

VRIENDE VAN DIE MICHAELIS-VERSAMELING / ZIHLOBO YA-MICHAELIS COLLECTION

The Friends of the Michaelis Collection was established in 1993.

Its objective is to stimulate active interest in the Collection and the Iziko Old Town House, the Museum dedicated to it.



Photo : Wouter van Warmelo

Left to right : Hans Huysen, Erik Dippenaar, Lente Louw acknowledge the audience at the Old Town House.

MUSIC FROM THE GOLDEN AGE

Full House for Baroque Concert No. 5

On 13 April the Old Town House again hosted a full-house concert. An outstanding success, it was yet another in a series featuring music from the era of the paintings in the Michaelis Collection. This time the main feature on the programme was George Frideric Handel, the German-born British Baroque composer, with two charming though relatively little-known cantatas and a harpsichord suite. Other featured composers were Handel's contemporaries Porpora and Geminiani.

Lente Louw gave a scintillating and heartfelt rendering of one of the latter's choral works which earned her a standing ovation at the end of the concert. In our

photograph are the three musicians; from the left internationally-known cellist and composer Hans Huysen, harpsichord player Erik Dippenaar (well known to audiences in England) and acclaimed soprano Lente Louw. The exquisite hand-built harpsichord was made available by its maker, Willem Kroesbergen. This harpsichord, gilded and painted and a work of art in itself, added splendour and distinction to the setting in the Old Town House. We look forward to holding further concerts in due course. We wish to thank the Iziko Customer Services Management staff who were on duty that evening, as well as the Iziko Department of Institutional Advancement for their assistance in publicising this successful event. HF



Federico Freschi in full voice in front of *Concert of Birds*.

A Summertime Celebration of Song

The beginning of summer 2012 was made memorable at the Old Town House with the performance of two of South Africa's top classical musicians: baritone Federico Freschi and pianist Francois du Toit. A programme of best-loved classics from the world of opera, operetta and musicals ensured that the menu would please a variety of musical palates/palettes. Federico's highly skilled rendition of Rossini's 'Largo al factotum' set the allegro vivace tempo for the evening. The audience shifted from the vocal acrobatics of the aria to the nostalgia of Lehar's 'Dein is mein ganzes Herz

and Rogers & Hammerstein's 'Some enchanted evening.' Francois du Toit added to this lively repertoire with well-spaced interspersings of favourite piano classics. The sumptuous mood extended to the refreshments with Kathleen Quillinan of Pesto Princess contributing the best of her cuisine to the canapés and Ginny Hulse extending the summertime theme into glorious floral arrangements. As noted by the curator Hayden Proud, this "was the first musical event initiated by the new musical events subcommittee of the Friends and it was a spectacular and energetic start!"

SB



TOP: Pierre Soulages' painterly and broad gestures in black oil on a dark brown ground (1970) evoke the same sombre, but rich colours seen in Old Master portraits to its left and right.

BELOW: Trevor Coleman's shaped hard-edge painting (1969) (right) creates a sense of spatial ambiguity, but simultaneously asserts modernism's belief that all paintings are merely objects in a world of objects.

Baroque meets Modern Explained

The seemingly-incongruous insertion of painterly and hard-edge abstract works into the present hanging of the Michaelis Collection has stirred responses ranging from outrage to admiration. An angry letter received from a visitor from Pretoria last year was quite categorical that the Old Town House should be "exclusively hung with Old Masters" and demanded that the modern works be removed. Other visitors have been more complimentary, feeling that the juxtapositions actually provoke much thought and add a more buoyant mood to the interiors. This contrasting of Old Master and contemporary paintings is by no means new. It is a curatorial strategy that has been adopted by a number of galleries dedicated to historical paintings abroad. The Dulwich Picture Gallery in London, for example, has followed this practice in a number of exhibitions. Their strategic insertion of eleven works by the abstract painter Howard Hodgkin alongside their famous Old Master treasures garnered similarly-mixed responses from the British public.

