
PRESS RELEASE

Graeme Willson: A Memorial Retrospective at Ilkley Manor House Gallery

Friday 4th October - Sunday 27th October | Open weekly, Wednesday to Sunday 11am - 4pm

The Manor House is thrilled to be hosting a retrospective exhibition to celebrate the life's work of the renowned artist, the late Graeme Willson. There will be works on display that cover the whole of Willson's extraordinary artistic career, including studio, ecclesiastical and public art. Pieces for the exhibition will be chosen by Graeme Willson's family Lucy Wright and Jacob Willson, who will be showcasing work from family, friends and private collections and most of the works will be for sale.

"It will be inspiring and moving; it will be one of the most stimulating exhibitions that the Manor House has hosted." Sarah Thomas, Chair Ilkley Manor House Trust

The Ilkley artist Graeme Willson graduated from Reading University in 1973 with a degree in Fine Art. He then pursued a career as an academic and lecturer at North Lindsey College, York University, Chelsea College, the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, Bretton Hall College and the renowned Bradford School of Art from which he retired in 2011, to devote his time to painting.

Not only an academic and lecturer, Willson was a dedicated practitioner. He had a distinguished and award-winning career as an artist, beginning with winning the Arts Council's competition, Art into Landscape, at the Serpentine Gallery in London and most notably the Royal Academy Award for Mural Painting for his work at St. Paul's Church in Thamesmead in 1984.

His best-known work includes his three altarpiece paintings and a ceiling piece for the Yorkshire Volunteers' Regimental Chapel at York Minster, and his mural Cornucopia for Leeds Corn Exchange which subsequently received the Leeds Award for Architecture and the Environment. Additional public art for Leeds included Inner City Redevelopment on Cookridge Street, and a mural on Oddy Locks called Fragments from the Post Industrial State, which is currently under threat from a potential development; a campaign is underway to save them. Willson was also recognised for his stained-glass, which he produced in partnership with the Martin Johnson Workshop in York.

Examples of his work in watercolour were acquired by Leeds City Art Galleries for their permanent collection. A successful portrait painter, Willson's distinguished sitters included Sir John Harvey-Jones, Lord Chelmer and Sir William Taylor; and his work has been included in exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery in London. Willson was a versatile artist whose work covered a broad range of themes human relationships, often expressing ambience through form and colour. References to classical mythology or Renaissance imagery were often subtly interwoven and reworked to express the human form and mood.

In 1995 Graeme was approached by the firm Fletcher Joseph to work with them on a new Morrison's supermarket in Darlington. This involved the design and execution of a frieze on the theme of railways. Many more commissions followed and there are a total of 15 works in Morrisons supermarkets around the country, which include stained glass as well as mural works.

Graeme Willson died in October 2018 from cancer, he is survived by his children Jacob and Lucy, and sisters Christine and Rosemary. A percentage of proceeds from the exhibition will be donated to the charities Candlelighters and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

continued overleaf...



“This will be one of the most important art exhibitions happening locally in 2019, it will celebrate and pay homage to an artist of great and diverse talent.” said Dr Patrick Eyres, art historian and academic and Director of the New Arcadian Press.

End

Editor's notes

Image credits Laura Mate (except the image of the mural, Cornucopia, to which the credit is unknown)

The Manor House Museum and Gallery is a diverse and thriving cultural centre for the benefit of the whole town of Ilkley and its surrounding area, improving the cultural, heritage and educational life of the town.

Enquiries: 01943 607030 admin@ilkleymanorhouse.org
Address: Ilkley Manor House, Castle Yard, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 9DT

Exhibition runs weekly Wednesday to Sunday from Friday 4th October to Sunday 27th October, 11am – 4pm.

Private View Thursday 3rd October 2019, 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Catalogue Credits: Lucy Wright and Jacob Willson and Dr Patrick Eyres, art historian and academic and Director of the New Arcadian Press.

A speech paying tribute to Graeme Willson will be made by Howard Eaglestone at 7pm. Howard Eaglestone, a former colleague of Graeme Willson, has over 30 years' experience teaching Art. He was Head of Painting on BA Hons Fine Art & Design at Bradford College, visiting Professor on the MA Painting programmes at The Universidad del Pais Vasco, Bilbao, Academia de Arte in Bucharest and Cyprus College of Art.

Opening event photographs Thursday 3rd October 2019, 6.30pm to 8.30pm

Interview opportunities Thursday 3rd October 2019, from 11am.

For any queries or additional information please contact the exhibition organiser.
Clare Lamkin Email creative.event.producer@gmail.com Mobile 07849 075488



Painting 'Untitled 15'



Painting 'Elegy for the Temple of Ceres'



Painting 'The Heart Has its Reasons'



Painting 'Untitled 71'



Painting 'Mediterranean Scene'



Mural 'Cornucopia', Leeds city centre