

Wednesday 18 May 2022, 10.30am – 5.30pm

Sainsbury Wing Lecture Theatre and on Zoom

## PAPER SUMMARIES & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### **Gabriele Finaldi**

(Director, The National Gallery)

*Gabriele Finaldi has been Director of the National Gallery since August 2015. He was previously Deputy Director for Collections and Research at the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, a position he took up in 2002. Prior to his role at the Prado, he was a curator at the National Gallery between 1992 and 2002, where he was responsible for the later Italian paintings in the collection (Caravaggio to Canaletto) and the Spanish collection (Bermejo to Goya). Finaldi studied art history at the Courtauld Institute of Art, where he completed his doctorate in 1995 on the 17th-century Spanish painter who worked in Italy Jusepe de Ribera. He has curated exhibitions in Britain, Spain, Italy, Belgium and the US. He has written catalogues and scholarly articles on Velázquez and Zurbarán, Italian Baroque painting, and religious iconography.*

### **Susanna Avery-Quash**

(Senior Research Curator  
(History of Collecting), The  
National Gallery)

*Dr Susanna Avery-Quash is Senior Research Curator (History of Collecting) at the National Gallery, in charge of pre-1900 objects in its History Collection, and responsible for activities associated with its research strands, 'Art and Religion', 'Buying, Collecting and Display', its Women and the Arts Forum, and its Legacies of British Slave Ownership research project, including managing research partnerships, organising conferences and supervising graduate students. She recently published 'Reanimating sacred art for a secular age: Art and religion at the National Gallery, London', in Timothy Verdon and Rita Filardi, eds, *Museology and Values: Human Dignity in the Twenty-first Century* (Brepols, 2020).*

**Ayla Lepine**

(Ahmanson Fellow in Art and Religion, The National Gallery)

*Ayla Lepine is Ahmanson Fellow in Art and Religion at the National Gallery. Following her PhD from the Courtauld Institute of Art, she held fellowships at the Courtauld and Yale, and was Lecturer and Fellow in Art History at the University of Essex. Her publications include co-edited books on monastic architecture and stylistic revivals in modern visual culture, as well as articles altarpieces and visual theology in Architectural History, the Sculpture Journal, and British Art Studies. She is a trustee of Art and Christianity, a contributor to the Visual Commentary on Scripture, and a member of the Visual Arts Committee at St Paul's Cathedral.*

**Joost Joustra**

(Ahmanson Research Associate Curator in Art and Religion, The National Gallery)

*Dr Joost Joustra is Ahmanson Research Associate Curator in Art and Religion at the National Gallery in London. In 2020, he curated the exhibition Sin at the National Gallery and authored the accompanying publication, Sin: The Art of Transgression, exploring how sin has been depicted in art for centuries. His current work focusses on Saint Francis of Assisi and his artistic legacy.*

**Orazio Gentileschi's *The Finding of Moses* and Crossing Borders**

Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639) is one of the most interesting figures of the Italian Baroque: his life and career spanned a period marked by significant artistic movements and innovations. Born in Pisa to a family of artists, Gentileschi moved to Rome and subsequently worked in Genoa, Turin, Paris and London, where he spent the final 12 years of his life at the court of Charles I of England (1600–1649). It was here that he painted *The Finding of Moses*, acquired by the National Gallery in 2020.

This majestic work was commissioned to commemorate the birth of the heir, the future Charles II, and was intended for display at the Queen's House in Greenwich. It shows the Old Testament figure of Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter. The infant would go on to become a great leader, guiding the Israelites out of slavery to the Promised Land. It seems particularly fitting that its subject should have been chosen by Henrietta Maria, the Catholic daughter of a French king, and that its author should be Orazio Gentileschi, an artist who had also crossed many borders to reach the Stuart court in London.

