

# The Intelligent Instinct

## - an exhibition of the works of Jane McAdam Freud

*Report by Henry Wyatt*

On Friday 17th January 2020 the Friends sponsored the preview of the works of Jane McAdam Freud now showing until 20th April at the museum in the Manor House. The guest of honour was the Worshipful the Mayor of Harrow, Cllr Nitin Parekh who was introduced by the Museum's curator, Stacey Bagdi. Ms. Bagdi then introduced the artist who both give an overview of the themes of her work and then conducted us in groups in a tour of the works themselves.



The exhibition consists of a series of sculptures formed of found materials which she, together with Ms. Bagdi, has placed carefully in various locations within the Manor House. These works of art originally made within her studio have therefore acquired a sense of specificity to the site, not least because Ms. Bagdi offered up items from the Museum's collection which complements Ms. McAdam Freud's work.

The materials consist of found objects such as old chests, vehicle towbars and dress shop mannequins which the artist has married up with the detritus of her own studio to create works which have both strong tactile qualities and are visually provoking. It was clear from the reactions of those in attendance that the works have succeeded in stimulating the imagination by virtue of the spontaneous comments, observations and linkages which the audience made.

The exhibition is titled 'The Intelligent Instinct' and this is indeed appropriate. Instincts are formed by that which we observe subliminally and then translate into knowledge. If an artist creates a work which resonates with our earlier experiences then we enjoy a fuller understanding of that which we previously knew only instinctively. It is quite clear that Ms. McAdam Freud's work is infused by the teachings of Sigmund Freud, her great grandfather, but these ideas are expressed in this strong visual and tactile manner.

There are about thirty pieces in all and the artist appends her personal comments on storyboards which I suggest you should read whilst viewing. I found several of the pieces particularly interesting.

Special Exhibitions Room - *(photo on page 12)* Crinoline Cage 2018 - This consists of a full size dress shop mannequin made of steel to which is affixed a small hammer. The hammer is located on the cage in such a way that it seems



to suggest a phallus. It stands in front of a red tapestry, laced with silver filigree, from the museum collection. In the right light that silver nicely enhances the image. This resonated with me but it took a little while to recall the illustration of the gold breast plate on Germaine Greer's book 'The Female Eunuch'. The artist has therefore skilfully produced a strong feminist statement which nonetheless creeps up on you subtly.

Victorian Room - (*right below*) Treasure 2017 - This is an old traveller's chest standing on its end to which the artist has placed a curved piece of steel, suggestive of a smile. I found this so very appealing that I really just had to touch the box and feel the lumps on the head.

Great Hall - It's not about us, 2018 - This is the largest piece of the show and consists of a triptych made of armature chicken wire together with stainless steel coat hangers, brass paper fasteners, an artist's smock and other bits and pieces. It hangs nicely and fills one wall of the Great Hall. Mediaeval triptychs were, of course, devotional objects and the location of this piece in the Great Hall is therefore entirely appropriate. A few months ago I visited the National Gallery where I saw a triptych by Chris Ofili which similarly filled the space allocated so well.



In reviewing this exhibition I have only made mention of those items to which I felt a personal affinity. There are many others which I am sure will stimulate you too. I suggest that those in attendance at the preview go back again so that you can enjoy the works in a more considered way. I did this myself and whilst there I saw a group of young schoolchildren also enjoying what they saw. I mention this because, although I have touched on some adult themes, this is still an exhibition appropriate for young people to see.

The exhibition finished on 20th April 2020. (*Three more photos on next page*).



*On this page are three more exhibits from the exhibition - all photographs by Franziska Trodd*

*Cans: These cans on a spring make an interesting vertical composition and are paired with the horizontal composition of the larder shelves on which the museums old food tins sit.*



*Happy Face: Everyone likes to see a happy face. This part object also has a face of sorts or is it that we see faces in everything.*



*Sculpture on Easel - Bear: Instead of a canvas or sketchpad we find a 3D wired to an easel. The combination takes on both a sinister and humorous effect but the intention is to question 'what is art'? The doll is from the museum's collection which might be considered an antique by certain collectors. After all we might also ask - what is an antique?*