NCAS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Sunday 24th July 2022 Chair’s Speech

**Welcome**

Good afternoon and welcome to you all. It is so very good to see so many members here today.

Our special thanks to Charlotte & Henry Crawley for sharing their delightful gardens with us today. I think you will agree this is an exceptional setting for our AGM. Charlotte & Henry have been hospitable too, in providing us with all those other items essential to make a good party work. Thank you so much.

**1 – Officers present.**

The officers present are myself, Chris Mardell (Chair) & Frances Martin our Administrator. Regrettably, Cate Allwood our Treasurer is unable to be with us today due to ill health. Cate sends her apologies and I know she is very disappointed not to be with us here today as are we all. We wish her a speedy recovery and send her our warmest wishes.

**2 – Apologies**

Apologies have also been received from our long-term trustee Janey Bevington. Janey has led the organisation of this AGM today, as she has done so successfully in previous years. Unfortunately, Janey became unwell whilst visiting her family in Australia. She is now due to return to the UK next week. Like Cate, Janey is very disappointed not to be with us here today. Thank you Janey & thank you Cate.

We have also received apologies from:

Rosy Gray, Paul Simmonds, Chrissie, Joseph and Clotilde Wang, Miles and Hilary Barry, Chris Loukes, Richard Jewson, Helen Breach, Tigger, John Westwood, Caroline Fisher, Miles & Hilary Barry, Matthew Bowles, Kevin Youngman & Ali Porter, John & Yvonne Millwood, Nicky Stainton

**3 - Minutes of the AGM held on 8 August 2021.**

I hope you have had an opportunity to read the Minutes of the AGM held on 8 August 2021 which are available on the NCAS website. Can you agree that I sign these minutes as a correct record?

Minutes Proposed by Derek Morris & Seconded by Selwyn Taylor.

**4 – Matters arising.**

Are there any matters arising? None noted.

**5 – Chair’s report.**

Our year began in lockdown in 2021 with all the restrictions & uncertainty of the coronavirus pandemic. Trustees’ meetings continued via Zoom. We are all delighted that we are now meeting face to face as a Committee to deliver our ambitions for NCAS.

As restrictions lifted, the events committee lead by Selwyn Taylor & Janey Bevington, were delighted to recommence events, with a fascinating talk by curator Sarah Lowndes at the new Yare Gallery in Great Yarmouth. There was real excitement for members in actually seeing beautifully curated contemporary art live again, in a real gallery, supported and informed by Sarah’s insightful narrative.

We were then delighted by a series of visits to the charming studio of Bob Catchpole where we viewed his unique sculpture and listened to his engaging talk. This was followed by a great lunch at the Gunton Arms.

In response to members requests we had several visits to the Old Schoolhouse Gallery in Wighton for a fascinating talk and exhibition of the work of Alfred Cohen, beautifully presented by his wife Diana Cohen and stepson Max Saunders.

In February we enjoyed a visit to the Corn Hall Gallery in Diss for an exhibition and talk of the work of Victor Passmore. We benefitted from hearing from two curators, both experienced though at different points in their careers. This introduced some interesting and sometimes different perspectives.

We have traditionally held our Norwich talks in the Auditorium at the Forum. Change is always difficult and the Forum is a great venue. However, we used the change of management and large increase in fees as an opportunity to try out different venues as well as holding talks at different times with the view to establish whether doing so:

1. significantly influenced the ‘makeup’ of our audience
2. provided the opportunity for greater numbers of our membership to attend events

This would demonstrate our commitment, shared at last year’s AGM, to attracting younger audiences, building on our developing relationship with NUA and ultimately attracting younger members.

With this in mind our first Norwich talk of 2022 was held in the brand-new NUA Riverside Lecture Theatre, in the afternoon. An intriguing conversation between Derek Morris, & sculptor and painter Ann Christopher RA. This format was very successful and was generally felt to enhance the experience of the audience and the speaker. We have replicated this more collaborative approach successfully with other speakers - less of the being ‘spoken to’ and more of ‘speaking and listening’ is one way to describe it. There is some anecdotal evidence that some individuals find NCAS ‘cliquey’ and we hope that small changes of this nature may lead to a more welcoming experience for anyone thinking of joining NCAS.

We returned to the Forum in the evening for Professor Giuliana Borea, talking of the indigenous contemporary art of Peru & the political climate that enhances or inhibits contemporary art there.

A number of members travelled to Firstsite Colchester & thoroughly enjoyed a curator-lead talk of the Benton End Group exhibition.