**Letizia Treves**

(The James and Sarah Sassoon  
Curator of Later Italian, Spanish,  
and French 17th-century Paintings,  
The National Gallery)

*Letizia has been Curator of Later Italian and Spanish Paintings since 2013 and was given the additional responsibility of French 17th-Century Paintings in 2016. She joined the National Gallery following a long career in the Old Master Paintings Department at Sotheby's, where she was a Senior Director and the principal worldwide specialist in Italian paintings. Since coming to the Gallery, Letizia has curated a number of exhibitions, notably 'Beyond Caravaggio' (2016), the much-acclaimed 'Artemisia' (2020) and, more recently, 'Bellotto: The Königstein Views Reunited' (2021). In 2020 Letizia championed the National Gallery's acquisition of Orazio Gentileschi's The Finding of Moses.*

**Orazio Gentileschi's *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt and Crossing Borders***

Purchased in 1947, Orazio Gentileschi's *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt* is a cornerstone of Birmingham's collection of Italian Baroque painting. It remains one of the most important pictures owned by the city and is of national significance: until the National Gallery acquired *The Finding of Moses* in 2020 it was the only autograph work by the artist in a UK public collection.

Created in around 1620, before Gentileschi's departure from Rome, the painting depicts Mary, Joseph and the young Jesus in a moment of rest during their escape to Egypt, following Herod's threat to kill the child. The subject and Gentileschi's treatment of it clearly appealed to the artist's patrons, and he returned to it repeatedly. This short paper examines the representation of the Rest on the Flight into Egypt in Birmingham's painting and its variants. The picture's narrative is one of crossing borders between countries, but in his naturalistic approach – emphasising the vulnerability of the Holy Family, and the tender connection between mother and child – Gentileschi also explores the boundaries between the human and the divine.

**Victoria Osborne**

(Curator (fine art) and Curatorial  
Team Leader, Birmingham Museums  
Trust, Birmingham)

*Victoria Osborne is Curator (Fine Art) and Curatorial Team Leader at Birmingham Museums Trust and is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham. After beginning her career at York Art Gallery, she joined Birmingham Museums in 2001 as Curator of Prints and Drawings. She currently has curatorial responsibility for the city of Birmingham's collection of paintings, sculpture and works on paper pre-1900.*

Art, Identity and Migrations: the Ben Uri Collection from Alfred Wolmark to Tam Joseph

Ben Uri was founded in 1915 in London's East End by Russian-Jewish immigrant artist Lazar Berson to provide a platform and support for Jewish immigrant artists and craftsmen working outside the cultural mainstream. Reflecting these origins, the collection is principally by late 19th, 20th and 21st Century artists of Jewish descent, but since 2002 has expanded to include the wider immigrant contribution to British visual culture since 1900, irrespective of national, ethnic, or religious origins. Today the collection reflects three principal waves of migration to Britain from c. 1880 to the present day.

This short talk focuses on Alfred Wolmark's *Sabbath Afternoon* (c. 1909–10), which transposes the setting of Polish master Samuel Hirszenberg's oil, *Sabbath Rest* (1894), from Warsaw to London, reflecting a journey much like the artist's own. Beyond the details of Jewish religious observance, the focus has shifted from interior to exterior and from domestic to industrial, identifying Wolmark with his Camden Town contemporaries and demonstrating that the borders he has crossed are cultural, as well as geographical. It is juxtaposed with Caribbean-born British artist Tam Joseph's *Hand Made Map of the World* (2013), which playfully reorders conventional geographies, highlighting both the legacy of Colonialism and the arbitrariness of borders.

**Sarah MacDougall**  
(Director, Ben Uri Gallery, London)

*Sarah MacDougall is Director of Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, where she is also Head of Collection and the Ben Uri Research Unit for the Study and Recording of the Jewish and Immigrant Contribution to British Visual Art since 1900. She has published, lectured, and curated widely on these subjects.*

Pride and Persecution: Jan Steen's *The Wrath of Ahasuerus*

The exhibition *Pride & Persecution: Jan Steen's Old Testament Scenes* was held at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Birmingham, between 27 October 2017 and 21 January 2018. Jan Steen (1616-1679) is widely admired as one of the most engaging and technically brilliant painters in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Although he is best known for his humorous and lively scenes of everyday life, the Barber exhibition looked at a less familiar group of paintings – indeed this was the first survey anywhere of his Old Testament subjects. The principal work of the Barber's small in-focus show was its own, magnificent *The Wrath of Ahasuerus* (c.1668-70), arguably his masterpiece within this sub-genre, and certainly the finest of the three known versions he painted.

