – "... the summer palaces on slopes, the terraces and the silken girls bringing sherbert...". Odd because of the harsh nature of the poem. But coming to those beautiful places after travelling through the often hard vastness of the country, the snow-capped peaks – maybe not so odd.

So many images return, sometimes half veiled. Ones that have slipped memory and emerge at the oddest moments. Like this, now – a crucifixion; a deposition. A beautiful small Flemish painting in Queen Isabella's collection. Christ's Mother supported by a friend on his right. She in a dark robe, her face white, her right arm hanging limp and by her hand a skull. Had she just touched death and was about to again?

Another memory – sudden, unrelated. In Malaga, being surprised by feeling moved when looking at a series of Picasso's etchings and one in particular. I could never have expected that, and after a glass of wine – again – the joy of discovering the quirky domestic delights of the little museum on Pasillo Santa Isabel.

If asked to state the ultimate experience it would be hard – impossible. At this moment I believe it to be when standing beneath the purity of the almost circular arch in the Mesquita, and then again is it the experience of the concept of resurrection at Carmona? Is it too, the social structure made visible, together with once more the pure geometric beauty of the throne room at Medina Alzahra? the enclosed gardens of the Alcazar? supper at the pavement café with a street musician playing, on his clarinet, Glen Miller's "Moonlight Serenade" (back to art school days)?

I'll let my final visual memory here be of the last evening in Malaga: the square tower of the Cathedral bronze against a golden sky, house martins squeaking and whizzing around it. Suddenly the sky darkened and as if one of them had commanded "STOP!" the birds were silent and invisible – then it was night.



*The Alhambra*

## Rozanne and Audrey:

We were often asked "Does this inspire you?" or "Can you see a piece of work forming in your mind?" The answer was, and still is to the latter, "I don't know". Collected sights, responses, are tucked away in the mind and will take a while to find their level. They may sit there for weeks, months or even years before starting to nag to emerge into the thought process that triggers a new piece.

We recognise and appreciate the hard work and organisation which went into the planning of such a successful tour, and Bryan and Peter's informative talks prepared us splendidly for each visit. We greatly enjoyed the companionship and differing insights of our fellow travellers. Thank you, and here's to the next time!

# CASW's VISIT TO 51<sup>st</sup> BIENNALE OF ART & REGATA HISTORICA, VENICE

- 31 AUGUST to 5 SEPTEMBER 2005

Rowland Davies

Those familiar with the Biennale will appreciate that it has an “official” element – the permanent national pavilions in the Giardini Della Biennale and the curated individual artists of the Arsenale – and the “collateral” exhibitions found throughout Venice. This report follows the same principle. On the left is the authorised version of the visit; on the right is a less conformist view of what took place.

However, old habits die hard, so as a lawyer I must start with some definitions:

## “The Party”

Elspeth Arthur; Sadie Craigmyle; David and Morfydd Entwistle; David and Betty Evans; Robert and Chris Forster; Margaret Gatehouse; Susan Greensmith; Mary Handy; Bryan and Elizabeth Hibbard; Hugh and Audrey Jones; Tudor and Iris Jones; Bernard and Val Rees; Brian and Sara Rees; Clive and Elizabeth Sowden; John and Mary Spottiswoode; and Sian and Rowland (your reporter) Davies.

## “The Hardcore”

The 17 members of the Party who stayed the course for the first two days and who (according to Iris and her pedometer) walked 11.5 miles. They know who they are and you only need to know that Betty was one of them.

## Day 1

We leave Cardiff by coach at 6:15 promptly. Bryan explains some of the details of the visit, including how the arrangements for the Regata Historica will be confirmed at the hotel. He also hands out Bernard's selection of restaurants. The flight from Heathrow is on time and by 18:00 we are in our hotel, the Saturnia & International, a few minutes from St Mark's Square.

At 19:30 a “tooth mug” reception is held in Elizabeth and Bryan's room and the Party get to know each other. Sara and Brian join us (they are already in Italy) as do Jane and Mike Tooby. Mike (Director of the National Museum) is to be our guide for the next two days. By the time we break up, names and faces are much more familiar.

Although not a formal part of the programme, 8 of the Party plus Mike and Jane have dinner at Osteria Enteco San Marco, one of Bernard's chosen restaurants and just a few minutes walk from the hotel.

## Day 2

The Party meets at the Giardini Della Biennale at 10:15 and Mike gives a short talk on the history of the Biennale. Then we visit a number of pavilions.

Britain is represented by Gilbert + George whose large works are definitely less offensive than earlier works. In the German pavilion, the artists are Thomas Scheibitz and Tino Sehgal, while Canada is represented by Rebecca Belmore whose video installation is reflected through a wall of water. France has chosen Annette Messager, whose work is “based” on the story of Pinocchio, and whose “river of blood” (the second of three parts) is very threatening as it appears to advance towards the visitor.