The idea behind our *Baroque meets Modern* exhibition is similar and relatively simple. It seeks to make a number of points about the very nature of paintings in relation to the "art" traditions established by the 17th-century Dutch. The first is the notion of the framed, portable oil painting on canvas as a tradable commodity, which the Dutch almost single-handedly invented both through their passion for acquiring oil paintings for their homes and the establishment of a vibrant international art

market in Amsterdam. Our present-day custom of collecting and showing off our prized paintings in our domestic settings, so taken for granted, actually derives from this. For the Dutch, art was a matter of pride and display in the home, and not the public art museum, which had not yet been fully imagined at that time.

Another point has to do with materiality and value. The persistent notion that an oil painting on canvas has a greater value than a work in any other medium ultimately derives from the Dutch tradition too. Since then, oil paintings have had "value". The oil medium was allegedly "invented" in the Netherlands, and an economic mainstay of agriculture there was also the growing of flax, itself the source of two vital materials in oil paintings; linen (for canvas) and linseed oil (the binder in oil paint). Our modern tradition of painting expressively in thick oil paint on a large scale essentially began with Rembrandt before it began with the Abstract Expressionists. The Dutch were also essentially the first to embrace more democratic and varied subject matter in their art. Theirs was the first stable political democracy to emerge in Europe, and their model of separate provinces functioning in unity was emulated in America. There is therefore much about the Dutch Baroque that is quintessentially modern, even if it might not seem so at first glance. *Baroque meets Modern* is thus more about commonalities than contrasts, and reveals that there is much relevance in our old Collection yet!

HP



Paul Mitchell (left) and Hayden Proud pause to discuss the fine art of framing during a tour of the collection at the Old Town House.

On the Art of the Frame

London framing expert Paul Mitchell's talk to the Combined Friends of the Michaelis Collection and the SA National Gallery this past February was very simply entitled *Looking at Frames*. Given to a near-capacity audience at the Iziko SA Museum, his presentation was filled with richly-illustrated and fascinating insights into the complexities of this always-overlooked subject. Frames can be works of art in themselves and were often specially created by master craftsmen to complement specific works of art. The vicissitudes of history and changes in taste have often led to frames, and the pictures for which they were made, sadly parting company. Our Michaelis Collection is replete with examples of this. In our case, many original Dutch frames have been lost due to their replacement with different ones more typical of 19th century English tastes. This seems hardly surprising given the fact that the Collection was originally put together in Britain by Sir

Hugh Lane. Paul nevertheless greatly admired many of the frames in the Collection and even identified a few which he held to be originals dating from the 17th century. The good news is that Paul will most likely be making return visits to South Africa on a regular basis, and that he has kindly offered to continue providing information and advice on the conservation of our frames. Paul acts as an adviser to many world-class art museums and institutions, and has made up replacement frames in an appropriate historical style for many pictures which have been wholly transformed for the better in the process. We hope to welcome him back again in the near future to give us a special tour of the Collection. You will be kept informed!

HP

■ For further information you can visit Paul's website at www.paulmitchell.co.uk.

Meaningful MAP Workshop



Helen Binckes demonstrates the use of an improvised telescope to learners on the steps of the Old Town House.



Mary Harding learners with their drawings at the Old Town House (left & middle); a happy artist with his work (right).

A MAP workshop (Meaningful Access Projects) was held at the Michaelis Collection on 24 April 2013 for learners from the Mary Harding School for the Intellectually Impaired. It was attended by fifteen Occupation Oriented Phase participants aged from 15 - 18 and two teachers, one of whom was a visitor from Denmark. This MAP visit to the Collection included art facilitation led by Helen Binckes in conjunction with Mariechen Schimmel and Sandra Eastwood, and a related music workshop by Bevil Spence. 'The Marketplace' was our central theme. Visual input, concentrated through 'telescopes', was reinforced through selected viewing and discussions inside the gallery as well as from the balcony and front steps. The group considered portraits and groups in

the Collection before focusing on *The Announcement of the Peace of Münster, market place at Haarlem* by Gillis Rombouts. The variety of buildings and the activities of the people and animals were emphasised, and the functions of the market square in the painting compared to Greenmarket Square today. Pencil drawings were made while sitting on the steps of the Iziko Old Town House. Later, after a session of concentrated auditory input from Bevil Spence using percussion instruments to describe different environments and evoke a range of feelings, pen drawings were made at tables in the foyer.

■ This workshop was sponsored by the Truworths Social Involvement Trust.