All of the paintings in the exhibition depicted subjects of significance to those of Jewish as well as Christian faith. *The Wrath of Ahasuerus* in particular concerns the revelation and defeat of a plot to massacre the Jewish population in ancient Persia, as recorded in the Book of Esther, an event still enthusiastically commemorated today in the joyous annual Jewish Feast of Purim. The exhibition not only explored the historical underpinnings of this story and its relevance to the Dutch population, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in Steen's own time, but also its fascinating resonances in the mid-twentieth century, when the artist's *Ahasuerus* and *Samson and Delilah* were both owned by a Jewish dealer. To these historical layers we added our own by inviting a rabbi from a local Jewish synagogue to offer her response to the subject of the exhibition. This short paper will touch on all these aspects by considering the depiction and consumption by Christian audiences of ostensibly Jewish subjects in Steen's paintings both historically and in more recent times.

*Robert Wenley read History at Durham and Gallery Studies at St Andrews. After curatorial positions at the Wallace Collection, 1991-2003, and at Glasgow Museums, 2003-10, he has been Head of Collections and Deputy Director at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, since 2010. He co-founded the French Bronze Study Group in 1999; was Reviews Editor for the Sculpture Journal, 2000-10; and on the Advisory Committee for Research on European Paintings, National Gallery, London, 2013-19. He has been a Trustee, Public Picture*

**Robert Wenley**

(Deputy Director and Head of  
Collections, Barber Institute of Fine  
Arts, Birmingham)

*Gallery, London, 2013-19. He has been a Trustee, Public Picture Gallery Fund, Birmingham, since 2015 (Chair since 2017); and a Trustee, Public Statue and Sculpture Association (also Chair of the Specialist Advisory Board), since 2020. He has curated numerous exhibitions at the Barber Institute, including on Govaert Flinck (2015/16), Jan Steen (2017/18), Jan de Beer (2019/20), and Celebrity Beasts in Art (2021/22).and Recording of the Jewish and Immigrant Contribution to British Visual Art since 1900. She has published, lectured, and curated widely on these subjects.*

### The Second Glance: Hidden Narratives at the Bode Museum

The Berlin Bode Museum, with its collections of European sculpture and Byzantine art, is particularly suitable for approaching the matter of the Christian faith as a part of the European identity from the 3rd to the 18th century. Within the integrated exhibition series "Der zweite Blick" (The Second Glance) - with two current instalments: "All Forms of Love" (on show since 2019) and "Women" (on show since 2021) - visitors are invited to engage with prevailing 21st-century socially relevant topics in the permanent exhibition of the Bode Museum. The overarching aim of the series is to provide a permanent enhancement to the official museum discourse, adding previously hidden narratives.

Presently, eleven thematic routes encompassing 95 objects encourage visitors to take a "second glance" at the works of the permanent collection, thereby discovering it in a new and different way. This can be done by using information sheets provided next to the objects, through the multimedia guide or with the free online catalogue in German and English. The exhibition catalogue is also available as print on demand. "All Forms of Love", developed in cooperation with the Berlin Gay Museum, offers a second look at works across the entire collection dealing with the diversity of sexual identities in European and Christian history. "Women" was produced in collaboration with the Frauentreff Olga organisation, a drop-in and counselling centre for drug-using women, trans women, and sex workers. The project analyses the traditional gender roles and challenges the functions ascribed to women in European and Christian society, as, for instance, heroines, prostitutes, and saints.

**María López-Fanjul  
y Díez del Corral**

(Senior Curator, Bode Museum  
and Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche  
Museen zu Berlin)

*Dr. María López-Fanjul y Díez del Corral holds a BA, a MA and a MPhil in Art History from the Complutense University of Madrid, a MA in Museum Management from the City University of London, and a PhD from The Courtauld Institute of Art (University of London). Author of numerous international publications and visiting lecturer at several German universities, she has worked for international institutions such as the Museo del Prado and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, where she works as a curator since 2012. She is now senior curator of the Bode Museum and the Gemäldegalerie, in charge of the strategies and projects to integrate both museums into the 21st century society.*

***The Visual Commentary on Scripture***

Paolo Berdini has developed the term 'visual exegesis' to describe the way that works of art represent 'expansions' of scriptural texts. He insists that such visual exegesis does (and should) present an existential challenge. It asks us to consider how the readings of Scripture with which we are confronted in art are disclosive of the sort of world we are part of. Such readings also ask us how we are to live well in the world being disclosed. '[P]ainting becomes a form of visual locution, in that it effectively makes the [text's] need for implementation coincide with the existentialization of the viewer's response [...] the text, having lost the neutral status of the source, has gained an active role in the viewer's beholding (Berdini 1997, 2–3).

