Larkin New Eyes Each Year – Exhibition Texts

To write

* Handlist
* Extracts for Presser for Ben
* Ellie Blog text about documentaries
  + Forthcoming Sky Arts and BBC 4

"Jazz is a parallel case in poetry; one's enthusiasm starts in one's adolescence and never seems to flag. In many ways I prefer it to poetry. I listen to it while dressing in the morning, turning to it in a way I should turn to poetry if I were living my life according to Vernon Watkins's standards. What did Baudelaire say, man can live a week without bread but not a day without poetry. You might say I can live a week without poetry but not a day without jazz." The Guardian 20:05:65

GET NOTES FROM PHONE FOR HANDLIST

ntro to make clear that this is not a book on the wall - biogs and poems are available in the library and at the shop

few things in life bring me more pleasure than jazz (FIND IT)

Can go a week without poetry not a day without jazz

History of library

Good summary of history of library TO EDIT http://catalogue.hullhistorycentre.org.uk/catalogue/U-LIB?tab=description

Handlist notes

Factoids from Library/Larkin flyer.

Quote about knowing someone from their books

All the patterns are from textiles found in the house when it was cleared after Monica died

There are no replicas - every object is domestic and authentic

The relics of a life lived in colour but from an era often represented in black and white

All of the photos were either taken by Larkin or found in his house.

Resisted writing about things... there are thousands of books about him and his life, his relationships as much as his work.

Curating, like writing poetry, is a process of elision. Ideas for creative interpretation and display grow fast, but like gardens, they benefit from weeding and pruning.

Larkin in numbers. Xxxx letters. Xxxx photographs.xxxx books. Xxxx records. In HHC Xxxx personal objects in care of PLS. Other materials of interest to scholars elsewhere in Oxford, London and overseas. This is a fraction...

Make your own mind up.

Sent from my iPhone

Welcome quote from Michelle about libraries being places of academic, intellectual and creative freedom

Introductory Contextual statement TO WRITE LAST along the lines of…The objects in this exhibition, that now belong to the PLS and the HHC (is this true?), were once owned by Philip Larkin or his long term partner Monica Jones…..The process of curating an exhibition, rather like that of writing poetry, is one of elision. Philip Larkin said that poetry was (find quote about eliciting emotion rather than being literal). In 1947 Larkin wrote to his friend, the artist Jim Sutton, that he was working on a novel about an artist and wanted to create an effect on ‘no words…only the pure vision’ (Ref Bradford p75) There have been many words written about Philip Larkin, and we have included many of them in this exhibition. However, we hope that the juxtaposition of objects and books as objects in this exhibition will prompt each visitor to consider Philip Larkin with New Eyes according to their ow thoughts, feelings and memories…. our intention is not to judge but to encourage people to make up their own minds about this contradictory character.

QUOTE REFERENCES FROM

https://www.ribaj.com/culture/philip-larkin-and-the-architects

Larkin was no more a modernist in his architectural tastes than he was in his verse, demotic language aside. Motion remarks:  ‘At every point in the design, Larkin had demanded that the merely functional be softened by his instinct for the homely, so that a place for study also became a place for pleasure. “Everyone looks at the wallpaper I’ve chosen,” he told Egerton, “and scoffs ‘domestic’, or more specifically ‘bedroom’.”’  He liked bright colours, using colour-coding of subject matter as part of the library’s decorative scheme.

‘Stage 2 of the library is provisionally fixed for 1966-8 at a cost of £600,000! I doubt both these figures. Fortunately I had nothing to do with them… This reminds me that I found Sir Leslie Martin & his italianate side-kick St John Wilson sneaking into the Library at 6.15 pm yesterday so I gave them a brief tour. It was rather embarrassing, like showing two conscientious objectors round the Imperial War Museum. The only thing they fell on with glad little cries was an exhibition of filthy modern paintings on the landing. Of course, they didn’t criticise anything: it was just their miserable silence that underlined their response, or lack of it. It left me feeling like the proprietor of a Victorian music hall. Not that I mind that in theory – but for an hour or two it did seem rather garish, those reds & pinks & blues, & my room appeared like the madam’s room in a high class knocking-shop… The Library will be the swansong of the old style. After this it will be all Danish butter-factories.’

Larkin himself remarked that ‘Librarians need to learn a new skill, the art of drawing up a brief for an architect.’ Untypically, he appealed for help, writing to SCONUL, (Society of College, National and University Libraries), asking them to publish a universal brief. ‘I make this proposal because I find myself engaged on the second major library building of my life without ever having been told how to draw up a brief or even learning what it is an architect needs to know before commencing work. If I am the only person in this predicament, then I gladly withdraw the suggestion but somehow I feel I am not.’

