



- Question from last week
 - Where is the Fry Art Gallery that has Eric Ravilious *Tea at Furlongs* (1939)?
The Fry Art Gallery is an art gallery in Saffron Walden, Essex that is best known for its displays of work by the Great Bardfield Artists, including Edward Bawden and Eric Ravilious. The Great Bardfield Artists were a community of artists living in Great Bardfield, north west Essex. They were diverse in style but shared a love for figurative art, making the group distinct from the better known St Ives School of artists in St Ives, Cornwall, who, after the war, were chiefly dominated by abstractionists.
- **Figurative art** runs as a theme through **all British art**. The **extremes** of modernism—Fauvism, Dada, Surrealism and even abstraction—never took hold in Britain but there was a continued interest in the human body, psychological insights and representing the full range of emotions. This means that **most** of the artists we have dealt with **have been figurative**, that is not abstract, artists.
- This means it has been **difficult to choose** a small number of artists to represent the tradition and I have selected painters who **stayed with the figurative tradition** throughout their lives with the exception of Victor Pasmore as I use his work to create a link with British art of the 1950s and 60s.

Notes

- Figurative art is a term used to describe paintings and sculptures that are derived from real objects. Figurative art is therefore representational. Note that human figures are often shown in figurative art but the term does not mean figures painting. Figurative art includes landscapes, still life and so on which includes no figures. The term has been particularly used since the arrival of abstract art to refer to artists that retain aspects of the real world as their subject matter, though in a general sense figurative also applies retrospectively to all art before abstract art.
- Modern figurative art can be seen as distinct from modern realism in that figurative art uses modern idioms, while modern realists work in styles predating post-impressionism (more or less). In fact, modern figurative art is more or less identical with the general current of expressionism that can be traced through the twentieth century and on.
- **Pablo Picasso** after about 1920 is the great exemplar of modern figurative painting, and **Alberto Giacometti** from about 1940 is the great figurative sculptor. After the Second World War figuration can be tracked through the work of **Francis Bacon**, **Lucian Freud** and the other artists of the **School of London**, and through pop art and neo-expressionism. Neo-expressionism was a 1980s revival of painting in an expressionist manner and was a reaction against minimalism and conceptual art

1900-1950

The London Group

- The London Group is a society based in London, England, created to offer additional exhibiting opportunities to artists besides the Royal Academy of Arts. Formed in **1913**, it is one of the **oldest artist-led organisations in the world**. It was formed from the merger of the **Camden Town Group**, an all-male group, the **Vorticists** and the **Fitzroy Street Group**. It was formed to challenge the Royal Academy which had become conservative and unadventurous. Founding members included **Walter Sickert**, Jacob Epstein and Wyndham Lewis. Over the years its membership has included most of the leading British artists.

The Seven and Five Society

- An art group of seven painters and five sculptors created in **1919** and based in London. Originally intended as a group of traditional, conservative artists when abstract artist Ben Nicholson joined in 1924, followed by others such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, they changed the society into a modernistic one and expelled the non-modernist artists. In 1935, the group was renamed the Seven and Five Abstract Group.

The Euston Road School


- In the **late 1930s**, artists, such as **William Coldstream**, Lawrence Gowing, Graham Bell and Claude Rogers practised a brand of **everyday urban realism** that demonstrably picked up where the Camden Town Group had left off twenty years earlier, in terms of choice of subject matter and low-toned palette, but arguably without the pictorial flair and inventiveness of, say, Sickert or Gilman. Killed off by WW II by continued by Coldstream at the Slade and led to a new generation of artists such as **Euan Uglow**.
- Walter Sickert (1860-1942). Sickert was very influential on other artists—an artists artist. He became a talisman in the late 1940-60s. Frank Auerbach has described Sickert as ‘the one painter of *real* world stature who worked in England in the early part of this century’.

School of London (1940s – 80s)

- The School of London was not a society but a loose term invented by R.B. **Kitaj** to describe a group of London-based artists who were pursuing forms of figurative painting in the face of avant-garde approaches in the 1970s.
 - R. B. Kitaj
 - Lucien Freud
 - Francis Bacon. Bacon rarely acknowledged influences other than Pablo Picasso but he was a Sickert enthusiast.
 - Frank Auerbach (influenced by Sickert and David Bomberg)
 - David Hockney
 - Other School of London artists include Michael Andrews (1928-1995), Howard Hodgkin (b. 1932) and Leon Kossoff (b. 1926)

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/martin-hammer-after-camden-town-sickerts-legacy-since-1930-r1104349>