This transition from treating Scriptural sources as having a 'neutral status' to recognising them as texts that seek 'the existentialization of the viewer's response' is a sort of border crossing, which challenges some of the methodological norms that keep art history and theology apart. It's a central dynamic being explored and applied in the interdisciplinary research project TheVCS.org. The VCS invites biblical scholars, art historians, and theologians to 'curate' works of visual art from past centuries as well as the contemporary world in ways that allow the Scripture's 'expansion' and invite its 'existentialisation'. I will consider how VCS contributors who are not themselves religious practitioners have been invited to cross the border into this distinctive activity of visual exegesis.

**Ben Quash**

(Professor of Christianity and the  
Arts, King's College London)

*Ben Quash came to King's College London as its first Professor of Christianity and the Arts in 2007. Prior to that, he was a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College and then of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. He is directing a major 10-year project to create an online Visual Commentary on Scripture. He runs an MA in Christianity and the Arts in association with the National Gallery, London, is a Trustee of Art and Christianity Enquiry, and Canon Theologian of both Coventry and Bradford Cathedrals.*

**Visual Metatext: A Case Study in Teaching the Book of Ruth to Student Rabbis**

As part of the year long course I teach on the *megillot*, students encounter not only written commentary, but also visual commentary of the Hebrew Bible. During this session, I will present a short case study based on studying the Book of Ruth with my 4th year rabbinical students. Beginning with a variety of paintings ranging from the 17th century to the present day, we consider how these works depict the relationship between Ruth and Naomi. How do these paintings problematize major issues in the biblical text? How persuaded are we by these depictions and why? How might we take these images into congregational settings when we teach? How might that empower lay people in ways that written commentary might not?

**Deborah Kahn-Harris**

(Principal, Leo Baeck College)

*Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris is Principal of Leo Baeck College in Finchley, London. Leo Baeck College trains rabbis primarily for the progressive Jewish communities of the UK and Europe. In addition to her management responsibilities, Rabbi Dr Kahn-Harris also teaches Hebrew Bible, in particular the megillot (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther). Rabbi Dr Kahn-Harris holds a PhD from the University of Sheffield and rabbinic ordination from Leo Baeck College. She is currently working on a commentary on the book of Ruth. She lives in London with her husband, two teenagers, cat, and two budgies.*



## Crossing Borders Between Cultures and Religions through the Sacred Visual Arts

Fatimah will speak of her experiences of Crossing Borders as a British Pakistani Muslim Woman - whose grand parents crossed the border between India and what is now known as Pakistan in 1947 in a not un-violent displacement of between 10-20 million people along broadly religious lines before crossing over to settle in England in the 1960s. She explores what it means to cross borders and why it might be important for those from minority Muslim communities to cross over the threshold of our various Houses of Art, coming face to face with often evocative and symbolically rich imagery, and how these experiences might be curated, and the gifts they might offer.

### Fatimah Ashrif

(Principal Advisor, Randeree  
Charitable Trust)

*Fatimah Ashrif works in the philanthropy and charitable sector with a particular interest in marginalised and faith communities, with significant experience of and insight into the areas of faith education, empowerment of young people, personal and leadership development, and interfaith engagement. She is also a Co-Creator of RAY of God, offering immersive and holistic programming which invites all genders to explore the insights and experiences of women from diverse spiritual backgrounds holding positions in leadership, teaching, healing, activism, and creative fields. Fatimah also leads a regular Sufi prayer circle and is a doctoral student at The Queens Foundation researching contemporary female mysticism: she is interested in the subtle ways in which a deeply held spirituality might impact both leadership and activism.*

### Novelette Stewart

(Conservator and Curator)

*Novelette-Aldoni Patricia Stewart was born in Jamaica, West Indies, and immigrated at age 9 to New York in the United States. She has lived in England since 1991 and has both American and British citizenship. She attended college and graduate schools in the United States receiving a BA in Liberal Arts from Goddard College, a MA in Arts Administration from New York University, and a M.A.L.D from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. She retrained at University College London as a conservator in 2004. Her relationship with the Church has been long-termed and is of prime importance in her life. She regards working with various church groups and sitting on various church committees as a practical component of her faith. She currently sits as a member of the*

