



# £11 million portrait ends up in charity shop window

By Neil McNaughton

High Road charity shop All Aboard has seen its fair share of bargains and unusual items over the years but shoppers were understandably surprised to see an £11 million painting in the window last month.

The picture in question was a self-portrait by 17<sup>th</sup> century artist and favourite of Charles I, Sir Anthony Van Dyck. Too good to be true? Of course. The painting in question has already been purchased by the National Portrait Gallery for the nation, and besides, the version in All Aboard was only a copy.

Shop manager, Leslie Cavendish, had agreed to display the picture in his window as a backdrop for a special film being made about Van Dyck and reactions to the picture by today's artists.

## Unique contribution

Being a specialist in self-portraiture, Marcus Coates, whose studio is in Huntingdon Road, N2, was an obvious choice to take part. Marcus, who has exhibited all over the world, has a broad and visionary interest in all art forms.

He told *The Archer*: "Theatre is politics and one of my current interests is to react to political discourse and events

through theatre." Marcus is also interested in shamanism, naturalism and in unusual ways of demonstrating the arts, including his best known activity of dressing as animals to perform or create video films.



In his own true style, he will be making a contribution to the film, explaining his unique reaction to the Van Dyck picture. One thing is for certain: his part of the film will not be anything like anyone else's contribution.



High and dry: One of the houses on stilts seen by David in Myanmar. Photo David Winton

## Our south-east Asian house-swap

David Winton, who has written for *The Archer* about his experience of teaching in China, has been lured out east again. He tells us where and why.

Do you know of a city where roughly half the cars on the road are taxis? The answer: Yangon, previously Rangoon, in Myanmar (Burma), where a modern urban transport system is in its early stages.

Last autumn my wife and I spent two months in a house-swap with our elder daughter who works in Yangon for the UK government's Department for International Development. She wanted to have her second baby in London, so we let her family have free run of our house in East Finchley.

### Exploring Yangon

Buddhism is very prominent in Myanmar. Buddhist monks and nuns in their red and pink robes are a frequent sight and the Buddhist Shwedagon Pagoda is the main visitor attraction in Yangon. The city also has many wonderful buildings going back a century or so to the British colonial era, and a local pressure group tries to preserve them.

We enjoyed walking beside Yangon's two large city lakes. On Inya Lake you can see through the trees the house of National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, where she was kept under house arrest for over a decade before her release in 2010.

In everyday life English is noticeable, on traffic signs, on street billboards and in supermarkets. English is now seen nationally as a tool for Myanmar's development. We taught English twice a week to young women at a rehabilitation project run by a Christian church: my wife had the beginners, while I had a small group, administrators at the project, who already had a good grasp of English.

### Further afield

We had two trips out of Yangon. Several experiences stand out: Inle Lake, with its lakeside villages consisting largely of huts on stilts; a nine-hour trip down the Irrawaddy River from Mandalay to Bagan with its hundreds of Buddhist

stupas; the Buddhist monastery perched on top of Mount Popa, and finally Ngapali Beach on the west coast, an idyllic kilometre-long palm-fringed sandy beach.

Tourism in Myanmar is increasing rapidly although the country has some serious political problems, especially concerning the Muslim Rohingya people in north-west Myanmar. These problems are an unfortunate legacy of the era before the election of the democratic government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2015 and hopefully they can soon be peacefully resolved.

## Whale of a tale

After Archer deliverer Pete Eiseman-Renyard had participated in a marathon reading of *Moby Dick* at the Royal Festival Hall in autumn 2015, his wife Maggie asked if he'd like to do anything or go anywhere special to celebrate a significant birthday the following spring. Pete said that he'd like to go to Nantucket where the Pequot, the whaling ship in the story, had sailed from.

This little island off Cape Cod in Massachusetts was the world centre of whaling for over a century, says Maggie, adding: "Its economy and population declined with that industry until it reinvented itself in Victorian times to what we saw: half museum, half tourist high-end resort. The museum was excellent. We spent two days in Nantucket Town between visiting family and friends in the US."

Pete has fond memories of the trip. He says: "We had lovely weather. The sea was like a millpond and we saw a glorious sunset from the ferry back."

Thar she blows! - in Nantucket!  
Photo Maggie-Eiseman Renyard



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