NEW WAYS OF SEEING: MODERN BRITISH ART

1. New Ways of Seeing
2. Impressionism, Post-Impressionism & Fauvism
3. Cubism, Abstraction and the British Avant Garde
4. Vorticism and World War One Artists
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- 9. British Figurative Art**
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British Figurative Art 1900-1950

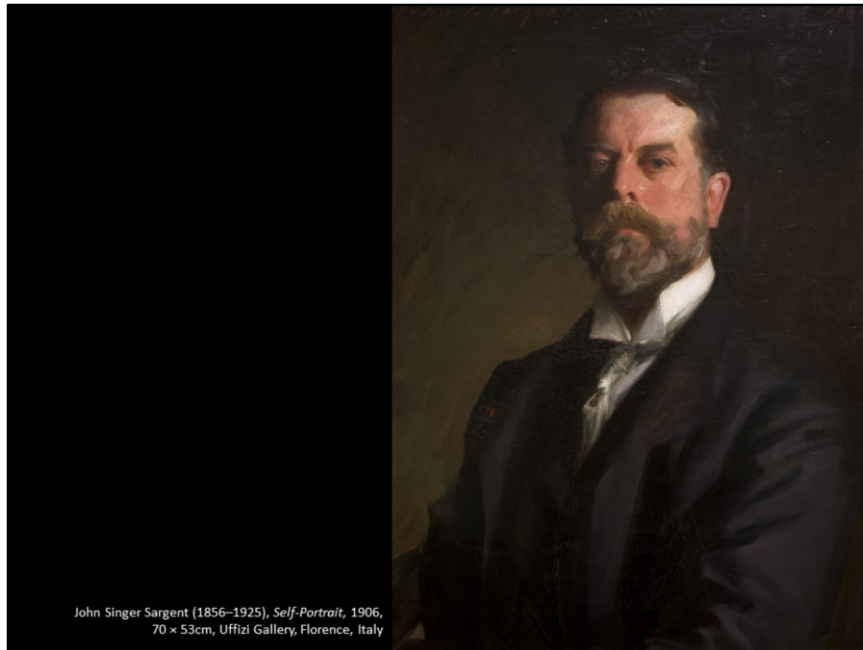


- The great tradition of British art is figurative painting and it has therefore been difficult to select a few artists. I have chosen **nine artists**:
 - **John Singer Sargent** (1856-1925), an American artist who worked in Britain and became the leading portrait painter of his generation.
 - **Walter Sickert** (1860-1942), a painter's painter and one of the **most influential British artists** of the twentieth century.
 - **Gwen John** (1876-1939). Gwen John, was an **intense and solitary artist** who was described by her brother Augustus John as the better artist.
 - **Augustus John** (1878-1961) Augustus John was one of the **most popular society portrait** artists at the beginning of the twentieth century.
 - **Laura Knight** (1877-1970) Knight was a painter in the figurative, realist tradition who was among the **most successful and popular painters** in Britain. In 1929 she was created a Dame, and in 1936 became the first woman elected to the Royal Academy since its foundation in 1768.
 - **William Orpen** (1878-1931) an Irish artist who worked mainly in London. William Orpen was a fine draughtsman and a **popular, commercially successful, painter of portraits** for the well-to-do in Edwardian society. During the First World War, he was the most prolific of the official artists sent by Britain to the Western Front and as a Major he was allowed to stay

- longer. He donated most of this work to the British government.
- **David Bomberg** (1890-1957) was an English painter, and one of the Whitechapel Boys. Bomberg was one of the most **audacious** of the exceptional generation of artists who studied at the Slade School of Art. He fell out of favour and has only recently been re-evaluated.
 - **Stanley Spencer** (1891-1959) is one of the great early **figurative artists** in Britain and his life was covered four weeks ago. I have included him here to remind you of his work.
 - **Victor Pasmore** (1908-1998), who went from figurative to abstract and so creates a link to next term's artists.



I am dealing with twentieth century artists and so John Singer Sargent almost did not make it. However, he was the leading portrait painter in late Victorian and Edwardian England and so I thought he would provide a good introduction to the fifty year period 1900-1950. I start with a self-portrait he painted in 1906...