*Church of England's Cathedral Fabric Commission, and as a member of the Fabric Advisory Committee for Bristol Cathedral. She has worked in museums and cultural organisations in the UK and abroad, these include the Schomburg Museum for Black Culture, the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, the British Museum, and the Horniman Museum. Presently, she is completing a PhD on 19th century objects from the Kalahari which were collected along the missionary road. This is a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership between the British Museum and the Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. She has worked as both a conservator and curator.*

#### Orazio's *The Finding of Moses*: an Italian painter realizes a Scottish royal iconography

I would like to lay before the seminar a new (but I hope convincing) iconographical interpretation of Gentileschi's *Finding of Moses*, one which returns it to what I believe the 1630s commission to have intended, which is dynastic celebration of the birth of Charles II, within the cultural context of a Stuart royal court and its historiography. In a long cultural tradition which finds its most lasting expression in the 1527 *Historia Gentis Scotorum* of the Scottish Humanist Hector Boece/Boethius, the daughter of Pharaoh, fabulously named *Scota*, is the ancestor of the Scottish people. Boece's origin myths were widely accepted in early modern Scotland, and the iconography of royal entries (as that of Mary Stuart in 1560) reflected belief in this Egyptian origin of the Scots. (This is also echoed and shadowed in Jonson's 160 *Masque of Blacknesse for Queen Anna*.) There can be no doubt that the seventeenth century Stuart monarchs of Great Britain adopted this iconography, as it forms the basis of the 1670s and 80s painted scheme at Holyrood for Charles II and James II, including the representation of *Scota* in the King's Closet, as ancestor of the Scottish Kings depicted in the Gallery of Kings.

Thus the painting which hung in the Hall of the Queen's House is of dynastic significance, the celebration of the (I think) 146th lineal descendent of King Fergus added to the Scottish royal line. Thus the circle of women in this painting relates much more closely to the circle

**Peter Davidson**  
(Curator and Senior Research  
Fellow, Champion Hall)

of women personifying the Arts of Peace on Gentileschi's ceiling, in embodying aspirations for the future of the newly born Prince. While I believe that this interpretation carries conviction, of course, paradoxically, it greatly complicates the status of Gentileschi's painting as sacred art.

*Peter Davidson is Senior Research Fellow of Champion Hall, University of Oxford and Fellow-Curator of the Hall's Collections. He is general editor for the Oxford University Press edition of the Works of St Robert Southwell. He has published academic books on the baroque *The Universal Baroque*, (2007) and his collection of writings on the subject --*Global baroque: relics, dreams, travels*-- is due from Manchester University Press next year. He also writes about art, place and nature: *The Idea of North* (2005) *Distance and Memory* (2013) *The Last of the Light: about twilight* (2015) and *The Lighted Window, evening walks remembered* (2021). A book of memoirs and travels, *Seasons and Castles* will be published by Head of Zeus in 2024.*

### New Windows Open New Doors: A Stained Glass Artwork by Kehinde Wiley at the Stained Glass Museum

Using the example of a recent acquisition by African American queer artist Kehinde Wiley at The Stained Glass Museum, this presentation explores how the display of a single contemporary artwork can bring fresh perspectives to existing pre-1900 collections, changing visitors' perceptions of 'sacred art' collections, and diversify existing audiences. Kehinde Wiley's *Saint Adelaide* (2014) is one of 12 freestanding stained glass artworks made to the artist's designs, and features a young black male wearing denim and gold trainers in the place of a traditional saint. Acquired by The Stained Glass Museum in 2020, Wiley's *Saint Adelaide* (2014) is a reworking of a pre-1900 stained glass window designed by French Academic painter Ingres. The artwork therefore crosses geographical and temporal borders, as well as challenging traditional representations of race, gender and religion today.

Placed on display in the main gallery of The Stained Glass Museum, which is located in an upper level of Ely Cathedral, this artwork occupies a unique position in a collection of public art (much of which is religious) displayed within a working Cathedral building and active

**Jasmine Allen**

(Director, Stained Glass Museum)

sacred space. This talk will explore the strengths and opportunities of using contemporary artworks to open up dialogues between past and present and bring new perspectives to public collections as well as new visitors. It will also touch on some of the challenges of dealing with themes of race, gender and religion in collections of sacred art within sacred spaces.

