

1. Portrait of Charles Napier Hemy

1.1 Falmouth Art Gallery is making an ambitious bid to acquire a masterpiece of world importance.

1.2 The gallery identified the painting as a seminal work that is of great significance in Falmouth's rich artistic heritage, and a top priority for the town's collection. Five years ago staff traced and contacted the owner in Canada asking for first refusal should he be prepared to sell. He has now agreed to sell the painting for a very special reduced price to Falmouth Art Gallery.

1.3 The oil painting, ***Portrait of Charles Napier Hemy RA RWS 1841–1917 by John Singer Sargent RA RWS 1856-1925***, has been offered to the gallery for £285,000, considerably below the market value.

1.4 Both artist and sitter are of great significance to Falmouth, the South West and internationally. Painted in Falmouth, the work is of international importance and has remained the property of the Hemy family, having never been placed on the open market before. Nor has it ever been publicly exhibited since its original showing at the New Gallery, London although it is recorded in *John Singer Sargent – The Later Portraits* by Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray (published for the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art by Yale University Press, 2003).

1.5 At the time of this portrait John Singer Sargent, an American, was acclaimed as the greatest portrait painter working in England since Lawrence, and was the most successful international society portraitist, regularly visiting the United States to fulfil commissions. Charles Napier Hemy was the leading maritime painter of his generation. He was appointed Official Painter to the Royal Yacht Squadron and was a prolific exhibitor at the Royal Academy. He settled in Falmouth in 1881, and produced the majority of his finest works here. He was Falmouth's first Royal Academician.

1.6 The John Singer Sargent portrait of Charles Napier Hemy is the best of four emotionally charged portraits of Sargent's artist friends produced in 1905. In January of that year his friend and neighbour, the painter Robert Brough was fatally injured in a railway disaster at Cudworth in Yorkshire. Sargent rushed to his bedside in a Sheffield hospital and subsequently wrote the introduction to a memorial exhibition of his friend's work. He was deeply moved by the loss of his friend and this prompted the four emotionally charged portraits of artist friends, each inscribed across the top '*to my friend...*'. The portraits are very different from the bravado style of Sargent's society portraits and are painted with an honest simplicity and compassionate warmth that places them firmly among his greatest masterpieces.

1.7 Commented Richard Ormond, the world's leading expert on Sargent:

"I fully support your application for the portrait of Charles Napier Hemy by Sargent. The portrait is a fine example of Sargent's mature portraiture and it represents a major marine artist of great significance to Cornwall. Sargent commands high prices in America, so the price the gallery has managed to negotiate is good value.

The portrait has a force and directness that one often finds in Sargent's pictures of his fellow artists. There is a sense of creative energy and force of character in the way that Hemy's powerfully modelled head emerges from the shadows. He gazes straight out at us with a fierce and penetrating stare, silver hair swept back, bushy eyebrows and full moustache standing out from the warm flesh tones. Two accents of white, the shirt collar and the edge of a handkerchief, are the only highlights to relieve the dark costume, which is toned back so as not to distract attention from the head. This is a strong piece of painting and a memorable characterization.

Sargent painted a portrait of the artist Seymour Lucas in the same year as the Hemy (1905). He clearly admired these fellow Royal Academicians, though both men belonged to an earlier era, and practised a form of art very different to his own. The portraits were a tribute to their achievement and reflected the warm personal relations that Sargent enjoyed with them. Napier Hemy is a wonderful marine painter whose work deserves far wider recognition than it has received in recent years."

1.8 Philip Mould OBE, Art advisor to the House of Lords and Antiques Roadshow expert, considers Sargent's artist friends' portraits a highly significant and fascinating series. He says that with this portrait Sargent is working in a tradition commenced by Van Dyck and continued by Gainsborough, Lawrence and the Pre-Raphaelites, in which the society portrait artist applies his polished technique to express something altogether more intimate and convivial. He considers the portrait to be of world importance.

