



An invitation to The Friends of the Geffrye Museum Home and Garden Quiz Evening

Please join us at a special evening, featuring a whizzy quiz compiled by quizmaster John Tomlins (also known to most of us as the Chairman of the Friends). The evening

will be hosted by the Executive Committee of the Friends and includes supper. The date for your diary is Wednesday 18 October, 7.00 for 7.30pm. See inside for details...

Geffrye wins award for education

The Geffrye has received a Sandford Award for Heritage Education. This is a major achievement and recognises the Geffrye's long-standing, high-quality and well-rounded education service. The Sandford assessor's report on the museum's education services states:


'At the Geffrye Museum each recreated living space has its own theatricality, resembling a set on which the audience's imagination casts an eye on the past. The education team enables children to break down the 'fourth wall' of each set studied, by allowing children to deduce for themselves how the English middle-classes live and used to live.

Embedded within the Geffrye Museum's education programme is the responsibility of staying true to an ethos that dates back to the 1930s. A highly skilled and dedicated education team perform the role of custodians of this ethos, whilst also being



Melissa O'Hare teaching in the mid-20th century room

willing to adapt, to listen and to lead. The Geffrye Museum appears not just to reach out to its community, it achieves more than that, being an integral, vital, quintessentially English institution within the rich and diverse community it dutifully serves.'


The Education Department and all members of the team at the Geffrye are honoured and delighted to have won this award. 

Good news flash...The 'Home and Garden' catalogue has been nominated for an AXA/Art Newspaper Award for best exhibition catalogue of 2007.

Members' events...

Kew Fifteen Friends made the journey to Kew on a lovely summer day, ideal for a visit to both the Palace and the Gardens. We first visited the recently restored Palace, where we were free to wander at our own pace through the rooms identified so clearly with George III and his Queen Charlotte. We were also able to see rooms which, until 1816, had been occupied by two Princesses and then not opened up for nearly 200 years! Their decoration has been left untouched and we were all surprised at how uncomfortable the rooms looked. After lunch we had guided tours of the gardens during which we learned all about their history and the royal influence.

The Horniman Museum A group of Friends joined Friends from the Museum of London and the London Transport Museum on board a Routemaster bus and, after a scenic trip across the river and through South London, enjoyed a wonderful evening. The weather was warm and sunny and the visitors were split into three groups and guided round the splendid gardens, the aquarium and then excellently fed and wined in the conservatory, in itself a stunning building. A memorable event.

Fund-raising Quiz Spend an extremely enjoyable evening with excellent food and wine amongst Friends and fellow Geffrye supporters in the intimacy of the museum after hours. The quiz is not intended to be too serious and will not require a detailed knowledge of all parts of the Home and Garden exhibition, so don't imagine that the questions will be too specialised for you. Tickets cost £25 a head: think what an average restaurant meal with wine costs and add to that the delightful surroundings, lots of fun and the chance to raise funds for the museum. Surely a bargain! Tables can take six or eight - why not make one up? Book your tickets with Michael Davies on 020 7249 3316. 

Insider's View

Home and Garden: Domestic Spaces in Paintings from 1960 to the present day

Opens 16 October 2007 and closes 4 February 2008

The Home and Garden exhibitions - which many of the Friends will be familiar with - have been an important part of the Geffrye Museum's ongoing exploration of the representation of urban domestic interiors and gardens in paintings. This has been a long project, which started in the late 1990s. We began by looking at works dating from the late 17th century and now, three exhibitions and two catalogues later, we have reached the present day.

The socio-historical context has been fundamental to our understanding of the often deceptively straightforward works in the exhibitions. Whilst we often found ourselves peering into fairly modest domestic spaces, where the quotidian is more obvious than the noble or grand, these pictures rarely failed to communicate something clear about the time in which they were created: a sense of the cultural backdrop, a hint of the great events, big ideas, communal hopes and dreams which marked that specific period.

We have found that, in almost every case, one's appreciation of the painting under consideration is en-

'great events, big ideas

hanced by information about the social setting, the artist's intentions, the sitter's hopes, fears and concerns.

The third of the four exhibitions, which was on show last spring, brought us into the 20th century. We very consciously decided on 1960 as a clear watershed, in that, for many, the effects of the war and rationing went on until the late Fifties. It was clear in many of the paintings that the shadow of war and upheaval was never far away - in particular the threat of World War II was palpable, even in several pictures which were ostensibly about other subjects. Another theme which emerged concerned religion: the strength of belief was apparent in several works, where

Good news...press coverage for 'Home and Garden' Part Three (1914 to 1960) included: Ham and High, Daily Telegraph, Evening Standard - Homes & Properties, BBC Radio 4 'Front Row', House & Garden...

religious themes were explored and seemingly intensified by the domestic setting. Small scenes, perhaps, but unquestionably full of resonance. In all of these paintings the complex nature of the English urban middle classes begins to be revealed.