Everyone mentions how early it is. Betty explains that she has broken her toe (in the bath!) but it will not stop her enjoying the visit (see Hardcore). The “troublemakers” immediately head for the back of the coach, while your reporter decides on the middle – neutral territory. Bryan's information on the Regata Historica places particular emphasis on there being no toilets on the boats. Nervous giggles. By the turning for Bath, the front of the coach is fast asleep.

Every woman in the Party makes the same comment – “This room is much bigger than mine.” The Hibbard bathroom is full of bottles of Prosecco and the Party do it full justice. By the end of the reception, everyone is very relaxed. Bryan would like a word and I discover that as a “CASW visit virgin” (my words, not Bryan's) I have been chosen to be the reporter.

Good choice Bernard! Sian and I ate here on our last visit to Venice. However, while the rest of us are eating, Bryan is still waiting for his main course, rejecting several dishes placed before him. Then the waiters realise Bernard is eating Bryan's meal. Mike and Jane enjoy themselves so much, they forget the time, miss their vaparetto (water bus) and get home at 1:30!



Gilbert and George

What happened to Margaret? Bryan's directions were immaculate, but he had forgotten to tell the Party to advance their watches by an hour.

A quick straw poll suggests the majority of the Party are not great Gilbert + George fans, but people are amused by the singing invigilators in the German pavilion. “This is contemporary, contemporary, contemporary.” Annette Messager's work seems much appreciated and the explanatory text on the wall helps the Party's understanding, but only a French artist would think it necessary to add the philosophy!

The Party moves to the Australian pavilion, where one of the installers explains Ricky Swallow's wooden sculptures. The still-lives concentrate on the brevity of life and the transience of materiality. Then on to the American pavilion, where Ed Ruscha has updated his paintings of buildings to reflect changes in both the social and economic position in USA.



Mike Toobey delivers his message

At Mike's suggestion, the Party visits the Italian pavilion, an exhibition called *"The Experience of Art"* supervised by Maria de Corral and with some 40 artists from all around the world. No question of the quality and some of the juxtapositions are very interesting e.g Thomas Schutte, Francis Bacon, Philip Guston and Marlene Dumas in adjoining rooms.

In the afternoon, the Hardcore follow Mike through a series of collateral exhibitions. In the Moroccan exhibition, the symbolic architecture of Fouad Bellamine strikes a chord, but New Zealand's *"Et al the fundamental practice"* seems to baffle the Hardcore. The Northern Ireland exhibition includes wooden sculptures which represent the gull-wing doors of the DeLorean motor car. When the Hardcore reaches the Irish exhibition, we are expected and welcomed and considerable time is spent looking at the work of the six Irish artists one of whom, Stephen Brandes, will be exhibiting in Cardiff in 2006. In between, we visit the Scuola di S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni to look at the outstanding works of Carpaccio and conclude by studying the Bellini Madonna and Child in the Church of S. Zaccaria.

### Day 3

In the morning the Party visits the Arsenale. Mike explains that this exhibition *"Always a little further"* has been curated by Rosa Martinez. The exhibition comprises 48 artists. They include Berni Searle and Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, both of whom showed works at Artes Mundi 2004. The work of Kimsooja (a 6 screen video installation in which the artist is seen standing, back to the camera in crowded streets in 6 locations) leads to a lively debate over coffee ranging from the position of the camera to what did the artist look like. That in turn leads to a discussion on whether a particular work is demeaning to women.

In the afternoon, the Hardcore are guided by Mike to further collateral exhibitions. Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran and Ukraine occupy the same building and the works from Afghanistan and Iran are given particular attention. The exhibitions of Slovenia and Estonia follow, with the

"Please don't touch" is a constant refrain, but Ricky Swallow's works have a magnetic effect. Bryan is asked to advise whether the skeleton is male or female (answers on a postcard, please) and everyone is surprised to discover that the pieces are carved out of a single block. Ed Ruscha's works have the Party reflecting on changes in UK society over the same period.

A number of the Party comment that the Italian pavilion is like a museum of modern art. Is this really contemporary? Perhaps it needs the German invigilators.

It is a hot afternoon, but the Hardcore keep going, stopping just once for water. Bryan negotiates a group admission to the Scuola and various tourists latch on to this. Sian gets a gold star for recognising the DeLorean doors. Everyone makes a note of Stephen Brandes work, so they can speak with authority about this when his exhibition opens in Cardiff. Mike expresses his amazement at the stamina of the Hardcore.