John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), *Self-Portrait*, 1906, 70 × 53cm, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy

- We start with one of the great portrait artist of the nineteenth century. This is John Singer Sargent, the **leading society portrait painter** at the end of the nineteenth century as Sir Thomas Lawrence had been at the beginning.
- He travelled extensively as a child-Paris, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and had no formal education but was highly literate. He was described as ‘an **American** born in **Italy**, educated in **France**, who looks like a **German**, speaks like an **Englishman** and paints like a **Spaniard**.’ The last point refers to his veneration for Velazquez.
- Sargent **hated his portrait painted**. He painted 150 portraits of his artist friends but almost never allowed his own portrait to be painted although he did permit photographs. There are three exceptions which he painted from necessity. This painting was requested by the Uffizi gallery in Florence. The practice of British artists sending their portrait to the Uffizi was revived in middle of the nineteenth century when the Uffizi director requested Lord Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, to send a portrait. He recommended George Frederic Watts and John Everett Millais also send portraits. This portrait by Sargent is modest and serious and he hides any evidence that he is a painter, even his hands are hidden.

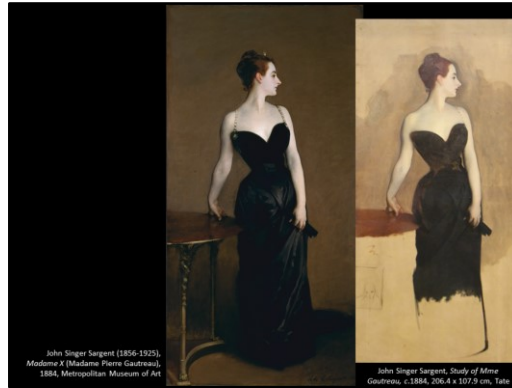
- Between 1886 and 1907 Sargent painted 350 portraits when he declared an end to this 'pimp's profession' by completing this self-portrait that he owed the Uffizi. Relieved, he stated, "Painting a portrait would be quite amusing if one were not forced to talk while working...What a nuisance having to entertain the sitter and to look happy when one feels wretched."
- Sargent was a shy and private man and some have seen his famous painting, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* as a form of self-portrait with himself replaced by the two girls.

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)

- His father was an eye surgeon but after his older sister dies at the age of two his **mother suffered a breakdown** and they spent the **rest of their lives travelling**. They were based in Paris but travelled to Germany, Italy and Switzerland. They stopped in Florence, where Sargent was born in 1856. His parents lived modestly on a small inheritance and avoided society. Although he had no formal education he grew up to be a highly literate and cosmopolitan young man, accomplished in art, music, and literature. He was **fluent in English, French, Italian, and German**. At seventeen, Sargent was described by Stanley Olsen in his book *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, 1986 as '*wilful, curious, determined and strong*' (after his mother) yet '*shy, generous, and modest*' (after his father).



Unidentified photographer, John Singer Sargent in his studio in Paris, 1885 (aged 29)



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Madame X* (Madame Pierre Gautreau), 1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art

John Singer Sargent, *Study of Mme Gautreau*, c.1884, 206.4 x 107.9 cm, Tate

- The intention was to create a positive **sensation** in Paris but the picture went too far and **shocked and scandalised the public**. However, Sargent later wrote: '*I suppose it is the best thing I have ever done*'.
- There are mixed views of Madame Pierre Gautreau from 'stopped traffic in the street' to poorly educated and boorish.

Madame X

- Sargent and Madame Pierre Gautreau (1859-1915) collaborated on this portrait in order to create a sensation at the Paris Salon of 1884. She did not commission it but Sargent pursued her unlike most of his clients. Sargent wrote to a mutual friend:
 - *I have a great desire to paint her portrait and have reason to think she would allow it and is waiting for someone to propose this homage to her beauty. ...you might tell her that I am a man of prodigious talent.*

- She moved to France when she was eight and was later introduced to French high society. She became one of **Paris's conspicuous beauties**, as she was a pale-skinned brunette with fine features and an hourglass figure. She used lavender-coloured face and body powder to enhance her complexion, to dye her hair with henna, and to color her eyebrows.
- The original portrait had **one shoulder strap hanging down** and people were shocked and scandalized. It was described as a **'flagrant insufficiency' of clothing**. Although the painting failed to establish as a society artist in France it achieved its objective in England and America. When he sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art Sargent wrote to the director, 'I suppose it is the best thing I have ever done'.
- Most writers believe she attracted much admiration due to her elegance and style and she married Pierre Gautreau, a French banker and shipping magnate and she was rumoured to have had numerous affairs. Her beauty is described as 'having stopped traffic in the street'. However, some research indicates all this was the creation of later writers and she was rarely mentioned in society pages until the scandal of the public portrait and no affairs are known to have taken place. She has been described as poorly educated, boorish, vapid and naïve and she fell into obscurity after the scandal.



