INSIGHT Exhibition Review

Kate West quarterly review of the local Art Scene

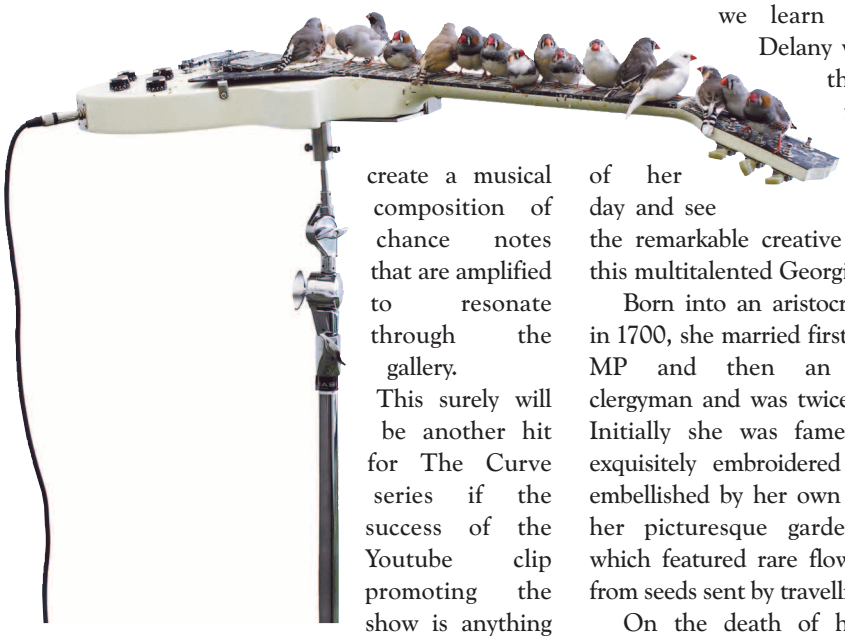
The Curve
Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
Until 23rd May

French contemporary artist Céleste Boursier-Mougenot takes on the latest commission in this always exciting series of installations in The Curve space in the Barbican Centre. Trained as a musician and working formerly as a composer, Boursier-Mougenot has been creating gallery installations since the early 90s. He works in a variety of media and likes to use everyday objects combining the audible and the visual to create random soundscapes.

For his first UK exhibition Boursier-Mougenot has transformed The Curve space into a walkthrough aviary inhabited by 40 zebra finches. These enchanting birds find themselves in an unusual landscape - bass guitars and ***Gibson Les Paul*** electric guitars stand in as perches and cymbals act as feeders holding water and seeds. As the finches go about their routine activities, alighting on the strings of a guitar or pecking a cymbal, they unwittingly create a musical composition of chance notes that are amplified to resonate through the gallery.

This surely will be another hit for The Curve series if the success of the Youtube clip promoting the show is anything to go by - it has already had over 400,000 hits at the time of writing. Go online and see the birds doing their thing like ornithological Nigel Tufnels by all means, but don't forget to get down to The Curve and see them play live.

The Curve
Level G
Barbican Centre
Daily 11am - 8pm
Every Thurs LATE until 10pm
Admission: Free



The Curve
CÉLESTE BOURSIER-MOUGENOT
Photograph: from here to ear (detail), 2007
Photograph : Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
© Céleste Boursier-Mougenot. Courtesy Galerie Xippas

Sir John Soane's Museum
Portrait of Mrs Delany (1700 - 1788) by John Opie
Picture courtesy National Portrait Gallery

Sir John Soane's Museum
Mrs Delany and Her Circle
Until 1st May

Mary Delany may not be a well-remembered name today but in the 18th century she was at the heart of cultural and political life in England and Ireland and numbered Handel, Swift, Pope and Walpole among her friends. In this gorgeous exhibition we learn why Mrs Delany was one of the most famous women of her day and see the remarkable creative output of this multitalented Georgian lady.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1700, she married first a Cornish MP and then an Anglican clergyman and was twice widowed. Initially she was famed for her exquisitely embroidered garments, embellished by her own hand, and her picturesque garden designs which featured rare flowers grown from seeds sent by travelling friends.