Changing of the Guard on the Friends' Council

Since our last Newsletter, there have been several changes to the Friends of the Michaelis Collection Council. Shirley Kellner stood down at the end of 2012 for personal reasons, and Sharon Ballard will leave at the end of May. Sharon is returning to England for a time but promises to keep in touch with us, especially in connection with the educational initiatives that she hopes to encounter in British museums and galleries. After many years devoted service, Colin Stevens has also stood down from the position of Honorary Secretary of the Friends. The Friends are immensely grateful to Colin, Sharon and Shirley for their hard work, generosity and inspiration in making the Friends Council work as well as it does. Thankfully, Colin has agreed to stay on with the Council and remains in charge of our Educational portfolio. In Colin's place as Honorary Secretary, we welcome Rosalind Malandrinos and, as part-time Secretarial Assistant, we also welcome Nobukho Nqala. The Committee is very excited to have their input of new skills and energy for our work.



Dr ROSALIND MALANDRINOS

The Friends' Council warmly welcomes Dr Rosalind Malandrinos who has accepted an invitation to join the Council as Honorary Secretary. Rosalind has been teaching Art History at UCT since 2003 and holds her doctorate in Art History from the University of Parma, Italy. She completed her thesis on the work of the Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rosalind is an ardent educator and is closely involved in local teaching and learning initiatives. She has been a volunteer English teacher at Zonnebloem Primary School as part of the Shine Centre. Her involvement consists of one-on-one sessions with children presenting with learning difficulties in literacy. She has also been a volunteer reader for Tape Aids for the Blind. She is currently involved in a proposal with a private school to include younger students in reading for blind children, as a part of the school's Outreach programme.



NOBUKHO NQABA JOINS OUR TEAM

The Friends' Council warmly welcomes Nobukho Nqaba who joins us in the capacity of part-time Secretarial Assistant. Nobukho was born in 1992, Butterworth, Eastern Cape and completed her undergraduate Fine Arts degree at the Michaelis School of Fine Art in 2012. She is currently doing a Postgraduate Certificate in Arts Teaching at the University of Cape Town. Nobukho works mainly in the medium of photography, fusing performance and staged photography to investigate things that matter especially in the lives of black women in South Africa. She is currently interested in the migration of people from one space to another, taking her own movement within South Africa as a starting point. Her work focuses on the difficulties that are faced by those who move from one city to another in search of greener pastures, such as language barriers and discrimination. She explores strategies for survival such as taking on menial jobs in domestic and garden service, and the problems encountered in the establishment of new homes.



FAREWELL FROM SHARON BALLARD

It has been a unique opportunity for me to be part of the Friends of the Michaelis Collection Council that plays an active and vibrant role in the promotion, restoration and preservation of the Michaelis Collection and the Iziko Old Town House. A considerable amount of energy, art historical expertise, organisational skills and innovation shape the contribution made by the Friends. My farewell message – I leave for Cambridge in the UK at the end of May – is that we continue to support the activities initiated by the Friends' Council. Our reward is always vividly tangible – we get to experience at first hand the unique gift of Sir Max Michaelis. Since gestures of good friendship have far reaching consequences, I would like to thank the Council, FMC members and Iziko staff who have given the gifts of their time, skills and many kindnesses. It had been a notable and memorable encounter. Wishing you all the very best with your future projects and exciting new initiatives.

VISIT BY BELGIAN CONSERVATORS

The first call of a group of some eight painting conservators from Antwerp, Belgium, on a study tour of South Africa, was to the Michaelis Collection. They were shown the Collection by Dr. Hans Franssen, former director. He also arranged for them to meet local conservators Richard Mitchell, Peter Spence and Thomas Rebok, all of whom have treated paintings from the Collection. A fourth local restorer, Angela Zehnder, unfortunately had to attend to urgent business. The two groups were soon engaged in lively discussions, comparing notes on their profession.

New Categories of Membership

For some time now, the Friends have been recognised that there are people whose careers and life-work connects, directly or indirectly, with the concerns of the Friends of the Michaelis Collection. Through the new category of Patrons, we wish to honour those whose work, in different fields, enhances the standing of the Michaelis Collection in our community; and through Affiliated Membership, we seek to encourage young artists and scholars to engage productively with the Collection.

