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■ CURATOR'S PIECE ■

DR. SYLVIA PINCHES

It has been an exciting and busy period since I last wrote for the Newsletter. The most exciting part was attending the award ceremony for the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust's 'Building of the Year,' in the company of Richard Ellis, project architect for John McAslan and Partners on 10 June at the Savoy. The restoration of 78 and 80 Derngate had been short-listed out of 200 entrants and the judges, under the chairmanship of Lord St. John of Fawsley, had visited in late April. The judging and the award ceremony were filmed by Sky Television and the programme will be screened on the Artsworld channel on 26 June, with some repeats thereafter. A short film of the short-listed buildings was shown at the ceremony and there was some stiff competition. The special award for Conservation was awarded to the Hackney Empire, so Richard and I thought, 'oh, well', but then came an award for 'Restoration' and Richard was called up to receive the two framed certificates – one for McAslan's and one for us. It is on display in the video room in number 82.

This award comes hot on the heels of a Commendation in the regional architecture awards of the Royal Institute of British Architects. These tokens of specialist recognition are a tribute to the fine work done at 78 and 80 Derngate by the architects, John McAslan and Partners, and the main building contractors, William Anelay's of

York, as well as to the vision of the Trustees and supporters who instigated the work and the confidence of those who gave money to enable it to happen. Not to be forgotten, but too numerous to mention, are the many research experts and specialist craftspeople who have all contributed to the achievement.

It is not just the specialists who have been visiting and appreciating what they see. Between March 1 and June 17 we have had practically 7,000 visitors. Many are local people who have been watching our progress with keen interest over the years. Others have come from as far afield as America, Finland, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Many have written the most appreciative and encouraging comments in our Visitors' Book. They have commented not only on the quality of the restoration but also on the quality of the volunteer staff. The knowledge and the enthusiasm of the guides, in particular, really add to the visitors' enjoyment of their tour. We are fortunate in having a keen band of helpers but there is a need for more – please see the separate piece for details.

I was delighted to be invited by Prof. Pamela Robertson to mount a temporary exhibition about the restoration of 78 in the newly refurbished display area above the Mackintosh House at the Hunterian Gallery in Glasgow. This was installed at the end of May and will run until 11 September.

■ FRIENDS EVENING AT 78 ■

The Friends' fund raising evening at 78 in June proved to be very pleasant and successful with a number of the guests being able to see the house in all its glory for the first time.

We were particularly pleased to have our honorary member, Janet Bassett-Lowke, and her party as our chief guests for the event. Janet also signed copies of her biography of her uncle 'Wenman Joseph Bassett-Lowke'.

The evening raised over £320 with the profits going directly to the Trust.

The Friends would like to hear from any members who are able to suggest and/or arrange fund raising events. Please contact Rob Kendall, Chair of the Friends, on 01604 711317 in the first instance.

78 DERNGATE NEWS

■ VOLUNTEERS PLEASE! ■

Running 78 Derngate absorbs an awful lot of man (and woman) hours. We are open six days a week, from 10am until 5pm, and ideally need six volunteers at a time (certainly on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays). That means that if everyone did just one half day a week we would need 72 volunteers every week. Obviously not everyone can commit to a weekly stint so we are fortunate that some people are prepared to come a couple of times (or even more) or do a whole day at a time. As with any group of volunteers, there is a regular core and then a wider circle of 'occasionals'. To increase the core I need to expand the hundred registered volunteers to about one hundred and fifty.

So, what would you be letting yourself in for? First of all, let me stress that we only ask you to offer the amount of help that you can really fit into your life, but that once you have made that commitment, you honour it. Once a week, fortnight, month or even six weeks is fine, as long as I know you are coming! Secondly, do not worry that you will be thrown in at the deep end. There are regular induction training sessions for new volunteers and quarterly meetings to keep everyone informed. You would also start off by 'shadowing' an experienced helper until you felt ready to go solo.