Mike has to delay his initial talk so that the women in the party can admire a straw hat, purchased that morning. When we get under way, Mike describes the café near the entrance as "the worst in Venice". In the Arsenale, the women in the party find the film of Leigh Bowery attaching clothes pegs to his genitals very amusing (hardly PC ladies!).

David (Evans) and Sian sit watching a video by Mark Rapidere (Estonia) and miss the departure of everyone else. Your reporter rounds them up and gets them to the Luxembourg exhibition with some nifty map reading.

Panic! A mix up over vaparetto timings means this part of the day is almost not reported. A 50 euro water taxi ride is the only solution. Those who visited the Welsh exhibition at the 2003 Biennale say this year's show is 100 times better. Jane and Mike leave us at this point. It is Jane's birthday. A visit to Venice must have seemed like a great birthday present before Mike told her about the CASW visit!

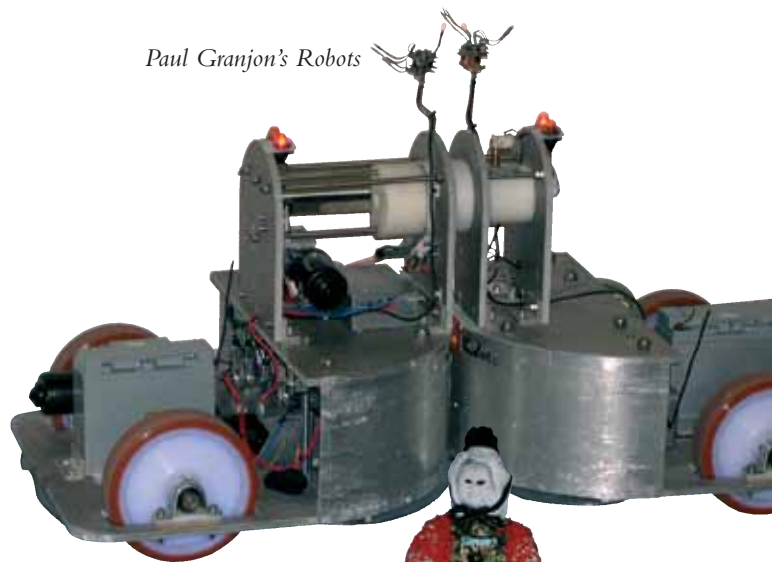




Soft Sculpture - Laura Ford

Hardcore ending the tour in the Luxembourg exhibition. And now to "Somewhere Else", the Wales exhibition. A reception for the Party given by Wales in Venice is followed by a tour of the works.

Paul Granjon's sexed robots move around, sing, sleep and mate. How can small mechanicals seem so human? Laura Ford's creations (sometimes called "soft sculptures") might, or might not be human. Peter Finnemore's videos show humans creating anarchy in his garden in West Wales, while Bedwyr Williams, as artist in residence, finds links between Venice and his home in North Wales.



Paul Granjon's Robots

Soft Sculpture - Laura Ford



**Day 4**

A free day

A free day

**Day 5**

After a free morning, the Party motors up the Grand Canal and takes station by the Rialto Bridge. The *Regata Historica* starts with a procession of historical rowing barges and parade boats owned by various rowing clubs and is followed by a series of races, ending with the 2 man racing gondolas. Throughout, the Grand Canal is devoid of motor craft (except the odd police launch) harking back to the 19th century. The banks of the canal are crowded with spectators and a sound system sends music out over the water, making for a wonderful atmosphere. The day ends with a reception and dinner in the hotel.



We leave the hotel in 2 water taxis (except for Tudor and Hugh, who end up in a third). The drinks are soon produced and then Chris' hat is in the canal. Robert

gallantly goes after the hat, but without risking falling in. After several days walking around Venice, sitting in a boat is very relaxing. Venice wins the gondola race and our taxi driver is celebrating all the way back to the hotel. The world is divided between men who wear ties and those who do not. Guess who did!

*Regata Historica*

**Day 6**

After a free morning, it is time to go home. Bryan's arrangements are still working like clockwork. By 20:30 we are back in Cardiff, queuing for taxis and saying our mutual goodbyes.

Bryan has instructed us to meet in the hotel reception at 12:30. The Party compare hand bag purchases and Bryan explains the final arrangements. These include an instruction not to go to the toilet after leaving Baggage Reclaim at Heathrow without Elizabeth's permission.

I end my report by saying thank you. To Bryan, for all his hard work and immaculate arrangements. Throughout the trip he worked tirelessly to make sure everything went according to plan. To Elizabeth, for her back up of Bryan. To Mike, for his excellent guidance and to Jane, for putting up with us.