Patrons of the Friends

These are individuals elected unanimously by the Friends' Council to honour their connection with the Michaelis Collection of Dutch and Flemish art. Patrons may be artists who, over a long period of time, in their work or otherwise, have demonstrated high regard for Dutch and Flemish art. Patrons may be scholars who have worked extensively on Dutch and Flemish art. And Patrons may be *ex officio* representatives of institutions or consulates who have demonstrated support of the aims of the Friends of Michaelis. Patrons of the Friends of the Michaelis Collection are exempt from membership fees but enjoy the rights and privileges of Ordinary Members of the Friends of the Michaelis Collection.

Affiliate Members of the Friends

These are individuals elected unanimously by the Friends' Council especially to encourage involvement of young people in the Michaelis Collection of Dutch and Flemish art. Affiliate members are typically early career artists or scholars who have demonstrated an interest in working with the Collection. The tenure of Affiliate members is three years, renewable by election by the Friends' Council. Affiliate Members are exempt from membership fees but enjoy the rights and privileges of Ordinary Members of the Friends of the Michaelis Collection.

In our next issue we hope to announce our new patrons and affiliate members.



Hayden Proud and his students take a quick break from their lecture on writing conservation reports to pose for a class photo.

NEW ANDREW MELLON FOUNDATION-FUNDED COURSE ON CURATORSHIP

Hayden Proud, Curator of Historical Paintings and Sculpture at Iziko Museums, has been running a course component of the new BA Honours in Curatorship degree at UCT. The course, entitled *Practical Communication for Curators*, has focused on the diverse aspects of writing in the curatorial profession, from labeling, text panels, condition reports and catalogue entries to the communicative and design aspects of exhibitions. Iziko has signed an agreement with UCT to jointly run the programme for an initial three years. The Michaelis Collection served as a

launch-pad for the one-semester course option, with six students writing fresh and updated interpretations of a number of paintings for inclusion in a projected new publication on the Collection. Students were also challenged to come up with written proposals to curate small-scale exhibitions along the thematic lines suggested by works in the Collection. They included such themes as the writing of love letters; images of pregnant and sick women, Italianate landscapes, and yet another on the representations of birds in 17th-century Dutch paintings.

REACHING OUT TO CAPE TOWN'S DUTCH AND FLEMISH COMMUNITIES

An attempt to make the Dutch and Flemish communities in Cape Town more aware of the existence of our world-class collection of Netherlandish art from the 17th century – and to provide more support for the Friends – is in progress.

Curator Hayden Proud addressed a group at the S.A. Centre for the Netherlands and Flanders in Pinelands, and his predecessor Hans Franssen took the Nederlandse Club on a Walkabout of the Michaelis Collection.

VISIT OF HENLEY MBA TEAM

Members of the Friends' Council hosted a visit recently from a team of postgraduate MBA students from the Henley Business School in England. The students had recently offered their services for a business research project to Iziko Management. They suggested the topic of assessing relations between Iziko Museums and the three sets of Iziko Friends organisations, namely the Friends

of the South African Museum, the Friends of the South African National Gallery, and the Friends of the Michaelis Collection. The Henley students discussed issues with the Friends' Chairperson and Honorary Secretary, before visiting the Michaelis Collection and enjoying lunch in The Ivy Garden. The Friends hope to have sight of their completed report in due course.

OBITUARIES



Fond memories: Beulah as we all remember her (top); tributes being paid at the garden memorial service (below).

Beulah Lombard

News of the illness and sudden passing of Beulah Lombard (64) of the Ivy Garden Restaurant at the Old Town House was received with great sadness by the Friends, many of whom attended a touching memorial for her on Saturday, 6th April. With the permission of Iziko's CEO Rooksana Omar, a celebration of her life was held in the Old Town House garden that she had always loved and tended so well. Well-known to the journalist fraternity in adjacent Newspaper House, as well as a loyal following of locals and tourists who savoured her cooking and baking, Beulah was a real Cape Town character whose death has left the city "'n bietjie armer", as Die Burger noted in a special tribute to her.

