

Objects illuminate times gone by

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where he studied for a time, though probably it was outdated soon after as watches were more common in the waistcoat of a Victorian doctor.

“But evidently Arthur was attached to it, kept it, and after his death it was enshrined in a small case, suitably labelled, by his son,” adds Gillian.

Gillian has been helped by her grandmother Blanche’s own squirrel-like attributes: she and her husband Bertie, a chronic diary keeper, saved the letters they exchanged and other personal papers. They reveal much about Gillian’s predecessors’ lives, including the saga of their daughter Monica’s marriage to her lifelong love Brian – a man her parents did not approve of.

The objects discussed range from a chipped ivory saint to a painted plate Gillian has in her sitting room, a piece of mahogany propping up a floor originally cut for use on a sailing ship and may well have circumnavigated the globe to a small leather bag.

This motley collection of seemingly unrelated objects all act as beams of light, helping the historian illuminate times gone by.

● *The Pulse Glass: And the Beat of Other Hearts.* By Gillian Tindall, Penguin, £16.99

Novelist and short story writer Wendy Perriam has a new book out. Always good news, as *Review* readers will know from my reviews of her previous work. Her combination of wit and fast-moving plots that tackle difficult subjects full-on, make everything she writes a page-turner.

But this one, her 19th novel, *Sing For Life*, has a particular resonance. The heroine, Veronica, is a troubled woman, looking after a vascular dementia-stricken husband, and struggling between her loyalty to him and her need for physical and psychological reassurance.

She finds both, in spite of an ultimately disastrous love affair, and several tragi-comic misunderstandings, by joining a choir. Here she makes friends and opens her heart and mind – like so many people, she’s been told she can’t sing and should, literally, keep her mouth shut – through the camaraderie of others in the choir and the freedom that comes from the act of singing. The choir’s mantra is “Wrong

Choir in the blood

Wendy Perriam's new book celebrates the positive power of communal singing, says Piers Plowright



Wendy Perriam

but Strong”, and as they collectively belt through Gloria Gaynor’s *I Will Survive*, Elvis Presley’s *Can’t Help Falling in Love*, and the song that gives the novel its title, her self-confidence and strength revive.

What makes this novel so timely, quite apart from telling a great story,

is the way it chimes with current medical research and with the work of inspiring figures like Gareth Malone. There is no doubt that singing is good for you; no doubt that it can lift you from despair to a kind of joy; and no doubt that – like dance, another way of combining the mental

and the physical – it can be an act of healing.

I happen to know about this personally, because – full disclosure – I sing in the same choir as Wendy Perriam. We’re all cancer sufferers or cancer carers and every Wednesday evening, for an hour, we put aside our problems and our physical and

mental challenges to raise the roof of a small church hall in South Kensington.

We also do gigs in hospitals and outside tube stations to raise money for the choir, as well as, we hope, entertaining commuters and tourists. This doesn’t always work: a recent performance of *You’ve*

Got a Friend was interrupted by a very angry man who, for one reason or another, chose to challenge us and the title of the song very directly.

But it’s exciting that a fiction writer has chosen a real choir – names and places changed, of course – as a prime mover of plot and character and a transformative power in her latest novel.

Like all Wendy’s work, *Sing for Life* is often very funny, and the dialogue crackles along. It also contains scenes – as they say on the telly – that some people may find sexually explicit – well, they are. But nobody who reads it is likely to be unaffected by this account of the power of song and what it might do for all of us. As it says in the chorus of the title song: No matter how hard life gets, sing for your life.

● *Sing For Life.* By Wendy Perriam, Bravura Books, £8.99 or in a Kindle edition at £2.99 either through Amazon or www.wendyperriam.com
● For information about Tenovus Cancer Choirs go to www.tenovuscancercare.org.uk

Three weeks ago a full-size bronze by Umberto Boccioni sold for over \$16.1million at Christie’s in New York.

It was controversial, given that during the artist’s short lifetime (1882-1916) the startling work, titled *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, had never been cast in bronze. But its value now is measured by its importance as a Futurist masterpiece, a strident, striding figure capturing what Boccioni called the “synthetic continuity” of motion, his

REBIRTH

John Evans on an innovative exhibition of Futurist work

“lines of force”. The original plaster piece can be seen in São Paulo.

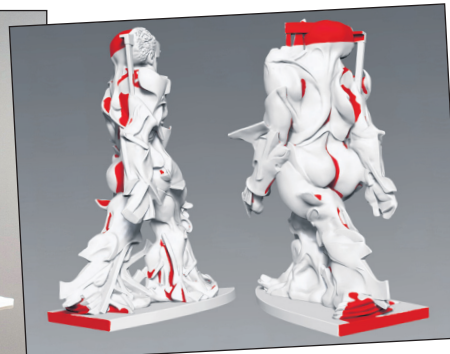
Today, at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art in Canonbury, for £19.99, you can pick up a unique 12.5cm replica of another of his works, *Spiral Expansion of Muscles in Movement*.

And this one is truly innovative, being 3D-printed and a recreation of a sculpture destroyed a decade after his death.

Soon after signing up to the 1910 Futurist manifesto, Boccioni sculpted the *Spiral* work and two others, *Synthesis of Human Dynamism* and *Speeding Muscles*.

It is these three that are revisited in the Estorick’s groundbreaking exhibition *Umberto Boccioni: Recreating the Lost Sculptures*.

After the conscripted Boccioni was fatally crushed by his horse on a cavalry exercise, aged 33, a number of his sculptures passed to fellow artist,



Left: installation shot of the 3D-printed *Synthesis of Human Dynamism* and, above, Matt Smith and Anders Rådén, digital rendering of *Synthesis of Human Dynamism* with red indicating areas of the original for which no photographic documentation exists

they have been able to compare images with a number of measuring techniques – and using Photoshop – to produce the highly accurate 3D reconstructions.

As well as the 3D prints, the show features maquettes which pinpoint areas where Smith and Rådén “compensated” for a lack of documentation, filling in by drawing “on the insights they had gained into Boccioni’s stylistic vocabulary”.

Time-lapse recordings of the processes can also be seen.

Piero da Verona; but were destroyed in 1927.

Now digital artists Matt Smith and Anders Rådén have collaborated to enable us to view these pieces again, in a single gallery. A fourth recreated work of a human face, titled *Empty and Full*

Abstracts of a Head, can also be seen alongside a drawing study.

The detailed methods used by Smith and Rådén are examined. Working from photographs of Boccioni’s studio and of three exhibitions held between 1913 and 1917,

Together with his passion for modern Italian painting Eric Estorick (1913-1993) had an interest in Soviet art.

In 1961 he mounted a landmark exhibition, *Lithographs by 27 Soviet Artists* at his Grosvenor Gallery. This is the inspiration for a special display at the collection in Canonbury. Works by 15 of the 27 artists from the original show can be seen. The curators say “Western viewers were able to see and acquire contemporary art from the USSR which, in contrast to prevailing stereotypes, proved to be brimming with vitality”.

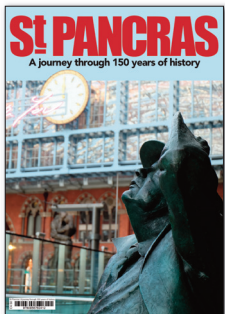


Mikhail Nikolaevich Skulyari (1905-1985) *Winter Swimming Pool: After Training, 1963*, lithograph, 72 x 55cm

● *Umberto Boccioni: Recreating the Lost Sculptures and Lithography from Leningrad: Eric Estorick’s Adventure in Soviet Art*, at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, N1 2AN, until December 22. www.estorickcollection.com

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