John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), *Sir George Sitwell, Lady Ida Sitwell and Family*, c. 1900, private collection

The Sitwell Family, 1900. From left: Dame Edith Sitwell (1887–1964), Sir George Sitwell, Lady Ida Sitwell, Sir Sacheverell Sitwell (1897–1988), and Sir Osbert Sitwell (1892–1969)

- *The Sitwells and the Arts of the 1920s and 1930s* (1994) published by National Portrait Gallery,
 - “In the spring of 1900 Sir George [Sitwell] **commissioned** John Singer Sargent to paint a **family group**, and therefore immortalise the great patron, his beautiful aristocratic wife and the dynasty, represented by his three children. After exhibition at the Royal Academy where it was admired by Sergei Diaghliev among others, the painting was intended to be **hung at Renishaw** [Hall] as a companion to the Copley portrait. The symbolism was there for all to see: Sir George (who seldom rode) wore polished riding boots, an illusion to his sporting ancestry, while Lady Ida was the picture of the dutiful wife, elegantly arranging flowers in a silver bowl (something she would never have done; at Renishaw as in all grand houses the flowers were arranged by the head gardener). The family was posed against

carefully chosen Sitwell heirlooms brought down from Renishaw to the artist's Chelsea studio. As the elegant projection of an image, the painting was a triumph - the dominant father, his hand resting protectively on his daughter's shoulder, the beautiful wife absorbed in her domestic task, the heir and his brother playing contentedly - but as a representation of a happy family it was pure fantasy."

- **The Sitwells** (Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell) were these three siblings who formed an literary and artistic clique in London between 1916 and 1930 that some thought rivalled the Bloomsbury group.
 - All three **reacted badly** to their **unloving, eccentric parents** and **Edith** lived much of her life with her governess. Edith was a poet and critic who never married, but became passionately attached to the gay Russian painter Pavel Tchelitchew, and her home was always open to London's poetic circle. With her dramatic style and exotic costumes, she was sometimes labelled a poseur, but her work was praised for its solid technique and painstaking craftsmanship.
 - **Osbert** was a writer who served in the trenches in WWI. He was a friend of William Walton although they later fell out and Osbert wrote the libretto for Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*. In the mid-1920s he met David Horner who was his lover and companion for most of his life.
 - **Sacheverell** (pronounced 'Sir-cheverel') was a writer as well as an art and music critic. He wrote books on Mozart, Liszt and Scarlatti as well as on architecture, particularly the baroque. In WWI he served with the Grenadier Guards. He married a Canadian woman and had two sons.
- The family home was Renishaw Hall (built 1625) near Eckington in Derbyshire.



John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), *Lady Helen Vincent in Venice*, 1904, Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama

- Lady Helen and her sister were **renowned beauties** in their circle. Helen Duncombe married Sir Edgar Vincent then a **governor of the Imperial Ottoman Bank** in Constantinople. Lady Helen, in that period, was "**the most celebrated hostess of her age**" and was 'by reason of her outstanding beauty, intelligence and charm, one of the most resplendent figures.'"
- She was part of an intellectual circle known as '**the Souls**' and it included **Arthur Balfour, Edith Wharton and Henry James**. In 1904, on a visit to Venice, Sargent painted this portrait.
- During the war she trained as a nurse anaesthetist and treated thousands of patients.

Notes

- Helen Venetia Vincent, Viscountess D'Abernon (née Duncombe) (1866–1954) was a British noblewoman, socialite and diarist.
- Edith Wharton (née Jones; 1862–1937) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist, short story writer, and designer. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in

Literature in 1927, 1928 and 1930.

- Arthur Balfour (1848-1930) was Conservative Prime Minister from July 1902 to December 1905.
- Henry James (1843-1916) was an American-born British writer who is regarded as one of the key figures of 19th-century literary realism. He was the son of Henry James, Sr. and the brother of philosopher and psychologist William James and diarist Alice James.

