

Moira

Once this is Over.....



My ambition is fairly modest.....

I would like to revisit this **The Burlington House Cartoon** by *Leonardo da Vinci* (with a private viewing of course!)

* I had one of the most moving experiences on first seeing it in 1970's. My memory was of seeing it in a small intimate room at the National Gallery. The size of it impressed, the lighting was muted, matching the tones of the picture and I felt drawn into this private moment between mother and daughter.

* It would mean I am in London and can also catch up on family and friends that I have missed so much in recent months.

*And I would treat myself to lunch in the rooftop restaurant of the National Portrait Gallery just around the corner - and maybe afternoon tea at the Courtauld Institute (orange polenta cake!)

The Burlington House Cartoon 1499-1500 Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) Full title: The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the Infant Saint John the Baptist

Charcoal and wash? heightened with white chalk on paper, mounted on canvas. 141.5 x 104.6 cm

Purchased with a special grant and contributions from the Art Fund, The Pilgrim Trust, and through a public appeal organised by the Art Fund, 1962

“The Virgin Mary sits on her mother’s lap, her attention focused on the wriggling Christ Child. Her mother, Saint Anne, looks intently at her through deep-set eyes and points upwards to the heavens, indicating the child’s divinity. Christ’s cousin, Saint John the Baptist, leans against Anne’s lap as the baby Christ tickles his chin.

Drawing was a crucial part of Leonardo’s artistic process and he produced numerous small-scale studies of animals, human anatomy and landscapes. In fact, we know more about Leonardo as an artist from his drawings than from his paintings, as so few of those survive. This work is particularly important as it is the only surviving large-scale drawing by the artist. Unlike his studies, it is a highly finished composition, and it may be the only record we have of a now-lost painting.

Sheets of paper this large did not exist when Leonardo was alive, so he joined numerous pieces together – the joins are apparent on close inspection. Parts of the drawing are highly finished while other areas, like Anne’s pointing hand, were simply left as outlines. This shows us how Leonardo began by creating rough outlines of the shapes of parts of the body and then, using light and shade, gradually built them up into more rounded shapes. Parts of the drawing are densely shaded and contrasted with lighter areas to give a three-dimensional effect (a technique known as *chiaroscuro*), for example the figures’ faces and elements of the draperies such as sections of the Virgin’s sleeve and the folds of fabric which cover Saint Anne’s knees.

In order to avoid harsh lines Leonardo blurred the contours of the forms, and the resulting smoky effect is called *sfumato*. He used it in his paintings too, for example *The Virgin with the Infant Saint John the Baptist adoring the Christ Child accompanied by an Angel* (*The Virgin of the Rocks*). Around the eyes, this blurring produces a mysterious effect that intensifies the gazes of the figures, expressing Leonardo’s idea that the thoughts (*moti mentali*, or ‘motions of the mind’) of painted figures should be visible on their faces. As she points upwards, Saint Anne reveals the mystery of Christ’s being – he is both human and divine. The focus on her eyes, which are so deeply in shadow, seems to emphasise his extraordinary identity.

This is a cartoon, a large drawing usually made in preparation for a painting. When finished, the design would have been transferred onto the panel or canvas by pricking holes in the outlines and dusting over them with charcoal. and it is. However, this drawing, often referred to as ‘The Burlington House Cartoon’, shows no evidence of having been transferred, which suggests that no painting was made from this design. But it has been connected to a number of Leonardo’s commissions....”

From the National Gallery website

To my eye and sensibility the humanity of the scene affects me most. The unfinished hand of St Anne is a potential stumbling block for me - but there is so much of beauty and technical prowess to hold my attention elsewhere in the painting.

I also feel that this study is an homage to women and post Covid 19 I would like to recognise them. Here we have women placed centrally, full of strength and compassion; showing their joy of companionship. Women have carried the greater burden of this disease; being the major carers, undertaking the majority of the home schooling and often being the ones to lose employment in the retail and hospitality sectors. It is no small accident that nations around the world with governments led by women have fared better than most. Politics apart.....

I could stand in front of it for hours!

WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER

AUGUST 13th 2020 JOY GLADSTONE

After drawing up an extensive (and expensive) short (or long) list, I've opted for two Art Deco masterpieces:

1. **THE MIDLAND HOTEL** in Morecambe, Lancashire, to stay there for a few days, and to see Eric Morecambe's statue (again) and find out when and where the bronze statue of Thora Hird will be erected.

I have always been intrigued by the Midland Hotel, and have seen its gradual decline into a seedy seaside dive, then a boarded up wreck, but happily, its dramatic rebirth recently. As a child, our family often visited Morecambe for the seaside attractions, Happy Mount Park with its illuminations, shows on the pier and in the Winter Gardens.

I last visited the Midland at Twixmas 2016 (just for a drink), when it had a gi-normous Christmas tree in its stairway, and saw some of the dramatic interior artworks by Eric Gill.



The Midland is a 4 star iconic Art Deco hotel, built by the London Midland and Scottish (LMS) Railway and first opened on 12th July 1933.

An existing Victorian hotel building of 1848, designed by Edward Paley, was replaced with a more modern structure. The railway company owners of the hotel saw Morecambe as an opportunity to depart from traditional hotel design and selected the architect Oliver Hill to provide "a building of international quality in the modern style". Hill also took a keen interest in furniture, décor, upholstery and costumes and had gained a reputation for his extravagant interiors using such materials as glass, chromium, vitrolite, marble and exotic woods.

The renowned sculptor and engraver, Eric Gill, carved two seahorses for the outside of the building. Inside the building he carved a circular medallion in the ceiling overlooking the staircase. He also designed an incised relief map of the Lake District and the Lancashire coast for a wall of the South Room, which today is called the Eric Gill Suite.



In a state of disrepair, The Midland was forced to close its doors in 1998, and stood derelict and at the mercy of the sea for nearly ten years. In 2006 the Manchester-based property developer, Urban Splash, finally commenced restoring and refurbishing the building.



The Midland re-opened its doors on the 1st June 2008, with beautifully restored existing features, such as the grand cantilevered staircase and a number of artworks by the renowned artist, Eric Gill, and a few contemporary additions, such as the chandelier in the Rotunda bar.

The hotel was used in filming episodes of the TV series *Agatha Christie's Poirot*, starring David Suchet, in 1990, most notably in the episode 'Double Sin'.

While in Morecambe, I would be certain to visit the Wetherspoon's there, named the **Eric Bartholomew** (his real name) and pay my respects to the comedian himself.



Eric Bartholomew
Graham Ibbetson 1999

2. LA PISCINE, ROUBAIX, NEAR LILLE, FRANCE



La Piscine is a museum of art and industry, located in the city of Roubaix near Lille, in northern France, with a notable art deco interior.

This swimming pool was constructed 1927-1932, by the Lille architect, Albert Baert. It closed as a swimming pool in 1985, and was remodelled as a museum by the architect Jean-Paul Philippon, opening in 2000. A modern entrance building, special exhibition space and garden were constructed within the roof-less shell of an adjoining textile factory.

The museum's permanent collection has its origins in 1835, when a collection of fabric samples from the many local textile factories was started. The museum closed with the onset of World War II, and never reopened. From 1990, the collections were displayed in Roubaix's Town Hall, in preparation for the opening of La Piscine in 2000.

La Piscine reopened in 2018, after two-year restoration, which cost €9 million.



Travelling to Roubaix would be by Eurostar from London to Lille, hence ticking off another item from the bucket list, the Channel Tunnel !

The Terracotta Army

Elaine Hansen

If I could travel anywhere in the world to see an art treasure I would love to see the Terracotta Warriors in China.



Several years ago I attended an exhibition in the British Museum in which there were displayed a small number of warriors, some with their horses and chariots.

I was absolutely fascinated by the detail sculpted into these figures. Each had a different hair style and different expression. The horses and chariots were unique, too.



Discovered in 1974, the army was built to protect the first Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, in the Afterlife. It was found in three pits in Lingtong District, Shaanxi near the Emperor's mausoleum.

It is dated 210-209 BCE.