On the death of her second husband, Mrs Delany pursued her interest in botany and in so doing invented a new art form - the botanical paper collage. Ever fashionable, Mrs Delany's work occupied the juncture where the emerging field of the natural sciences met the Georgian fascination with handicrafts. Her collages, which she called "paper mosaicks", were not only much admired by George III, who instructed Kew Gardens to send her floral specimens, but also had the support of eminent botanists who praised their scientific accuracy.

This new exhibition brings many examples of those paper collages together with embroidery, textiles, drawings and manuscripts to illustrate the varied nature of Mrs Delany's accomplishments and justifiably bring this extraordinary woman to our attention once more.

Sir John Soane's Museum
13 Lincoln's Inn Fields WC2
Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 5pm
First Tuesday of the month 6pm - 9m
Admission: Free

British Museum

Kingdom of Ife
Sculptures from West Africa
Until 6th June

Bringing together nearly 100 outstanding pieces of West African sculpture, this exhibition tells the story of the legendary city of Ife in what is now modern Nigeria. This wealthy and cosmopolitan city-state flourished between the 12th and 15th centuries and is still regarded by the Yoruba people to be their spiritual heartland. The sculptures on show here are drawn from the magnificent collections in Nigeria and represent some of the highest achievement in African art both in terms of their technical accomplishment and their powerful aesthetic appeal.

British Museum
Gt. Russell Street WC2
Sun - Wed 10am - 5.30pm
Thurs and Fri 10am - 8.30 pm
Admission : £8 and a range of concessions

Imperial War Museum

The Ministry of Food
Until 3rd January 2011

Cutting down waste and cooking with local seasonal ingredients sound like very modern culinary preoccupations but they were a government enforced way of life for everyone in wartime Britain. In this new major exhibition the Imperial War Museum marks the 70 year anniversary of the introduction of food rationing by showing how the British public adapted to a life dictated by food shortages.

Visitors will be able to see a wartime greenhouse, a grocer's shop and a typical 1940s kitchen along with economical, if not particularly appetizing, recipes such as Woolton Pie which were necessarily long on vegetables and short on meat. Along with the familiar posters that exhorted the public to ***Dig for Victory*** and ***Eat More Greens***, The Ministry of Food introduced cartoon characters like ***Doctor Carrot*** and ***Potato Pete*** to encourage people to fill up on plentiful root vegetables. Lawns and window boxes were transformed into vegetable plots and the nutritionist Marguerite Patten broadcasted cooking tips to help the housewives of Britain make the most of the rations. The exhibition also highlights how agricultural production was dramatically increased to feed the nation, the contribution of the Women's Land Army and the perilous role of the Merchant Navy.

This fascinating and comprehensive exhibition follows the fourteen year long story of rationing beyond 1945, through the hardships of post-war austerity to the day the ration books could be finally torn up on the 4th July 1954.

Imperial War Museum
Lambeth Road SE1
Daily 10am - 6pm
Admission: £4.95/ Children £2.50/ Concessions £3.95

We Want Your Kitchen Waste, John M Gilroy, IWM PST14742
Over 1 million householders were feeding hens with kitchen waste to provide their own eggs in 1943.
Copyright Owner: © Imperial War Museum

What's On March – June

Barbican Art Gallery
Ron Arad
Restless
Until 16th May

The Courtauld Gallery
Michelangelo's Dream
Until 16th May

Design Museum
Shad Thames SE1
Urban Africa
a photographic journey by David Adjaye
Opens 31st March

Estorick Collection
Canonbury Square N1
On the Move: Visualising Movement
Until 18th April

Geffrye Museum
A Garden Within Doors
Plants and Flowers in the Home
Opens 30th March

Guildhall Art Gallery
London Paintings
from the City's Permanent Collection
Until 11th April

Hunterian Museum
Lincoln's Inn Fields
Curious: The Craft of Microscopy
Until 3rd July

National Gallery
Painting History
Delaroche and Lady Jane Grey
Until 23rd May

Royal Academy of Arts
The Real Van Gogh
The Artist and his Letters
Until 18th April

Tate Modern
Van Doesburg and the
International Avant-Garde:
Constructing a New World
Until 16th May