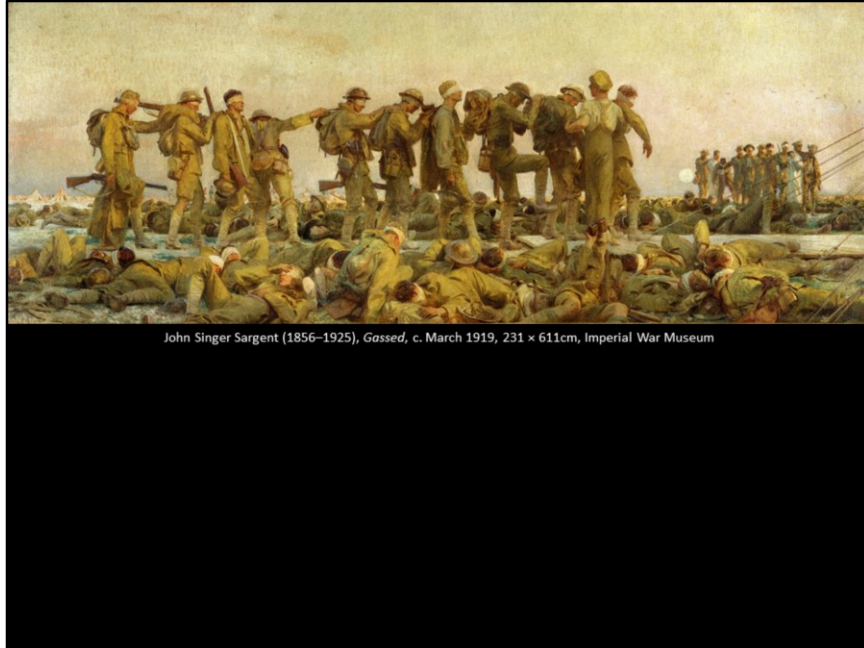


John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), *Mrs. Waldorf Astor*, 1908-9, 149.9 x 99cm, The Athenaeum

- From **1907** he **closed his portrait studio** and painted mostly **landscapes and architecture** but there were some exceptions.
- **Nancy** Witcher Langhorne **Astor**, Viscountess Astor (1879–1964) was an American-born English socialite who made a second marriage to **Waldorf Astor** as a young woman in England. After he succeeded to the peerage and entered the House of Lords, she **entered politics**, in 1919 winning his former seat in Plymouth and becoming the **first woman to sit as a Member of Parliament** in the House of Commons.
- Nancy Astor was a teetotaler, feminist, an advocate of votes for women at 21, improved treatment of young offenders, equal guardianship for mothers and fathers, state health care and town planning. She said, **“My vigour, vitality, and cheek repel me. I am the kind of woman I would run away from.”**
- She created the social sect at their country home of Cliveden (pronounced ‘clif-den’, with ‘i’ as in ‘lid’ and ‘f’ as in ‘have’) in the 1920s and 30s.

Notes

- Later, during the 1960s, Cliveden was the setting for the infamous Profumo Affair (which led to the collapse of the Conservative government in 1964). During the 1970s, it was occupied by Stanford University, which used it as an overseas campus. Today it is owned by the National Trust and leased as a five-star hotel.



John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), *Gassed*, c. March 1919, 231 × 611cm, Imperial War Museum

John Singer Sargent (1856–1925), *Gassed*, c. March 1919, 231 × 611cm, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London

- I have shown this work previously but let us not forget that he was a World War I artist. This is perhaps his most memorable image.
- In **1907**, aged 51, **Sargent officially closed his studio**. His fame was still considerable and museums eagerly bought his works. That year he declined a knighthood and decided instead to keep his American citizenship. He made numerous visits to the United States in the last decade of his life, including a stay of two full years from 1915 to 1917. By 1917 most critics consigned him to the **masters of the past** and modernists considered completely out of touch with the latest trends including Cubism and Futurism. Sargent accepted the criticism but said that he still **admired Ingres, Raphael and El Greco**.
- Upon his return to England in 1918 after a visit to the United States, Sargent was **commissioned as a war artist** by the British Ministry of Information. In his large painting *Gassed* and in many watercolours, he depicted scenes from the Great War.
- In 1925, soon before he died, Sargent painted his last oil portrait, *Grace Curzon, Marchioness Curzon of Kedleston*.

Notes

- Sargent is often viewed as a conventional figurative artist following a long tradition but he is a complex personality, quiet and she and a very private person. A portrait by Sargent was never flattering and if you were brave enough to commission one you took 'your face in your hands'. Recent research suggests he was a homosexual but there is a danger in interpreting his work in a simplistic way in the light of this. It is unfortunate that this had to be hidden during his lifetime but his male nudes were not destroyed and are now available online at the Fogg Gallery, Harvard.
- He died in his sleep of a heart attack. His probate estate was £25,000 but his estate sale of 237 works raised £175,000. He is buried at Brookwood Cemetery, Woking, Surrey.