In a later essay, Moon cites Larkin’s own description of his relationship with his architects, thus:

“[It] was based on a card game I used to play when I was young – I’ve forgotten what it was called – but each player has a stopping card which can stop the game at any point. If I play the game of professional expertise, librarianship in other words, then the other two have got to say, all right, let’s go back to the beginning and start again. I’m not quite sure which card the architects should choose as their own – good architecture perhaps, by which I mean a strong streak of aesthetic rightness coupled with functional efficiency; and certainly the Buildings Officer has got to speak for his university on costs… We all try to play our stoppers from time to time.’

INTRODUCTION

All a reader has a right to be told is what other work a writer has published; the author who supplies more can be suspected of vanity, the reader who expects more of illegitimate curiosity – or else of that well-known attitude, tell me who it’s by and I’ll tell you it it’s any good

(Letter to The Listener October 15 1953 from Philip Larkin Queen’s University, Belfast.)

Letters cabinet

Numbers and Letters (STATEMENTS ON THE QUANTITY)

Between December 1946 and April 1984 Philip Larkin wrote to Monica Jones more than 1421 letters and 521 postcards: about 7500 pages of this correspondence survive.

Relationships

KINGSLEY AMIS, ROBERT CONQUEST, COLIN GUNNER (THE UNSAVOURY STUFF)

WINIFRED DAWSON

at the same time as Monica – note of their meeting in Belfast.

The girls in the library knew about Monica, but she was kept is a separate compartment,…Now I knew she was over from Leicester for the weekend, but I was kept well away from her. To meet by chance left the three of us tongue-tied…

I admit also that I should have introduced you: I felt like an early Xtian who feels it hardly necessary to introduce a pair of lions that have met over his recumbent body. (About Larkin 31 p 7)

MONICA/MAEVE About love, if I could have said last September, ‘I’m in love with Maeve, goodbye, I wd: as it was, I couldn’t – perhaps too fond of you, perhaps not fond enough of her, perhaps just too cowardly all round.

(About Larkin 31 p 26 quoted from Letters to Monica)

BETTY MACKERETH

‘Loaf-haired secretary’

He did like large, well- built ladies…the sort of lady you get in the thermal underwear catalogues (About Larkin 31 p26)

ON COLOUR AND PATTERN

See James Booth, LA&L, page 242, on colour-coded stacks –

On 14 Jun 2017, at 5:08 pm, Richard G Heseltine <[R.G.Heseltine@hull.ac.uk](mailto:R.G.Heseltine@hull.ac.uk)> wrote:

Graham

Larkin mention in his account of the Library ('A Lifted

Study-Storehouse') that 'Use had been made of individualizing (sic) colours for different subject areas.'  Hugh Pearman, in his 2011 article in the Riba Journal on Larkin and architects, also refers to this: 'He [Larkin] liked bright colours, using colour-coding of subject matter as part of the library's decorative scheme.'  Larkin seems to be referring to this in his letter to Monica dated 16 March 1960 (i.e. 'reds & pinks & blues), quoted by Pearman, which I've always found very amusing - I ' ....This reminds me that I found Sir Leslie Martin & his italianate side-kick St John Wilson sneaking into the Library at 6.15 pm yesterday so I gave them a brief tour. It was rather embarrassing, like showing two conscientious objectors round the Imperial War Museum. The only thing they fell on with glad little cries was an exhibition of filthy modern paintings on the landing. Of course, they didn't criticise anything: it was just their miserable silence that underlined their response, or lack of it. It left me feeling like the proprietor of a Victorian music hall. Not that I mind that in theory - but for an hour or two it did seem rather garish, those reds & pinks & blues, & my room appeared like the madam's room in a high class knocking-shop...The Library will be the swansong of the old style. After this it will be all Danish butter-factories."

The reference might, of course, be to something else.  What I don't know for sure is where the colours were exactly. I assume it must have been the shelf ends, either painted as a whole or just the range indicators (the signs on the shelf ends). A practical librarian such as Larkin would not, I think, have painted the actual shelf ends as a whole, because it would limit the flexibility to move stock around - if English is blue and Chemistry is pink, and you gradually acquire more English books than Chemistry books, you can't take over more of the pink shelves to accommodate them, whereas range indicators can be changed.

I imagine you could take this as an inspiration for the exhibition and interpret freely.  One person you might ask who would know is Betty Mackereth, or possibly Geoff Weston.

I hope that's slightly helpful.

Best

Richard

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Thanks, Richard. It's just that the design of the exhibition relies a lot on shelf ends and info that can be put on them.  I'm trying to anchor the idea into Larkin's own vision.