However, I reserve my biggest thank you to the Party as a whole for making the visit to the 51st Biennale so enjoyable. I confess that when we decided to join the trip I was unsure of what to expect. I had visions of a Venetian equivalent of an OAP coach trip. When Bryan started to explain the toilet arrangements for the Regata Historica, I thought my worst fears were being confirmed. However, nothing could have been further from the truth and if there are any CASW members unsure about going on a future trip, my advice is - don't hesitate further.

## VISIT TO WATERFORD AND WEXFORD OCTOBER 27<sup>th</sup> - NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> 2005

Rosemary Markham

On this Waterford-based visit to S.E. Ireland, the sky joined in our lament over the absence through sickness of Hugh Jones - it rained. Even so, CASW members, having reached the age when Nature intends them to shine, shone. Every time the coach stopped, there was renewed awareness we were here to take note. Doubtless, many members have returned, pundits of a widening culture.

There were different sides to this visit, cheerful or solemn. Even the sheep carry their local team's colours, our courier announced! In Kilkenny, the many cars proclaimed the National Conker Championships. On the other hand, the Dunbrody, full-scale replica of a famine ship, is docked in New Ross. Such a ship took Irish emigrants to America during the potato blight of the 1840s during which a million Irish died. We boarded the Dunbrody, hearing how a further toll was exacted during the 50-day journey in terrible conditions. J.F.Kennedy's great-grandfather was a surviving migrant and, in tribute to his illustrious descendant - and in effect to him - a 600 acre arboretum

was started in 1965 in Co. Wexford where the Kennedy family originated. We toured this marvellous site, planted with over 4,000 trees from all round the world.

The Wexford Festival was on and, in the Dun Mhuire Theatre, many of us saw Bizet's early comic opera, *La Docteur Miracle*, a production theatrically and musically effective.

The soprano, Martene Grimson, could well be at Glyndebourne. In Wexford Town

Art Centre, a large contemporary art exhibition was mounted, Rooney's work impressive, somewhat reminiscent of Augustus John's murals though small-scale and more down to earth. Next day, we took compass bearings to the Rock of Cashel on which stands a medieval building, first a palace then a monastery. Very strong wind enriched the experience of

climbing up to it, but it was worth the climb because inside, the main chamber was of the most satisfying proportions, with exact carving round the arches in good state of preservation. A video outlined the history. We went on to Tipperary and Clonmel where we saw Caroline Byrne's sensitive pictures of deer. Her working methods would repay examination. We stopped also at Cahir but the rain was persistent, the ground sodden and unkind, and at that stage the unsayable was not, by some members, left unsaid. Very late that evening, Saturday 29th, mummers wearing extraordinary attire, as we saw through the windows, paraded the streets in anticipation of Hallowe'en. Sadly, some of these revellers, or another group breaking into their ranks, came to transgress the bounds of discipline.

Kilkenny Castle, seat of the Dukes of Ormonde, the Butler family, was another day of impressive experience. The Long Gallery there, hung with portraits discharging spirit and personality, is memorable. Even more so, if possible, is the miniature collection containing the most exquisite pieces by artists who worked in both London and Ireland. Contemporary art was represented in the castle by *Fifty Years of Tony O'Malley's Sketchbooks*; O'Malley is a Kilkenny artist with a swift and confident line. After this, Jerpoint Abbey was explored. Time has brought it to its knees and Cromwell was intent on hastening the process, but dull would he be of spirit who is not touched by the sight of these cloisters where generations have trod, meditated and mourned.

An oasis in all the bustle was Waterford Crystal factory where, before our eyes, glass is worked of a quality only Waterford can reach. A foil to so much exquisite detail were Miranda Corcoran's highly coloured orbs on large canvases decorating the Visitors' Centre here. They suggest the symmetry and energy of the universe. After this, back in Waterford, an omniscient and humorous guide took us on a short walking tour foregrounding dominant buildings such as Reginald's Tower and the two Cathedrals, one Protestant, one Roman Catholic. Both were by the same architect, Roberts, a local man who trained in London, and then returned, had 22 children by the same wife who, as he did, lived to be 82. The Museum of Treasures in Waterford threw further light on the history, and also showed a contemporary exhibition, *Diversions*, by seven artists not all Irish. The works were small in a room so large it could have held more, and the impression at first wasn't good. But on inspection, there were clever, accomplished images such as those by George Roe and Michael Pitman, aesthetic but not removed from the angst and issues of our times.

All in all, this trip, with one or two uncertainties and mishaps, its abrupt transitions between historical periods of subjects viewed, had a colour of its own.

### A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

CASW's Distribution Exhibition opens at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth on Saturday January 28th 2006

### CASW Charity Christmas Card

Unfortunately it has not been possible to progress this

Season's Greetings  
Cyfarchion y Tymor

