

Press Release Frank Brangwyn Exhibition:

*“An artist’s function is everything: he must be able to turn his hand to everything, for his mission is to decorate life...”* – Frank Brangwyn, 1934

This year marks the centenary since Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) – internationally acclaimed artist, craftsman and designer – worked on the commission of sixteen murals for Christ’s Hospital Chapel. Born in Bruges, but of Anglo-Welsh descent, he trained with the famous Arts and Crafts maker William Morris. Brangwyn worked prolifically across all media, in a career that spanned some 70 years, before ending his days locally in Ditchling, Sussex.

Brangwyn’s series of large, vibrant panels depict, just as the Headmaster at the time requested, *‘The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, beginning with the Acts of the Apostles and leading to the Conversion of our own Islands and Foreign Missionary Work’*. The intention was to inspire and inform charity children to go out into the world and do good just as the saints and martyrs had done. Created during the time of the First World War, the reality was so much more than this: The works show not only Brangwyn’s love of colour, decoration and artistic influences, but his humour and social empathy with the common man – appealing of course to his humble young audience.

The magnificent panels, created in egg-tempera paint between 1912 and 1923, tell the story of St Peter speaking to the disciples and follow chronologically the various martyrdoms and conversions of saints around the world before returning to Britain and showing the Christian enlightenment on our own southern shores.

However, unknown and unseen to many are the seven chalk preparatory drawings, known as cartoons. Approximately half life-size, these framed sketches have remained in storage since they were last exhibited in London in 1924 and given by Brangwyn to Christ’s Hospital in 1930.

In celebrating Horsham District’s Year of Culture 2019, April will see the launch of its exhibition, *Brangwyn’s Cartoons at Christ’s Hospital*, which displays these hidden treasures now that they have been conserved and stabilised for future generations to enjoy. Museum Curator, Laura Kidner, says *“this exhibition reveals the splendour of the cartoons to new audiences from the Horsham District and beyond. To see them in the context of the mural sequence is to understand and fully appreciate the grand scale of Brangwyn’s achievement”*.

The conservation process, as carried out by a Sussex based Paper Conservator and Framer, involved careful surface cleaning of the vulnerable cartoons, their original mounts, frames and old glass as well as interleaving acid-free barrier board.

This pioneering exhibition invites comparison between the figurative, subtle sketches and the rich and decorative murals. It inevitably encourages fresh interpretation and discussion about Brangwyn’s renowned work and career. Important loans from private collections referencing the CH designs alongside original photos and letters from Brangwyn and a film about his later life serve to enrich the display.

Laura Kidner said: *"Let's not forget that Brangwyn never intended these cartoons drawings to be revered in the same way as his finished murals. They do, however, offer insight into Brangwyn's working practices and how he interpreted and changed his designs and subjects within the process of making. It is remarkable how they have survived so well."*

*Brangwyn's Cartoons at Christ's Hospital* runs from 23 April 2019 – 27 April 2020 and will be open to the public, pupils and staff free of charge on Tuesdays and Thursdays by arrangement (as we are a school site).

There will also be a series of public mural and cartoon exhibition talks and tours, with guest speakers such as Brangwyn author Dr Libby Horner and Brangwyn's closest living relative, David Brangwyn. For event dates and times please see the CH Museum website What's On page: [www.chmuseum.org.uk](http://www.chmuseum.org.uk) and book via: <https://www.christs-hospital.org.uk/admissions/book-a-brangwyn-tour/>  
Booking is essential.

A full colour revised edition of *Christ's Hospital Murals* by Dr Libby Horner with a new preface by Headmaster Simon Reid has been specially released to coincide with the exhibition (retailing at £16 a copy), along with all-new postcards illustrating all 16 murals, 7 cartoons and a portrait of Brangwyn himself (retailing at £5 a pack of 8 designs).