*Jasmine Allen is Director and Curator of The Stained Glass Museum, an independent museum located in Ely Cathedral. The Stained Glass Museum houses a collection of both national and international significance, spanning the medieval era to present day. Jasmine studied History of Art at the University of York and has published widely on aspects of postmedieval stained glass, especially of the 19th and 20th centuries.*

### Feeding Homeless People Under Edward Burne-Jones' *Last Judgement* Window

Birmingham Cathedral houses four stained glass windows by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, including his late masterpiece The Last Judgement (manufactured by the William Morris Factory, 1898) and situated in the West End of the cathedral. In the paper I will explore 'Crossing Borders' by reflecting on the breakfast the cathedral and a partner charity provide for homeless people immediately below the window each Tuesday and Thursday. This will include the following interwoven questions:

- What it means to have outstanding works of art in 'a living building' (i.e. in the place and purpose for which it was designed as opposed to a gallery)
- What the work of art might demand of the cathedral, notably in terms of the biblical story it represents (the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25)
- What the window means for the cathedral in terms of mission, not least with an upcoming major restoration of it
- The thin liminal divide between inside and outside the cathedral.

**Andy Delmege**

(Canon Missioner, Birmingham  
Cathedral)

*Andy Delmege is Canon Missioner at Birmingham Cathedral, a role that involves both the social outreach of the cathedral and developing an innovative Arts Strategy.*

## Can Teachers 'do justice' to Sacred Art Through Mainstream Religious Education?

There is a dearth in pedagogical approaches to sacred art within Religious Education (RE) in mainstream education. RE is commonly caught between the reductivity of sacred art as explanatory illustration and cautious rejection of the subject's confessional past. This paper addresses this issue by proposing an approach that draws on RE's pedagogical literature and a museum collection of sacred art, in an attempt to empower teachers to include sacred art as a crucial component of the RE curriculum. Challenging a perceived dichotomy of the academic and personal can allow us to see a sacred object through our own and others' eyes in a meaningful and informed way.

A resource for RE teachers, written in collaboration with the Wallace Collection, proposes an interdisciplinary approach to sacred art that is conducive to RE's new 'worldviews' paradigm (Cooling et al., 2020). By sharing the pedagogical foundations of the resource, a case is made for meaningful encounters with sacred art through critical engagement with disciplinary lenses and awareness of one's own worldview (Flanagan, 2019). RE's 'canonical' pedagogies of experiential learning, ethnography and critical realism may be eclipsed by a 'worldviews' paradigm, yet they are generative in approaching sacred art. Taking an Egyptian mosque lamp (c. 1350 – 1357) and rock crystal "Good Shepherd" (Sri Lanka/Goa, c. 1600) as case studies, we will consider a holistic approach to sacred art that calls for recognition of affect, reflexivity, decolonised hermeneutics, and the intersectional nature of personal and institutional worldviews in relation to the sacred in art.

**Alexis Stones**  
(Lecturer in Education, UCL)

*Alexis Stones is subject lead for Religious Education PGCE at UCL Institute of Education, having worked for many years as an RE teacher. She has research activities and published works in art and RE, knowledge and subject specialism, and the relationships between religion and science in the RE classroom. Alexis is also a gallery and museum educator, working with children, teachers and the general public, and she co-leads the National Gallery's teacher education programme for primary teachers.*

The Art of Digital Conversation: How a church conservation charity is engaging people with ecclesiastical art and heritage

At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, all churches were closed, and all events were cancelled, all engagement activities with schools and communities had to cease. In response to this, the Trust went Digital in May 2020 and launched a free online weekly lecture series open to all. The Trust has secured leading experts and church enthusiasts to give lectures with the aim of not just crossing borders, but breaking down barriers to learning about churches and the fascinating range of topics connected with them. The lectures regularly attract viewers and lecturers from across the world. The topics of the lectures are international also, with one lecture focussing on Jesuit Art and Architecture in Latin America for example. The lectures have reached over 2.7 million people since they began and has seen Membership increase by over 400% in 2020-21.

In December 2021 the Trust took the next step in this digital adventure to break down boundaries and cross borders by launching CCTdigital.com, the world's first and only streaming dedicated to learning about churches. This paper would explore the development and impact that these digital outreach and engagement initiatives have had in crossing borders around the world and engaging people and communities in the cultural significance, histories and value of ecclesiastical art and heritage.