References

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gassed_\(painting\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gassed_(painting))

<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/art/307680>

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35950?docPos=8> (login using a British library card)



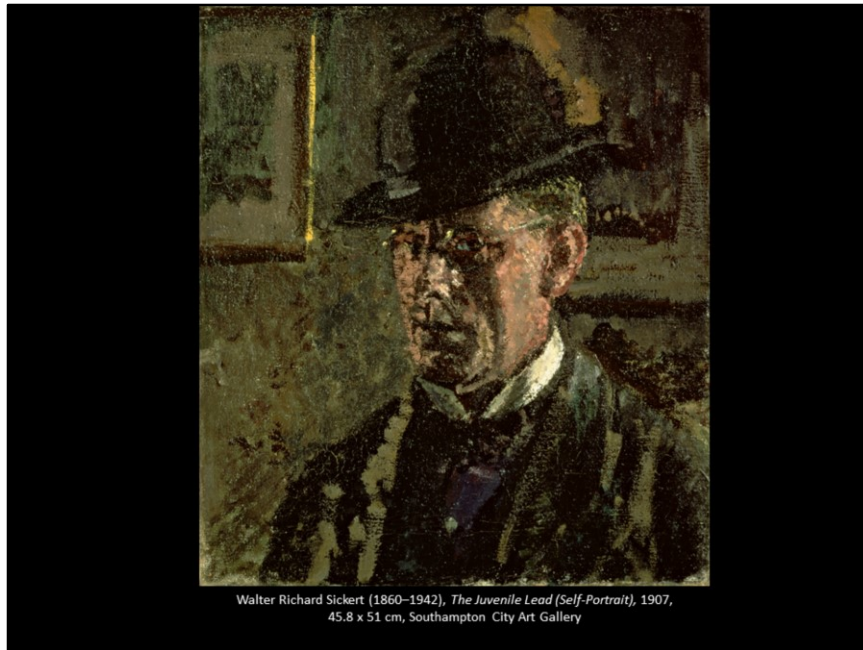
- A very **influential and prolific artist**. He influenced many twentieth century artists although his reputation is less well-known to the general public.
- He was a **colourful and charming** character who was recognised as an important artist in his lifetime. He courted many eminent personalities and was a **skilled raconteur**. In old age he cultivated his eccentric habits frequently appearing in the newspaper having changed his appearance or his name or for some controversial painting stunt.
- He was born in **Munich to a Danish father and an Anglo-Irish mother**. In 1868 the family moved to England and London remained his home although he spent time in Italy and France. He spoke fluent English, German and French and had good Italian.
- His father was a painter and illustrator but discouraged him from painting and when he was 18 he took up acting under the stage name 'Mr. Nemo'. In 1881 however, he signed for the Slade School. In 1882 he abandoned the stage to join **Whistler's studio**.

Notes

- The **Camden Town Group** was a group of English Post-Impressionist artists **active 1911-1913**. They gathered frequently at the studio of painter **Walter Sickert** in the

Camden Town area of London. It was decided it should be **men only** and limited to **16 members**. Female artists like Ethel Sands, Anna Hope Hudson and Marjorie Sherlock that were involved on the periphery.

- The members of the Camden Town Group included Walter Sickert, Harold Gilman, Spencer Frederick Gore, Lucien Pissarro (the son of French Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro), Wyndham Lewis, Walter Bayes, J.B. Manson, Robert Bevan, Augustus John, Henry Lamb, and Charles Ginner.
- Influences include Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin whose work can clearly be traced throughout this groups work.
- He **denounced Whistler's anti-literary** theory of drawing and saw all creative paintings as **telling a story**. He also disliked Whistler's titles as he felt the title set the scene in which the painting could be interpreted. Regarding the **aesthetic**, he said, '**for me it's the rudest word I know**'.
- Sickert chose to allegorise painting as 'a robust and racy wench'. Dismissing Whistler's *Symphony in White, No.3* as a 'bad picture ... badly composed, badly drawn, badly painted' and appealing only to English sentiment, he insisted that: '**painting is a rough-tongued, hard-faced mistress**, and her severe rule will brook no dallying of that sort'.
- A major retrospective was held at Tate Britain in 2008



Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942), *The Juvenile Lead (Self-Portrait)*, 1907, 45.8 x 51 cm, Southampton City Art Gallery

- Sickert was **one of the most influential British artists of the 20th century**. He is often called a **painter's painter**, appealing primarily to artists working in the figurative tradition; there are few British figurative painters of the 20th century whose development can be adequately discussed without reference to Sickert's subject-matter or innovative techniques. He had a direct influence on the **Camden Town Group** and the **Euston Road School**. Sickert's active career as an artist lasted for nearly 60 years and his output was vast. He may be seen as the last of the Victorian painters and as a major innovator and precursor of international developments in later 20th-century art.
- Sickert was born in Munich, Germany and was an important influence on many 20th century British artists. Sickert was a **cosmopolitan and eccentric** who often favoured ordinary people and urban scenes as his subjects. His oeuvre also included **portraits of well-known personalities** and images derived from press photographs. He is considered a prominent figure in the **transition** from **Impressionism to Modernism**.