Beulah's famous Scotch Coffee House, which she opened in the 1970s on Greenmarket Square, later moved to St George's Mall before taking up the lease

at the Old Town House about six years ago. It was a Cape Town landmark and a magnet for many in artistic, literary and intellectual circles. Beulah also enjoyed the patronage of important citizens of our city, such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, former President FW de Klerk, Premier Helen Zille and Mayor Patricia de Lille. While at the Old Town House she was a great ambassador for the Michaelis Collection and the Friends, always making a point of pressing her patrons to see and appreciate the Collection. Her snoek paté, bobotie, milk tart, apple pie and lemon meringue pie, the standard favourites on her menu, were always guaranteed to please. The Scotch Coffee House is now no more. Many returning overseas visitors and fans who make the pilgrimage to renew their acquaintance with Beulah are now being sadly turned away. A new tender for the Garden Restaurant at the Old Town House has recently been advertised by Iziko Museums.

Willem Hefer

It is regret that we record the death of Willem Hefer earlier in April after a long period of ill-health. He and his late wife Wendy were stalwart and enthusiastic members of the Friends. In addition,

Willem served as a most able Honorary Treasurer for several years. Coming from a strong business background, he made sure that the books balanced and the Friends' funds were wisely invested.

Upcoming Education Programmes

Filling the Old Town House with Young Friends, Flowers and Fun!



Learning through enjoyment: The new educational focus on flower paintings will set out to repeat the great success of 2012's programme on portraiture.

Groups of learners from three local schools that teach children with special educational needs will visit the Iziko Old Town House/Michaelis Collection on the 10 and 11 June 2013. Children will be making a variety of two and three-dimensional artworks inspired by the specific paintings in the Michaelis collection that depict an array of flowers exquisitely rendered by seventeenth century Dutch artists such as Willem van Aelst. The art works that the children make will be exhibited to the public on a special exhibition at the Artscape Theatre in August celebrating the centenaries

of the Botanical Society and the National Botanical Institute (NBI) at Kirstenbosch. A selection of the works that the children make will later be exhibited in the Iziko Old Town House in an area under the stairwell that will be renovated shortly. This project marks the beginning of regular visits by LSEN learners to the Iziko Old Town House and the Michaelis Collection each term where they will engage with different aspects of the collection. The Project will be managed and co-ordinated through the Frank Joubert Art Centre and the Ibhathane Project.

NEWS & ACTIVITIES FOR FRIENDS & THEIR FRIENDS

Booking arrangements are outlined individually for each event. The council reserves the right to cancel events if insufficient support is indicated. Payment for each event must be made on the occasion.

■ **SATURDAY 15 JUNE 2013**

VISIT TO THE ART COLLECTIONS OF PARLIAMENT

With Lila Komnick

10h30. Fee : R50 payable to the Friends of the Michaelis Collection before entrance on the day.

Lila Komnick, Manager of the Art Collections of Parliament, will introduce a small group of Friends of the Michaelis Collection to the treasures of this little-known public collection.

Numbers have to be limited to 10, in the first instance – Lila kindly says we can arrange a second visit if necessary. For security reasons, intending visitors should send their full names and ID Numbers to Rosalind Malandrinos, Honorary Secretary (rosalindfm7@gmail.com) by 12.00pm on 20th May.

■ A meeting time and place will be announced once the group has been finalised. Visitors will be selected on a first-come-first-served basis.

■ **SATURDAY 13 JULY 2013**

CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE Walkabout with Michael Godby at the Iziko Old Town House

10h30 for 11h00. Fee payable at the door : R30

Michael Godby will lead a Walkabout of the Michaelis Collection pausing at paintings, and other works of art, that, for one reason or another, have caught his attention over the last 12 months.

■ **SATURDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2013**

MUSIC FROM THE GOLDEN AGE VI

Venue : Iziko Old Town House
Programme to be announced.



■ **DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED**

CHRISTOPHER PETER RECREATES THE FLORAL BAROQUE

One of South Africa's top floral artists, Christopher Peter, resident curator of the UCT Irma Stern Museum, will be giving the Friends a special floral demonstration at the Iziko Old Town House/Michaelis Collection. In it he will attempt to recreate the glories of the Dutch Baroque floral still life using real flowers. A collaborator with Andrew Putter on the latter's highly-acclaimed series of indigenous floral still lifes entitled "Flora capensis", Christopher brings with him an inimitable sensibility and style to this fascinating subject. The Friends will also be supporting an educational project for schools on the theme of the floral still life. Watch for an announcement!