The soldiers are life size but vary in height depending on their status, the tallest being the generals. Uniforms and hairstyles also differ according to rank.

The figures were originally painted with ground precious stones and minerals, for example malachite for green, and iron oxide for red. White was made from ground bones. Unfortunately in the dry climate the colour flaked off in less than 4 minutes.

Originally the men held real weapons. Many of these were looted or rotted away but 40,000 were found including swords, crossbows and lances.

There are 8000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses. Also there are figures of officials, acrobats, strongmen and musicians.



Archer and general in original colours.

Helena



The Hermitage, St Petersburg

The Hermitage founded 1764 when Empress Catherine the Great acquired a substantial art collection. Now the second largest art museum in the world after the Louvre, a complex of 6 palatial buildings including the Winter Palace, former home of the Russian emperors. My fantasy is to see it!

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 - 1669)
at the Hermitage





The Return of the Prodigal Son"
c 1668 (but certainly between 1661- 69)
Oil on canvas
262 x 205cm (8'7" x 6'8")

Huge painting, figures almost life size, would have had great impact. Holland was a Protestant country, churches would not have large altarpieces, unusual to see such a large scale painting with a religious theme. Yet this work was not commissioned, but sprang from Rembrandt's personal resonance in his own life.

Narrative describes the biblical story of the prodigal son who wasted his inheritance. Rembrandt was a Mennonite (a Christian sect which split to form the Amish) and would be familiar with this parable where a man has two sons, one of whom is impatient to inherit his fortune, which once received he squanders and is left destitute. Broken and starving, he returns home in shame, only to find a loving welcome with celebrations from his father instead of the scorn and rejection he expected, but faces resentment and envy from his brother. A story of redemption and forgiveness, Rembrandt had embodied the status of both these brothers during a rollercoaster life of success, fame and recognition, wealth, extravagance, scandals, disapproval and bankruptcy, ultimately dying as a pauper.

* Kenneth Clark: " A picture which those who have seen the original in St Petersburg may be forgiven for claiming as the greatest picture ever painted."

* Van Gogh: " Rembrandt goes so deeply into the mysterious that he says things for which there are no words in any language....a magician."

* Lord C Huygens: " Rembrandt could bring together so much in one human figure and express what is universal."

* Rembrandt had huge empathy for the human condition and the frailties of human nature, recognizing himself as a flawed character. At the cost of suffering he gains psychological insight.

* Main group includes elderly father, returning dishevelled younger son, older son, domestic assistant. Shadowy female figure back left, possibly the mother.

Rembrandt's house was on the edge of the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam, he knew and studied many local faces and invited them to be models.

* Frontal lighting, larger areas of deep colour, use of chiaroscuro contrasts, spiritual atmosphere created.

* Red wrap of father's cloak falls protectively over the broken man, sheltering him with compassion and love, moving gesture of tenderness

* Penitent son in filthy rags, bleeding feet, humble kneeling pose, downcast, evokes our pity

* Older son, richly dressed but stiff unyielding posture, body language with crossed hands says he is closed to accepting the outcast.

* Genuine repentance brings peace between father and son, wonderful message of homecoming and forgiveness.

However, jealousy from the older brother requires healing when the younger sincerely regrets his excesses and wants to come back to the family. He needs redemption too.

One final thought: the theme song to US comedy 'Friends' is sung by the Rembrandts (implying quality)... "I'll be there for you" is another message to take from this amazing painting.