In April we returned to NUA where Lara Wardle, Director Curator of the Jerwood Foundation and James Rawlin, former Head of Modern and Contemporary Art at Sothebys, talked to us of the Jerwood Foundation & collecting 20th and 21st century art;

In May we visited the Norwich School Lecture Theatre where we were intrigued by the ‘Art of the Intangible’ - a talk of digital art by Peter Higgins and Lol Sargent.

In May too, Derek Morris & I enjoyed a delightful conversation with the sculptor John Carter RA at the NUA old lecture theatre.

Although not inundated with younger audience members it was noted that attendance of younger people was greater at Norwich School Lecture Theatre and at the NUA old lecture theatre. This is something we hope to build on. Additionally, we plan to continue to increase our liaison with NUA staff to ensure that students are kept informed of NCAS future events in a timely manner.

Finally, this year we supported a film of the work of artist John Kiki, that was shown in the Auditorium at the Forum. The film produced by Keith Roberts, Selwyn Taylor & Pete Higgins, prompted a fascinating discussion of the work of Kiki; in particular the series of Infanta paintings. We were fortunate to share the evening with John & his family & members from EAAF.

Looking forward we have an exciting series of events planned for this year including talks by :

Rosie Cooper, the new Director of Wysing Art, & her new ideas for this arts experimentation centre

Helene Binet, the internationally acclaimed architectural photographer, not to be missed

Jago Cooper, the new Director of the Sainsbury Centre & his exciting vision for the Centre

Laurence Edwards, the accomplished Suffolk sculptor, who NCAS members may recall visiting at his Suffolk studio & foundry in 2018

A curatored tour by Dr Rosy Gray of the current exhibition at the Norwich Castle Museum & Gallery entitled ‘ The world we live in ‘

A further curatored tour by David Case and Matt Kirkum of ‘The prints of Paula Rego’ at the Corn Hall, Diss.

**Exhibitions**

Our long-planned Norfolk Contemporary Art Society member's exhibition NCA2018, was postponed because of Covid, until 2021. Selwyn Taylor led the management of NCA21 which ran from November to December, exhibited in the Norwich Cathedral Hostry. The quality of the work and the exhibition was considered by many to be of a very high standard and was enjoyed by a diverse audience. The venue was both central and welcoming and we were well supported by the Cathedral staff and volunteers. Footfall was good and the Cathedral provided a sympathetic back drop for works of Art.

At NCA21 an award of £500 was made to Marie Pavledis for the most outstanding work. Personally, & more recently, I was delighted to see the other work by Maria Pavledis, ‘Poplar Kitten’, that we exhibited in the NCA21 exhibition now at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition ).

The Adnams prize for the most accomplished work in NCA21 was awarded to Geoffrey Lefever.

In March 2022, we sponsored the Geoffrey Lefever Exhibition in the Crypt Gallery, at the Norwich School, a space which in my view was ideally suited to his work.

In order to progress our objective to be more inclusive and accessible we have had preliminary discussions with Norwich Cathedral regarding the future exhibition of contemporary art in and around the Cathedral.

**Artworks Collection**

In 1985 the society adopted a policy of purchasing art works by artists working in the region. The pieces were bought with the intention of exhibiting them in the region, and in places with public access but outside the normal confines of galleries.

Fortunately, three important pieces in our collection are, we believe, being shown in ideal situations and the Trustees decided it would be a good idea to leave them there in perpetuity.  Accordingly NCAS has formally gifted:

a) Rebecca Lyne’s ‘One We Did Earlier’ to the Strangers Club Elm Hill;

b) 'A Trouble with Worms', by Ben Southwell delightfully displayed in the East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens; and

 c) 'Dawn Raucous' to UEA Law School.

Diana Heuvel manages these works on behalf of the society. However, it has become increasingly more difficult to find public places and spaces for our collection and it is evident that finding homes for them all will have to take a different direction. The trustees propose we sell many of these works at a members auction next year. Can we please have your endorsement to this proposal?

This was proposed by Robert Short & seconded by Selwyn Taylor.

**Letting People know who we are, what we do and what we stand for?**

We maintain publicity via the NCAS website that is managed & regularly updated by Helen Eisler. The society also has a social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Secret Norwich, and these are maintained by Caroline Fisher. We continue to participate in *Art in Norwich*, the digest of all visual art activity in the City and we also send out 3 editions a year of both our programmes and our newsletters. We plan to continue with all of the above next year but we do wish to appeal to a more diverse membership.

**NUA Prizegiving**

Each year we award a £500 prize to what we consider the best portfolio of fine artwork by an NUA graduate together with 2 runners up commendations. In addition, this year we were pleased to also award a £500 prize to what we consider the best portfolio of sculpture by a graduate together with 2 runners up commendations.

The NCAS fine art award this year goes to **Chloe Lees** with commendations to **Oisin Dologhan** and **Zara Jutsum**.