1.9 According to Hemy family archives John Singer Sargent stayed at Hemy's Falmouth home, Churchfield, for three days. Hemy recalled: *'He made no attempt at drawing, he threw a mass of colour for the forehead, then worked round it and said things in many languages under his breath and seemed thoroughly dissatisfied with everything. On the third day I told him to throw his cigarette away and settle to. He did so for half an hour, working hard, fuming all the time. Then I heard him whistling softly to himself, and watched him swaying his head from side to side while he scrutinised his work. He lit another cigarette, painted the clothes in, put the highlights in the hair, threw in a finishing touch or two, and the thing was done!'*

Hemy's grand-daughter, Margaret Powell, wrote: *'Hemy was impressed. He had seen the portrait come to life in an hour's work. It was the work of a genius, uncompromising, an artist's portrait of an artist. Hemy is seen full-face, austere, in black clothes, the only relief the twinkle in his eyes. When*

Hemy mentioned the bill for his portrait, Sargent asked only for one of Hemy's paintings, so Hemy put several pictures around the studio and Sargent, to his surprise, chose a modest interior scene. Hemy at once protested, pointing out that he had chosen the picture of least value. "Well," said Sargent, "you have a wife and ten children, while I'm not even married".'

1.10 Despite the recession the gallery has already received over £100,000 in conditional support from **The Art Fund, the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund** and from **local supporters**. The gallery has also applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund who will make a decision in December. The gallery would be delighted to receive donations towards the purchase, however small.

2. Renewal of VAQAS Quality Assured Visitor Attraction Status

2.1 The gallery has been awarded Visitor Attraction Quality Assured Status for the second year running after receiving a glowing report from the *Visit Britain* inspector who considers it to be one of the best maintained galleries he has ever visited.

2.2 The inspection was once again very thorough with anonymous site visits and a series of test telephone enquiries.

3. Access improvements

3.1 A safer banister has replaced the one fitted at the top of the stairs leading into the gallery. The previous banister did not run the full length of the stairs making access difficult particularly for the elderly. The work was carried out by local wood craftsman Peter Hopkins.

4. Darwin 200 Celebrations

4.1 *Species*, the second in the series of four 'Darwin 200' celebratory exhibitions funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, proved to be highly popular. It attracted a total of 9,175 visitors with 1,431 educational visits.

4.2 *A Day at the Zoo*, the third exhibition of the series was equally as successful, attracting 9,846 visits with 1,065 educational visits. To date the 'Darwin 200' celebratory exhibitions have attracted over 36,000 visitors, with 3,558 educational visits.

4.3 As part of Falmouth Week and the Heritage Lottery Funded 'Darwin 200' celebrations the gallery staged a week of 'Midsummer Spectacular' activities. The week began with a 'Darwin 200' group taking part in Falmouth walking carnival, this included three 'Unicycling Darwins' and an array of children and families dressed as colourful animals. The gallery ran costume workshops in the weeks leading up to the event where families made 'scaly masks' and 'hairy hoodies'. During the week families also enjoyed a lively 'Boum Boum' African drumming workshop, being serenaded by Radio 4 star

Sally Crabtree, making jungle music maracas, colour safari costumes and penguins on parade.

4.4 The gallery held a special prize-giving evening for the winners of the 'Darwin 200' Big Art Competition. Children from across the country came to the gallery to receive their prizes personally from The Mayor of Falmouth, Cllr. Geoffrey Evans. They were able to see their work professionally framed in the staircase gallery. The children and their families were also treated to a special viewing of paintings by popular Cornish artist John Dyer. John showcased his series of 'Darwin 200' paintings which he had completed during his time as 'Darwin 200' artist in residence at Newquay Zoo. More than 200 children entered the competition, which was organised in collaboration with The John Dyer Gallery, the National Maritime Museum Cornwall and Newquay Zoo. Winners and their families travelled to Falmouth from all over the country.

4.5 The fourth and final 'Darwin 200' celebratory exhibition is now on display. *Expressions in man and animals* features fascinating images of both humans and animals expressing emotions. Included are works by Francis Bacon, Vince Bevan, Sir Peter Blake, Susan Boafo, Robert Bradford, Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones, Sam Dodwell, David Kemp, Suzy Sharpe, Jesse Leroy Smith and many more. The exhibition was opened at the private view on Friday 11 September by Anthony Fagin, who is giving a number of talks to visitors about his recent trip to the Galapagos Islands. The exhibition runs until 7 November.