Second Domestic Scene
Stuart Pearson Wright, 2003

The fourth, and final, exhibition, which opens on 14 October, includes

work by Carel Weight, Olwyn Bowey, Howard Hodgkin, Anthony Green, John Pearce, Stuart Pearson Wright and Julian Bell. All 40 paintings in the show provide a vivid and intimate glimpse into private worlds not often on view, raise questions and stir emotions.

We initially feared that we would not have enough material for the late 20th century to make a rounded exhibition, but in the end we were happily surprised by the large amount of material available. However, there were some puzzling gaps and some unanswered questions. There seem to be omissions in the subject matter and chosen

...hopes and dreams'

settings, despite the fact that the curators of this exhibition looked at over 2,500 works to make a final selection of 80 to represent the 20th century. We wonder, where are the modernist interiors? Why aren't there more women artists? Where are all the flower gardens? In this period when London was expanding (the continuation of rippling 'suburbs' seen in the previous century) and there were more possibilities for the middle classes to make gardens, one wonders why so few were depicted in paint. Perhaps, pictures of domestic spaces - both living rooms and gardens - are still part of a domestic setting, not yet plucked from private ownership by public collections. 

A word from the Chairman

We were deeply saddened at the sudden death in June of Roger McEwen, the Head of Finance and Administration at the museum. Although it may be that not many Friends knew Roger personally, those who did will surely appreciate the tragic loss to Roger's family and to the museum. Please see the back page for an appreciation by Christine Lalumia.

Although weather-wise it has not been a good summer, we always try to lay on good conditions for our events. We duly succeeded with the trip to Kew and the visit to the Horniman (details opposite). The Horniman visit was the second London Hub Friends' event this year following on from the earlier trip to the London Transport Museum Depot at Acton. In the last edition of the newsletter I gave some background to the London Museums Hub and I hope that our Friends are starting to appreciate the interaction with Friends of the other museums in the London Hub. The London Transport Museum in Covent Garden is due to reopen after its refurbishment in November and we are promised a special visit sometime next year. When our refurbished front gardens have been completed, that will be an opportune time to invite Friends from the other Hub Museums back to the Geffrye.

'an excellent day and a special one for the Friends'

A final note for your diaries is the Friends' Christmas Party which will be held on Monday 10 December in the afternoon from 2.00 - 3.30pm and in the evening from 6.30 - 8.30pm. This is always an excellent day and a very special one for the Friends and I look forward to seeing you then.



John Tomlins, Chairman,
Friends of the Geffrye Museum

and still more...*The Spectator, The First Post (online), World of Interiors, BBC Homes and Antiques, Art of England and Blueprint Magazine.*


A friend remembered...

This summer at the Geffrye has been tinged with sadness, following the loss of our beloved friend and respected colleague, Roger McEwen, who died unexpectedly in June.

In his six years at the museum, Roger brought balance, diplomacy and dedication to his work. He was earnest, sincere and genuinely kind. He was a stalwart supporter of the museum and always had the Geffrye's best interests at heart. But it would be wrong to think of him as a goody-goody: Roger's essential decency never prevented him from enjoying a bit of mischief or a good joke. There was always a



Roger McEwen

little twinkle in Roger's eye and it is that, more than all his other wonderful qualities, which I think we miss the most. 

Christine Lalumia, Deputy Director

Meet Dierdre Cohen...volunteer extraordinaire

Deirdre was interviewed by press officer Ruth Somerville in June.

I first started working here in 1999; I had just retired and was on a walking tour of the City of London when we stopped at the Geffrye for lunch. I wandered through the rooms soaking up the friendly atmosphere...and the next day I phoned to offer my help. Could I man the quiz desk?


Seven years later and I'm still here. Now, in addition to the desk, I stuff envelopes and conduct almshouse tours. I volunteer at least once a month,




Deidre Cohen and Margery Harrison

working with the same circle of faces that have now become my friends.

Working at the Geffrye has been rewarding on so many levels. I feel a real connection with history and I love working with children - in fact, my experiences here have even inspired me to volunteer at the local school.

One moment really stands out, involving a group of teenagers from Belarus whom I guided around the almshouse. I pointed out that the pensioners didn't have running water or an inside flushing toilet until the 1870s and they used oil lamps or candles until the 1880s. The group seemed interested and attentive. Then their companion turned to me and whispered: "They still have this way of life in their own homes, you know." It made me realise how thin the distinction between past and present is. 

The Last Word

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue of the newsletter. If you have any comments, criticisms or encouragements, please write to me care of the Geffrye Museum, Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, London E2 8EA. 
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