



News Release

Talk on Joseph Wright of Derby, the Tate family of artists, and their connections to Barnsley during The Hidden Art of Barnsley Exhibition

By Elizabeth E Barker, Director of Mead Museum, Amherst College, Massachusetts, USA

On 28th June 2014, The Cooper Gallery, Church Street, Barnsley

Admission Free

11 am until 12.30 pm

(Gallery opening times Monday-Friday 10-4 Saturday 10-3 closed Sunday

Telephone 01226 242905

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“Joseph Wright of Derby (1737-1797) is one of the most admired European artists of the second half of the 18th century. His masterful depictions of artificial light attracted collectors and taste makers as diverse as Catherine the Great of Russia and Josiah Wedgwood.” (Joseph Wright of Derby in Liverpool, Elizabeth E Barker and Alex Kidson, 2007). He was equally proficient in portraiture, history painting and landscape. He painted portraits in various northern towns including Retford, Thorne, Doncaster and Eckington. He established a reputation for effects of artificial light with paintings such as An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump (1768), and An Iron Forge (1772).

Between 1768 and 1771, in Liverpool, Wright lodged with Richard Tate son of Paul Tate, who was a glassmaker all his working life at Gawber Glass Works near Barnsley. In Liverpool, Wright encountered a group of artists and merchants who would become his lifelong friends and patrons. Wright took on Richard Tate’s younger brother William, born at Gawber, as his pupil from about 1769. The Tates became lifelong friends and

agents for Wright. William Tate is recorded as completing Wright's unfinished paintings after his death in 1797.

The Liverpool period was a watershed in Wright's life and work. He changed his methods of design, experimented with new materials, altered his handling of paint and developed new approaches to history painting. Wright records in his letters his (often fraught) engagement with the London art world particularly with the Royal Academy of which he was suspicious and resentful. In fact Wright viewed much of his later work in terms of direct competition with the Academicians. This relationship also affected William Tate his pupil. Wright's account books record financial transactions that do not concern art-he loaned money throughout his life, typically in the form of bonds and mortgages including to the Tates.

Elizabeth E Barker is a distinguished curator of art having jointly curated the exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool in 2007/08 'Joseph Wright of Derby in Liverpool'. This exhibition was also shown in the USA at the Yale Center for British Art in 2008. It contained paintings by Wright's pupil William Tate and in the catalogue Elizabeth provided a mine of information about him and his family and their relationship to Wright, extending previous work by Benedict Nicolson in his biography of Wright. Elizabeth Barker subsequently published Wright's letters which contain very many references to the Tate family. It had been once thought that William Tate and his brother Richard Tate, an amateur artist, were born in Liverpool but recent research has shown that in fact their parents lived at Gawber Hall, Barnsley and their mother came from Cawthorne, near Barnsley. Their father was a glassmaker at Gawber Glass Works.

Hugh Polehampton chair of Barnsley Art on Your Doorstep said, "We are privileged to be having a talk from Elizabeth Barker as she knows more about the link between Joseph Wright of Derby and the Tates than any other professional." There is a drawing of a glasshouse by Joseph Wright of Derby in the Hidden Art of Barnsley exhibition and three portraits by William Tate.

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the **Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)** aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported over 36,000 projects with more than £6bn across the UK including £440m to over 3,100 projects in Yorkshire & the Humber alone.

www.hlf.org.uk.

BAYD is a voluntary organization. As part of the Hidden Art Project to date, BAYD has worked with over 30 schools and colleges and youth groups. The group have given talks to local organizations and a local student has made a twenty minute film portraying aspects of the artists' lives. The group have run four competitions involving young

people and the winning entries will be on display at the exhibition, as will the creation of a yurt hung with textiles made by Barnsley students.

A series of talks and workshops runs in conjunction with the exhibition.

Please see our website at

<http://www.barnsleyartonyourdoorstep.org.uk>

and Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/Barnsleyartonyourdoorstep>

Dr Elizabeth E. Barker is currently Director of the Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Massachusetts, USA and Lecturer in the History of Art. She specializes in British drawings and paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries and is researching Joseph Wright of Derby whose tenebrist paintings formed the subject of her doctoral dissertation. She is very much interested in making museums more inclusive. She has written many articles, reviews, essays and catalogues with many on Joseph Wright of Derby.