5. Henry Scott Tuke exhibition

5.1 The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society is currently staging an exhibition in the Permanent Gallery entitled *A celebration of gifts* featuring works from their Tuke collection. Dr Anthony Philips and John F. Tonkin worked in partnership with gallery staff, and a special viewing was held for the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society members. On show is their new acquisition *Carnations* donated by George Bednar.

6. The Art Fund Hugh Stoneman Archive

6.1 The gallery has been commissioned by the distinguished publishers Halstar to produce a full colour catalogue of The Art Fund Hugh Stoneman Archive, which was acquired last year and features major international artists. It is currently at the printing stage and it will be released to coincide with the gallery's next exhibition 'The Master's Master – The Art Fund Hugh Stoneman Archive', which opens on the 14th November 2009.

6.2 During his recent visit to the gallery Christopher Lloyd CVO, trustee of The Art Fund, and former Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, commented: "*It is a pleasure to see works from the Hugh Stoneman archive on view in Falmouth, which has the immediate effect of making Falmouth Art Gallery one of the main repositories of master prints in this country, and will undoubtedly attract further additions of this type to the South West*".

7. Celebrating Cornwall's Stained Glass Heritage

7.1 The large stained glass window designed by Falcare (formerly Mencap) has been approved by the County Conservation Officer, who was enthusiastic about the entire project. It can now be installed in the foyer to replace the large discoloured fibreglass windows.

7.2 It is hoped that if this goes smoothly the grand launch will mark the Heritage Lottery Fund's 15th Birthday on 5th November 2009.

8. Falmouth Art Gallery website

8.1 Improvements to Falmouth Art Gallery's website continue. Families can now access the community gallery showing works produced during our workshops. Now that our collection is online under 'Artist's A to Z' we are creating subject indexes such as 'The Children's illustration archive', 'Local views', 'Art Funded works', 'Masters of photography' etc.

9. Volunteers and work placements

9.1 The gallery has recently welcomed six degree students to our volunteer and work placement training programme – Ken Barrett, Louise Burrows, Joshua Crowles, Amy Rackowski and Jack Andrews. Leicester student Louise Krogsriis has successfully completed an eight week placement as part of her MA course in Museum Studies and University College Falmouth MA student Peter Barclay has completed a two week placement.

10. Acquisitions

10.1 Popular Cornish artist John Dyer has donated a work entitled 'Peckish Penguins, Newquay Zoo' to the town's collection. The painting is one of the most popular of a series of paintings John produced during his time as 'Darwin 200' artist in residence. Accompanying the painting is an amusing photograph by Lisa Chapman of a large penguin admiring John's painting, which is aptly named "The Connoisseur". The photograph suggests that penguins can prove to be quite the art critic when they want to be!

10.2 Through the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Darwin 200' celebrations the gallery has acquired a self portrait by Susan Boafo. The artist took a transparency of herself and placed this temporarily around a jar that contained millions of living, single-celled, aquatic organisms.

10.3 The organisms are attracted to the light passing through the image, needing the light to carry out photosynthesis. As they move towards the varying degrees of light, they form the image, which is then re-photographed

once the original transparency is removed. Susan is a lecturer at University College Falmouth and has exhibited nationally.

10.4 The artist Michael Bickford has donated his oil painting: 'Home waters - His Majesty's survey ship *Beagle* anchored in Falmouth Harbour, dawn 3 October 1836'. The picture was displayed in the exhibition Voyages of Discovery, and was popular with visitors.

11. Training

11.1 Natalie Rigby and Donna Williams attended 'An Introduction to Project Management' course run by Logical Solutions. Natalie Rigby also attended an 'Access 2003 Workshop'.

11.2 Donna Williams and Glyn Winchester attended a workshop entitled 'Working with families of all shapes and sizes' organised by Tate St Ives and Barnados.

11.3 This training was part of the Heritage Lottery Funded programme.