

Contemporary responses to portrait collections

Tuesday 16 July 2013, 9.30 — 16.30

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery | The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

Programme

Morning session—Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square

Chaired by **Toby Watley**, Head of Programming, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

9.30—10.20 **Registration and refreshments**

10.20—10.30 *Welcome from the Chair*

10.30—10.50 **Simon Taylor**, Head of Learning, Ikon Gallery

Life Still: Portraiture and End of Life Care

Life Still is an ongoing project that presents exciting opportunities to develop the dialogue between Ikon and Birmingham's John Taylor Hospice. Inspired by the unique history of the Hospice, the former home of influential photographer and politician Sir Benjamin Stone (1838–1914), Life Still takes inspiration from the collection of Stone's images housed in the Library of Birmingham's photographic archive. Simon explains how people receiving long-term palliative care, their families and hospice staff have worked with acclaimed artist Stuart Whipps, to create photographs that reflect their lives, their experiences and their surroundings. Themes of isolation, separation and transition have been explored and led by the people the Hospice helps. Through consultation the residents have used traditional and contemporary methods to explore the creative process.

10.50—11.10 **Anton Want**, Photographer

Pit Profiles: Re-profiled - The Changing Face of an Industry

In 2011, the National Coal Mining Museum for England commissioned Anton to portray workers at the Kellingley Colliery in North Yorkshire. The project was inspired by the work of H. Andrew Freeth (1912–1986) who was himself commissioned, shortly after the coal industry was nationalised in 1947, to record miners across the coalfields. Freeth's on-the-spot drawings and miners' biographies were published in the monthly journal *Coal* between 1947 and 1952, and many of the original portraits are held by the NCMME. *Pit Profiles: Re-profiled* provides a modern-day reflection on workers' lives through portrait photography combined with oral-history interviews and written profiles. This talk will be a reflection on the nature of the *Pit Profiles: Re-profiled* commission and how the original work and Freeth's approach effected the new work's direction. It will also discuss the aims and outcomes of such a commission from the artist's perspective.

11.10—11.30 **Dr Sadiya Qureshi**, Lecturer in Modern History, and **Shahmima Akhtar**, undergraduate student, Department of History, University of Birmingham

Catlin, museums and the future of collaborative teaching

In 2013, an exhibition of George Catlin's painting opened in London at the National Portrait Gallery. Students from the University of Birmingham worked in collaboration with the museum to produce a series of responses and gallery talks. Come and hear about the project's conception and how it might help us to think about new audiences and possibilities for teaching collaborations with museum collections.



11.30—12.00 **Refreshments, and time to visit the Museum & Art Gallery collection, including *George Catlin: American Indian Portraits*.**

12.00—12.20 **Ruth Clarke, Participation Manager, National Portrait Gallery**
Creative Connections - connecting young people with contemporary artists to create new artworks inspired by the Gallery's Collection

A presentation looking at what has been achieved in the first year of this four-year project when young people in the London borough of Tower Hamlets worked with artist Lucy Steggals. Together they have explored and re-imaged eight inspirational life stories of people from their locality who are represented in the NPG's collection, and created new artworks on display at the Gallery between June and September this year.

12.20—12.50 **Chaired discussion session with the morning's speakers**

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12.50 Delegates and speakers depart for the Barber Institute by their own means. Information on public transport will be available on the day.

13.20—14.00 **Lunch** for all at the Barber Institute

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Afternoon session—The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

Chaired by **Robert Wenley**, Deputy Director, Head of Collections and Learning, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts

14.00—14.10 ***Welcome from the Chair***

14.10—14.30 **Vanley Burke**, Photographer, and **Rachel West**, Deputy Curator Manager, Soho House Museum

Handsworth Culture Swap

Handsworth Culture Swap is the first exhibition to be displayed in the redeveloped Visitor Centre at Soho House Museum, a heritage site close to the vibrant community of Handsworth. Through these striking images, renowned photographer Vanley Burke and artist Pauline Bailey have created a dialogue between community, museum and artist. Local groups were asked 'What represents your culture?' The resulting series of portraits bears testament to the hugely diverse cultural identities of the area. This presentation discusses the ambition of the exhibition from the artist and museum point of view.

14.30—14.50 **Brian Griffin** and **Mihaela Calin**, Photographers

The Propagation of Interest

In this presentation, Brian Griffin will discuss his part in the Library of Birmingham's major artistic commission *Reference Works*, for which he created photographic portraits of some of the individuals involved in planning and building the Library's new home. The Library has also fostered a mentoring programme as part of which Brian mentored emerging photographer Mihaela Calin over an 18-month period. Mihaela will discuss her experience of working with and assisting Brian, and what impact this has had on her own working methodology and creativity.

14.50—15.10 : **Shelley Longford** and **Jas Lally**, MA students, History of Art, University of Birmingham

Defining Faces: Experiencing Co-Curatorship

The MA students at the University of Birmingham discuss their insider's review of understanding, planning and presenting an exhibition through the collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery, London and The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham. The presentation will focus on the complexities of co-curatorship and the resulting learning experiences.

15.10—15.40 **Chaired discussion session with the afternoon's speakers**

15.40—16.30 **Refreshments, and time to visit the Barber's collection, including the *Defining Faces* display.**

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