The NCAS panel considered Chloe’s work and I quote ‘ An extraodinary installation, quite a spectacle and experience. Edgy uncomfortable and thought provoking’.

The NCAS sculpture award this year goes **Jo Bellamy** with commendations to **Oisin Dologhan** and **Catherine Swain**.

The NCAS panel considered Jo’s work and I quote ‘A really engaging installation on the stairwell coupled with the beautifully produced small bronzes. Mature work, thoughtfully conceived and well executed’.

The society continues to serve in a co-opted capacity on the Norwich Area Museums Committee, represented by Janey Bevington and Danuta Wurm.

**Ncas Survey**

Earlier this year we held a survey of members to establish if we were on the right track for 2022. The Key take outs from the Survey response were:

- we received a total of 120 responses, a 31% response rate of membership (currently 391 strong). According to industry standards, this is a "good" survey response.

- the majority of respondees were over 60;

- a small majority preferred evening events in the Forum

- 72% of respondees had been members for more than 3 years & many for more than 10 years

- 77% felt NCAS provided value for money.

- positives were that NCAS was getting it about right but could try and attract a younger audience/membership and collaborate with other organisations

- criticisms were mainly that NCAS was perceived as cliquey and possibly too Norwich based

- 12 members expressed interest in becoming NCAS Trustees. 10 wanted to engage further with the Trustees in helping shape NCAS

So what are we doing in response?

Preparing an outline job description for a ncas trustee

Providing events in different venues & times to suit our membership

Engaging more with NUA & the Sainsbury Centre & exploring joint events

Engaging more with other like-minded organisations (a representative of Outlook will attend our next committee meeting)

In summary the committee has spent much time this year in looking at Diversity & how we meet the expectations of a changing membership. We will continue with this work whilst maintaining an exciting programme of events to stimulate everyone.

6 – Treasurer’s report & Financial Statement

I am sorry Cate Allwood is not here to present the Treasurer’s report & Financial Statement. I hope you have had an opportunity to read the Treasurer’s report & Financial Statement 2022 prepared by Cate.

Are there any questions regarding the accounts?

Adoption of the Accounts Proposed by Robert Short & Seconded by Selwyn Taylor.

Brown Bales accountants act as our auditors. It was proposed by Diana Heuvel & seconded by Rose Davies that Brown Bales continue as our auditors for the next year.

**7 – Election of officers & trustees Election of Officers & Trustees**

Firstly, we have one resignation from the committee. Robert Short has decided to resign from the committee. Robert has been a trustee of NCAS, forever! He was chair of NCAS from 1987 to 2005. He is known for his elegant prose & of course he co-wrote the NCAS’ Sixty Years On’ book’. His critique over the years has been eloquent and at times forthright. I would like to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to Robert on behalf of the Society, which is so much richer for his contributions over the years. We hope that we will continue to benefit from his valuable input to the ncas agenda.

Thank you, Robert.

Cate Allwood our Treasurer has also expressed her wish to stand down, once we have found a replacement for her. So, we are actively looking for a new treasurer for the society at the moment.

Thank you, Cate.

Frances Martin serves as our Administrator & Membership Administrator & is willing to continue in these roles. Frances also serves as the representative for the Norwich 20 Group. Thank you, Frances.

I am pleased to say all the other trustees wish to continue to stand for the forthcoming year.

The trustees were all proposed by Caroline Kennedy & seconded by Peter Davies to continue for the following year.

Dr Rosy Gray served as the representative for Norwich Castle Museum & Gallery & is willing to continue in this role.

As I have mentioned earlier several members have recently expressed an interest in the role of NCAS trustee. We will discuss the role with these people & where appropriate co-opt them for the forthcoming year for the vacancies available. As a Board we are working on a job description for Trustees which will assist in this process.

8 – **Any other business**

Do we have any other business? None was raised.

9 - I would now like to hand over to James Glennie Director of the Holt Art Festival. James may be familiar to many of you as he kindly conducted the NCAS auction for us at City Hall Norwich 4 years ago. James will talk to us this afternoon of the Holt Art Festival & the Craxton Picasso Exhibition.

James …… over to you.

Thank you, James. Hopefully a number of ncas members will be joining you in Holt later today.

Thank you to Selwyn, Janey, Alan Loughlin & all the other trustees & members who have made this afternoon happen.

Thank you, Charlotte and Henry. As a small token of our gratitude may I present you with a bottle each for you to enjoy later in the quiet of your delightful gardens, once we have all disappeared.

Thank you everyone for joining us today. We look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming ncas events.

Please enjoy the food, the wine, the company & Charlotte and Henry’s marvellous gardens.