There are three main 'jobs' – receptionist (taking telephone bookings, greeting visitors as they arrive and helping with the smooth running of the day), shop assistant (in charge of ticket and shop sales – the till is not as frightening as it looks!) and guide. The greatest need is for guides, as we need four at a time on busy days, though if people are prepared and willing to do more than one job it makes the rota that much more flexible. Do not feel that you have to be a Mackintosh expert to be a guide. You will be given all the basic knowledge that you need to guide someone round this particular house. Any extra knowledge that you bring about Mackintosh, design and architecture, Bassett-Lowke, model trains or anything else is an added bonus.

Give me a ring, **Sylvia Pinches, on 01604 603408**, to have a chat if you think you might be interested.

■ WAGNER'S VIENNA ■

Before Otto Wagner (1841-1918) became one of the most distinguished Viennese architects and an advocate of functional architecture, he was a Classical Revivalist. He moved from the Neo-Renaissance style to modernity by rejecting traditional brick for steel structures. No other architect has left such a strong imprint on the city.

One of the finest examples of an Art Nouveau style house looking on to the Naschmarkt was created by Wagner in 1898, the Majolika Haus. The house is decorated with colourful patterns on glazed tiles- pink roses, green leaves and blue blossoms adorn the building's weather resistant surface. The window-sills bear matching floral patterns.

Next to the Majolika Haus is another of Otto Wagner's Art Nouveau-style buildings. The six-storey house has a white plaster façade with beautiful golden stucco elements. Between the top row of windows are golden medallions with female heads, designed by Wagner's fellow artist Koloman Moser (1868-1918). Golden palm leaves are spread above the medallions and peacock feathers underneath reach down to the windows below. Above the rounded corner with an iron-and-glass porch are statues of female 'visitors' by Othmar Schimkowitz (1864-1947). Some of the designs are believed to be by Wagner's students who also became well-known architects, such as Josef Maria Olbrich, the Secession building's architect.

In the slightly later building of the Postsparkasse (the post office and savings bank) Wagner implemented all his principles, combining functionalism within an attractive design. The square six-story building was constructed in two stages between 1904 and 1912, has a plain marble and granite façade. The stone panels are fixed to the external walls with metal rivets, which led to the building's nickname of 'a box of nails' among the locals. The solid looking exterior, however, is contrasted by the light interior, covered with a glazed vault.

■ GLASGOW WEEKEND ■

Friday 29 – Sunday 31 October 2004.

Depart Northampton 8am. Friday and return approx. 10pm. Sunday
£185 per person.

The price includes return travel by coach, two night B&B in the 3* Swallow Hotel, Blue Badge Guide and Rennie Mackintosh specialist – Mrs. Audrey Shirra, and all entry fees.

The itinerary includes: Queen's Cross Church, The Hill House, Hunterian Art Gallery, The Lighthouse, House for an Art Lover and Scotland Street School. There will be a chance to view the exterior of the Glasgow School of Art.

Booking details: Ann Mayhew 01234 781648 or 01604 711317.

WAGNER'S VIENNA

Probably one of his better known architectural designs (which I am afraid I did not visit on my recent trip to Vienna) is the Kirche am Steinhof 1905-7 and the Kaiser and Karlsplatz Pavilions, which I did tick off on my round of Wagner buildings.

The Secession Building, by Olbrich (a student of Wagner's as mentioned above) is more than worthy to be included in the astounding buildings of Vienna. It was designed in 1897 as the manifesto of the Secession movement although most of the interior was looted during the last war and the building was left in a desolate state until the passion for Viennese Art Nouveau was rediscovered in the 1970's. Like most 'new' buildings it had its critics at the time who described it as a 'greenhouse' or 'public convenience' and even, more affectionately, the 'golden cabbage' because of its dome on the central roof. However its architecture is summed up in the motto above the door: Der Zeit ihre Kunst. Der Kunst ihre Freiheit – to every age its art, to art its freedom. Certainly one of the most spectacular exhibits within the building is the restored Gustav Klimt Beethoven Frieze created in 1902 which narrates the composer's Ninth Symphony, Ode to Joy. Today the frieze is regarded as one of the masterpieces of Viennese Art Nouveau

The architectural hunt in Vienna can be endless. Certainly one should map out ones time to see the architecture, let alone all the other treasures and

paintings in galleries and museums. Not the least being the recently opened Leopold Museum which has some very striking Josef Hoffmann furniture that is earlier than, and very reminiscent of, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Or some of the Josef Hoffmann fabric designs in the Wiener Werkstatte Museum.