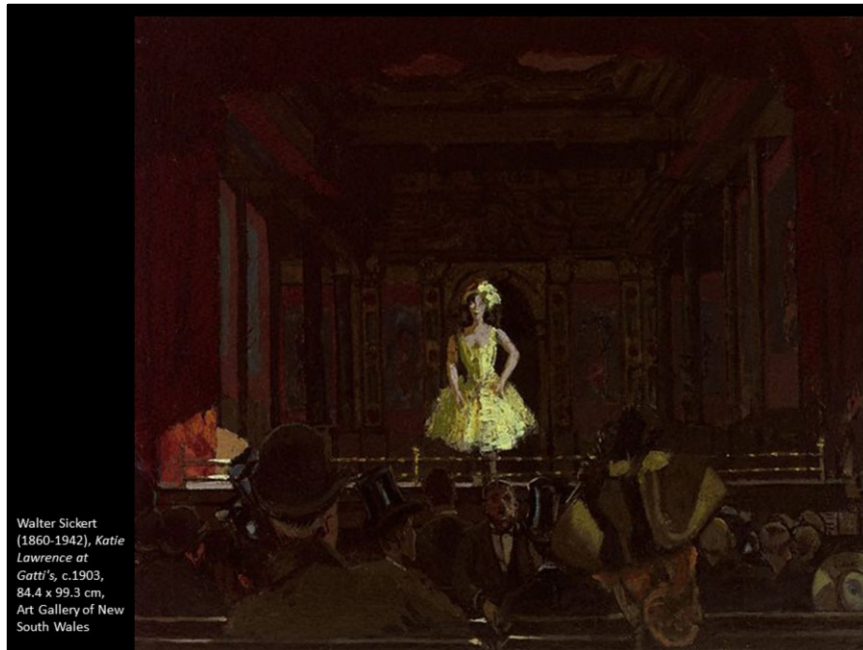
- He was the son of a Danish-German artist and the illegitimate daughter of a British astronomer. He settled in England when he was 8 and attended University College (1870-71) and King's College (1871-1878). Despite his father's reputation as an artist he started work as an **actor** before studying art at the **Slade** School of Art in **1881**. Within a year he had left and become a **pupil** of James Abbott McNeill **Whistler** (1834-1903). In 1883 he went to Paris and **met Edgar Degas** (1834-1917) who had a powerful effect on his style. He started to use sombre colours and like Degas he worked in the studio from **drawings and memory** to **escape** the '**tyranny of nature**'. In 1888 he joined the New English Art Club and started to paint scenes in London music halls.

Notes

- Art Gallery of New South Wales "Born in Munich of Danish parents, Walter Sickert came to England as a child in 1868. Taught by Whistler and inspired by Degas, whom he knew, he became one of the most influential and prolific British painters of his period. Experimenting with late impressionist and post-impressionist idioms, Sickert forged a personal practice devoted almost entirely to depictions of metropolitan life, some of them squalid. He settled permanently in London in 1905, from which time his studio served as a nerve-centre for the younger 'realist' painters of the Camden Town Group. Sickert's love of urban types, bohemia and the world of variety theatre is apparent in this atmospheric canvas. Katie Lawrence was a knockabout songstress who frequently headlined at Gatti's venue. Despite Sickert's interest in working-class themes his art is far from populist, appealing as it does to sophisticated taste. Daringly, the painter portrays Lawrence as little more than a footlit smudge." (AGNSW Handbook, 1999)

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-r1105345>
<http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/7772/>



Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), *Katie Lawrence at Gatti's*, c.1903, 84.4 x 99.3 cm, Art Gallery of New South Wales

- One of the two paintings he exhibited at the NEAC in April 1888, *Katie Lawrence at Gatti's*, which portrayed a well known music hall singer of the era, incited controversy "**more heated than any other surrounding an English painting in the late 19th century**". Sickert's rendering was denounced as **ugly and vulgar**, and his choice of subject matter was deplored as **too tawdry for art**, as female performers were popularly viewed as morally **akin to prostitutes**. The painting announced what would be Sickert's recurring interest in sexually provocative themes.
- Sickert's music hall paintings were **inspired** by those of his friend **Edgar Degas**. In Paris, Degas and Edouard Manet's pictures of café concerts were greeted with interest and even respected.
- The painting technique used was derived from that used by Whistler and during the 1880s Sickert had been **Whistler's studio assistant**. The shallow foreground and lack of background recession are **typical of Whistler**, for example, *Arrangement in Grey and Black No.1*, *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, 1871.
- By 1887 he had fixed upon the theme which would occupy him intermittently for

most of his career, the world of the **British music hall**, exhibiting his first painting of this subject, *Le Mammoth Comique*, at the Society of British Artists. A natural platform for his work at this time was the recently formed **New English Art Club**, which Sickert joined that year. His arrival crystallised a split within the group between the more conservative artists and those who looked to the example of **French impressionism**.