Sheila

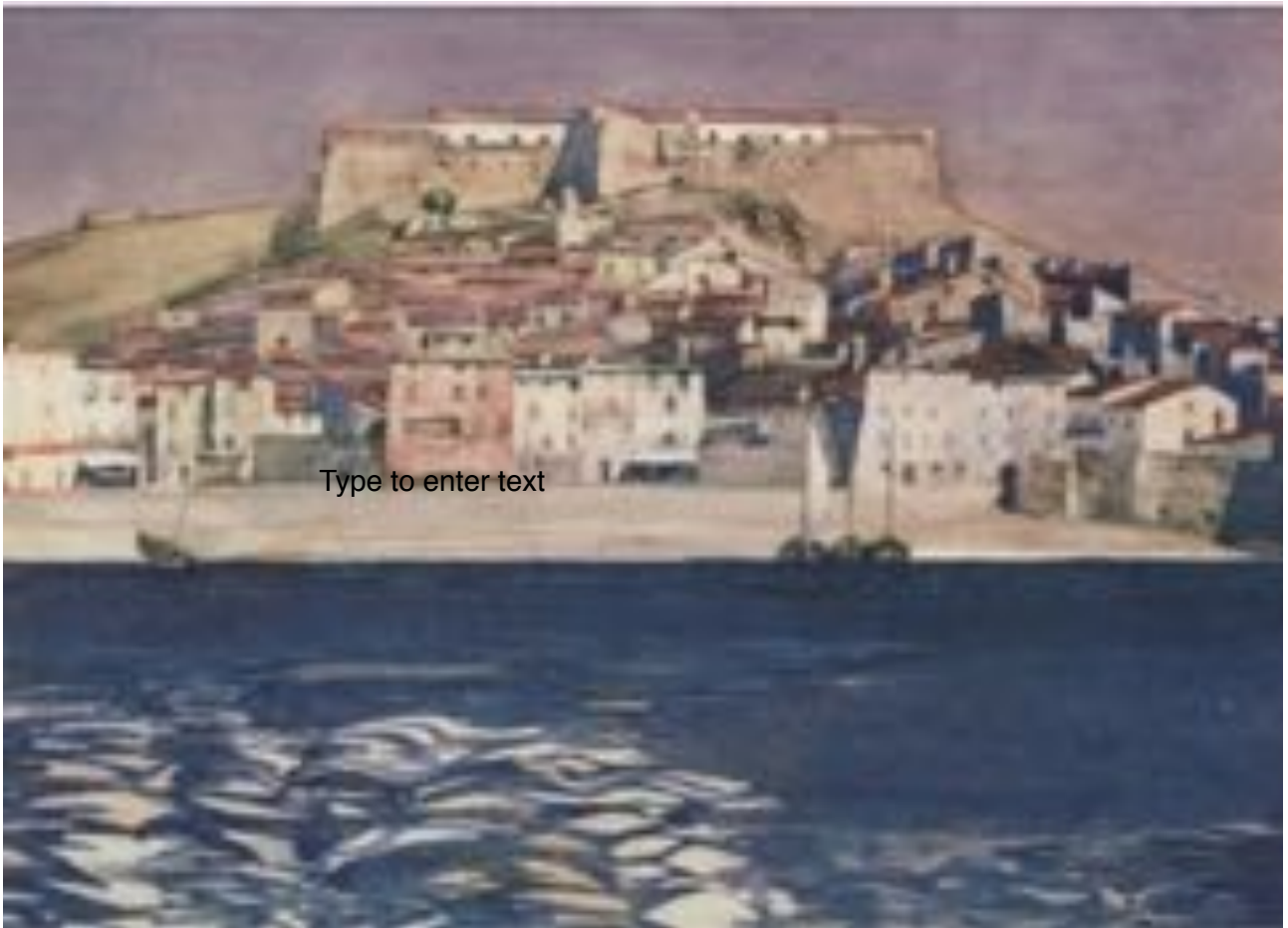


COLLIOURE

The Rennie Macintosh Trail in Roussillon, South of France

The trail features 30 reproduction landscapes showcased in situ where they were painted interspersed by interpretation centres along a route near the French-Spanish border in the Pyrenees. It is a trail through time and space from fortified medieval villages to the roof of the Pyrenees, a place CRM called 'fairyland'

41 watercolours painted from their twilight years in France survive. They are imaginative and free - he could be cavalier with geographical details for the sake of the composition but they were meticulously executed and brilliantly coloured. The landscape watercolours are conceived with a sense of design and an eye for pattern in nature which owes much to his brilliance as an architect and designer.



Collioure painted 1924 owned by University of Chicago



Port Vendres



Southern Town, painted 1924 owned by Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow University



Charles Rennie Mackintosh La Ville européenne 1926