Rob Kendall.



Majolika Haus & Wagner Apartments.



Secession Building. Vienna.

SHAW'S CORNER

George Bernard Shaw had been a guest of the Bassett-Lowkes on a number of occasions while they were at 78 Derngate so the Friends of 78 decided on a reciprocal visit to view his house and oh what a contrast to 78!

Built in 1902 as the 'New Rectory' it was the home of Bernard Shaw from 1906 until his death in 1950. A typical Edwardian house full of an eclectic mix of furniture and lots of 'bits and bobs' filling every corner. The house has been arranged much as it was in Shaw's day, evoking the feeling that the great man had just gone out for the afternoon. There is still a collection of hats inside the front door and in his study is the desk where he would write, and cut and paste the original drafts of his texts, littering the floor with scraps of paper. The Oscar he received for 'Pygmalion' in 1938 is on show and also a Nobel Prize for Literature is displayed at the house for the first time this year.

The Shaw's always kept a flat in London but Ayot St. Lawrence was their main home. Henry and Clara Higgs came up from London as Head Gardener and Cook/Housekeeper. An under-gardener, chauffeur and two maids completed the household. He said of the house, 'People bother me. I came here to hide away from them.' Saying this he also entertained many guests, whilst trying not to give in to the many fans and journalists who would gather outside his gates.

It was a beautiful day for our visit so we were able to stroll in the gardens and view the famous revolving hut 'The Retreat' where Shaw did much of his writing of books, plays and film scripts. Also in the garden is a large bronze statue to 'Saint Joan' whom Shaw admired very much. His ashes are scattered around this area of the garden and around the 'hut' where he died.

He left Shaw's corner to the National Trust but with no money believing that fees from visitors would fund its upkeep. Indeed it was so popular that only one year after Shaw died the police urged the National Trust to convert the large vegetable patch by the garage into a car park. The house justly deserves the popularity that it still enjoys to this day as a memorial to a great man.

Joy Saville

Tamara De Lempicka



Adam and Eve 1931.

Royal Academy of Arts Until 30 August.

Though not to everyone's taste Tamara de Lempicka (1898-1980) has been described as an extraordinary artist, and an Art Deco icon, who enjoyed living an independent and, some say, a colourful way of life. In this exhibition her pictures capture the essence of modernism and the Art Deco flavour in a way unlike any other artist. Her style is instantly recognisable and her paintings reflect the wealth and decadence that was synonymous with Paris of the 20's and 30's.

The Royal Academy of Arts have presented the first major exhibition of her work from 1922 to the early 40's. It brings together some 55 paintings, some rarely seen in public and already the exhibition has confirmed her reputation as one of the most iconic painters of her generation.

Tickets are £7 and £6 concessions and can be pre-booked on 020 7300 8000.

Clare Brittain.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2004

Red House & Hall Place
Wed. August 11 (full)
Details 01604 469281

Northampton Festival
78 Derngate stand,
The Racecourse
August 20 - 22

Kelmscott Manor
Thursday 26 August
£31.50 (limited places)
Details 01604 469281

**Maggie Angeloglou /
speaker**
The Fauves
Thursday 23 Sept. 7.15pm.
Tickets £3
The Guildhall, Northampton
Pre-book 01604 711317

Glasgow Weekend
Friday 29 - Sun 31 October.
£185. Inc. Per person
Details 01234 781648/
01604 711317

78 Derngate Booking Details

Opening times:
March to November.
10am-4pm.
Saturday to Thursday.

£5 adults and
£3.50 concessions.

All visits are guided and
should be
pre-booked on
01604 603407.

NEWSLETTER COPY

Should you wish to contribute to the newsletter articles and/or photographs re 78 please contact:

Rob Kendall

on **01604 711317.**

You may also like to check the Trust web site

www.78derngate.org.uk