**George Reynolds**  
(Digital Media Officer, Churches  
Conservation Trust)

*George Reynolds is the Digital Media Officer for the Trust and joined them in May 2019 following working for the award-winning Digital team at the Church of England, and working for several years at Ely Cathedral in fundraising and developing digital campaigns. At the CCT he leads on digital activities and content production for the Trust. He manages the social media and hosts and manages the weekly lecture series. He holds a MA in Death, Religion and Culture from the University of Winchester, and is a church crawling enthusiast with a particular passion for Italian churches.*

Westminster Abbey's Annunciation Diptych at the Museum of London's new Faith Galleries

In 2006, the Museum of London acquired two panels of an Annunciation, painted for Westminster Abbey. The work exemplifies this workshop's theme in numerous ways. The wooden panels crossed several national borders to travel from the Baltic to London. Their unknown Lower Saxon artist is thought to have visited England from Germany to complete the commission. The subject provides a biblical example of angelic border-crossing between the heavenly and earthly realms, presaging God's transformation from spirit into flesh through Christ. The painting's ecclesiastical architectural setting also takes us from first-century Holy Land to 16th-century London. The painting has subsequently undergone further movements, first by being expelled from the Abbey during the Reformation, then broken up into pieces and passing through various hands before entering the national collection. As we prepare for the next stage of its journey – as the centrepiece of a multifaith display on Sacred Practices in MOL's future permanent exhibition – we are working with the Faiths Forum for London to interpret the painting for the next generation. 'Crossing borders' is a theme with strong relevance to Londoners, many of whom are connected through their religions to people and places across the world. By exploring the relevance of this and other universal themes to the Annunciation panels, our participants will help us to recover forgotten histories and lost meanings that are as relevant to Londoners in 2022 as they were in 1500.

**Thomas Ardill**

(Curator of Paintings, Prints and Drawings, Museum of London)

*Dr Thomas Ardill is a curator of paintings, prints and drawings at the Museum of London. After writing for the JMW Turner bequest catalogue and working on displays at Tate Britain, he completed his PhD (Between God, Art and Mammon: religious painting as a public spectacle in Britain, c.1800-1832) at the Courtauld Institute in 2016. He is particularly interested in the exhibiting culture around sacred paintings in Romantic-era Britain. He is currently working as the curatorial lead on various future displays at the Museum of London including on the theme of Faith.*

*Feminine Power: The Divine to the Demonic at the British Museum*

This paper will provide an overview of the exhibition *Feminine power: the divine to the demonic* (19 May – 25 September 2022). Drawn primarily from the British Museum collection with key loans, this cross-cultural, cross-period exhibition explores the representation of femininity within global religion and mythology, from the ancient world to today. Bringing together sacred artefacts and art from five continents, it looks at the diversity of ways in which the female image and ideas about femininity have been constructed, embodied and understood. Enhanced by engagement with contemporary worshippers and insights from prominent contributors, the exhibition considers the influence of these beliefs on people's lives and the formation of cultural attitudes towards gender relations and identity.

In this paper I will give examples of some of the key objects on display and discuss the curatorial methodologies used in developing the project, which have informed the object selection, thematic narrative and interpretive approach. I will raise questions relating to the sensitivities involved in curating an exhibition comprising a wide variety of objects, including sacred artefacts and contemporary art, from different cultural and religious traditions. I will also speak about how we have developed the exhibition narrative to include multiple voices, through engagement with a number of religious communities in Britain, in order to ensure the interpretation of living beliefs in a sensitive and appropriate way.

**Lucy Dahlsen**  
(Project Curator, British Museum)

*Lucy Dahlsen is currently the Project Curator of the British Museum exhibition *Feminine power: the divine to the demonic* (2022). She was previously Associate Curator, 20th Century and Contemporary at the National Portrait Gallery, London, where she curated exhibitions including *Elizabeth Peyton: Aire and Angels* (2019-20), *Njideka Akunyili Crosby: "The Beautiful Ones"* (2018), *Michael Jackson: On the Wall* (co-curated, 2018) and *Samuel Fosso: Self Portraits* (2017). She has an academic background in philosophy and art history and is a Board Member of the Centre for Philosophy and Art, King's College London.*



## Mary Magdalene Across Borders

How can a biblical woman, about whom little is known and much is speculated, be a source of connection and recognition for contemporary audiences? This question was at the heart of Mary Magdalene. The Exhibition, held at Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht in the summer and fall of 2021. While the question "who was Mary Magdalene?" can hardly be answered conclusively, visual representations of Mary Magdalene are legion and diverse. Therefore, the exhibition offered an exploration of the Magdalene's multiplicity: not aiming to get at one definitive truth, but to demonstrate the broad implications and meanings she has had throughout history and still has today. Focusing on representation, the exhibition departed with cinematographic depictions of Mary Magdalene, moving into early textual sources, along the symbol of the ointment jar, into the wide-ranging interpretations that emerged in Western Christianity and culture. The curatorial focus on multiplicity was exquisitely embodied by one of the international loans to the exhibition, the painting *The Magdalene* by the Workshop of Master of 1518, from the National Gallery's collection. This painting combines several major Magdalene narratives in one image: rich clothing points to the penitent sinner, the book of hours to her identification with Mary of Bethany, the ointment jar to her witness of the resurrection, and the rock formation in the background to her hermit life in the South of France. In this paper, I'll discuss how such visualized multiplicity of one woman resonated for the contemporary museum audience, particularly in feminist terms.

**Lieke Wijnia**  
(Curator of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, Museum  
Catharijneconvent)

*Dr. Lieke Wijnia (1985) is an art historian and religious studies scholar. She works as Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Museum Catharijneconvent, the national museum for Christian art and heritage of The Netherlands. She also lectures heritage and museum studies at University College Utrecht. Her recent publications include Resonating Sacralities. Dynamics between Religion and the Arts in Postsecular Netherlands (De Gruyter 2022), Mary Magdalene. Chief Witness, Sinner, Feminist (Waanders 2021) and Beyond the Return of Religion: Art and the Postsecular (Brill 2018).*

Transcending from Quantity to Quality: An Exploration of Human Perception of Empathy and Love Through Art

This case study offers a compilation of findings attained from ongoing multidisciplinary and collaborative work since 2016, on the development of empathy-building experiences through museums, based on the Designing for Empathy framework, with a special focus on three experiences developed for empathy-building through Islamic arts. Expanding our heart-spaces at individual and institutional levels to include differences is more essential than ever, and art, museums, and empathy-building have a role to play in this exploration of the heart's capacity for holding Love. An empathic appreciation of the uniqueness of each self may inspire our hearts to expand to include those who may not look or think like us, contributing to the healing in our world through the preservation of diversity within Unity.

We will explore five elements that remain constant when designing heart-expanding experiences around artworks:

- 1) Art is utilized as a mirror for our humanness: through an engagement with an artwork we learn about ourselves,
- 2) The outcome is not improving knowledge, rather is to create a safe environment for the exploration of multiple and shifting perspectives,
- 3) The "experience" is real-time, in-person, and in group setting, including paradigm-shifting experiences of safe discomfort, prompting deep reflection, dialogue, and movement,
- 4) The "other" to be empathized with, may include one's self, another (person, nature, object), as well as the Unity,
- 5) A Reflections Circle creates a safe, non-judgmental listening environment for all

**Elif Gokcigdem**  
(Founding President, ONE -  
Organization of Networks for  
Empathy)

*Dr. Gökçığdem is a historian of Islamic arts, author, and founder of ONE – Organization of Networks for Empathy, the Designing for Empathy™ platform, and the Empathy-Building Through Museums Initiative, which was recognized by His Holiness The Dalai Lama with an invitation to host: Fostering Universal Ethics and Compassion Through Museums Summit with Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. She is the thought-leader and the editor of two visionary books on empathy-building: Fostering Empathy Through Museums (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), and Designing for Empathy: Perspectives on the Museum Experience (American Alliance of Museums, 2019).*

**Neil MacGregor**  
(Writer and Broadcaster)

*Neil MacGregor was Director of the National Gallery (1987-2002) and the British Museum (2002-2015), was Gründungsintendant of the Humboldt Forum, Berlin (2015-2018), and held the Chaire du Louvre in 2021. Among his books are A History of the World in 100 Objects and Germany, Memories of a Nation. While at the National Gallery he participated in the millennium exhibition Seeing Salvation, which examined ways in which western European artists had used the image of Christ to explore the themes of suffering and injustice, redemption and hope. In 2016 the book and radio series Living with the Gods looked at the relationship between faith and society across cultures and through the millennia.*