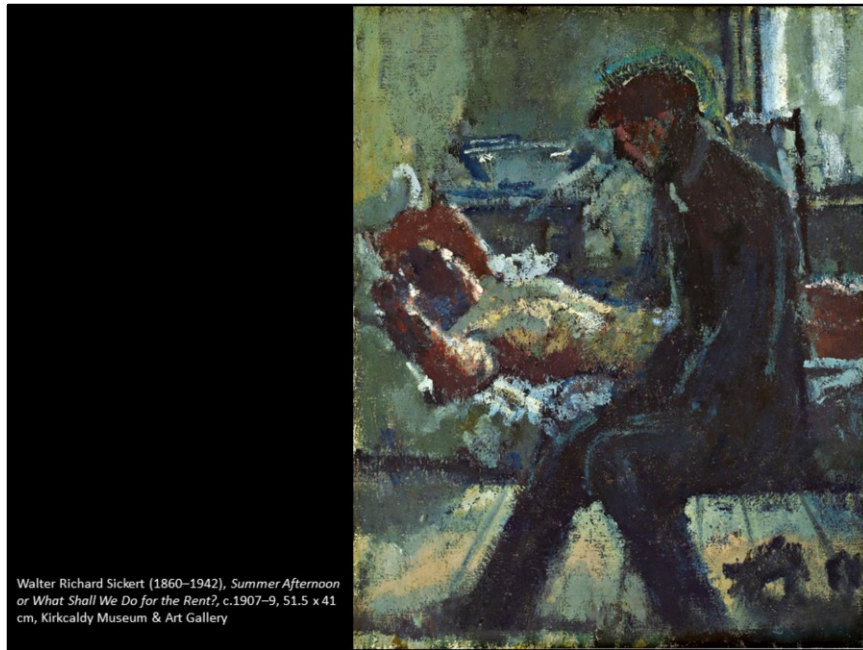
- In Britain Sickert faced intense critical hostility when he showed *Gatti's Hungerford Palace of Varieties: Second Turn of Miss Katie Lawrence*, **1887–8** (believed destroyed, possibly similar to the painting above) at the New English Art Club in **April 1888**. It represented '**the lowest degradation of which the art of painting is capable**', according to the *Builder*, while the *Artist* believed it symptomatic of 'the **aggressive squalor** that pervades to a greater or lesser extent the whole of modern existence.' Even other members of the New English Art Club were shocked, and the artist **Stanhope Forbes** angrily scorned the picture as '**tawdry, vulgar and the sentiment of the lowest music hall**'.

Notes

- 'No painter before Sickert had dared to consider the music hall as a fitting subject for art, and his production of such pictures was considered wilful and provocative. In Britain the music hall held distinct connotations of immorality. Many of the acts, Minnie Cunningham included, dealt in the currency of ribald, vulgar or suggestive humour, and it was just this waywardness that partly made the music hall so popular. But the halls themselves were considered dens of dissolution by the moral majority. Alcohol was served throughout performances, and volatile audiences were encouraged to join in singing the often bawdy song choruses. Additionally, many of the halls were believed to be venues where prostitutes plied their trade. The Empire in Leicester Square was particularly notorious as a place where, away from the auditorium in its promenade area, clients could meet prostitutes.' (Tate website)

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/walter-richard-sickert-minnie-cunningham-r1139296>



Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), *Summer Afternoon or What Shall We Do for the Rent?*, c.1907–9, 51.5 x 41 cm, Kirkcaldy Museum & Art Gallery

- In the late 1880s Sickert spent time in Dieppe where his mistress and possible his illegitimate son lived. He began to write art reviews and between 1894 and 1904 visited Venice a number of times. He became fascinated with urban culture and the working class and many of his Venice paintings were of prostitutes that he knew.
- Back in London, he painted Cumberland Market and Camden Town. Sickert established himself in rooms in Camden Town and began to hold Saturday afternoon '**At Homes**' in his studio in Fitzroy Street. His regular core of visitors became the more formalised '**Fitzroy Street Group**', an independent, modern exhibiting society which, in 1910, evolved into the **Camden Town Group**.
- In **1907** a **prostitute** called **Emily Dimmock** was brutally **murdered** in her home at Agar Grove (then St Paul's Road), Camden. We now see a woman who may have been murdered. After sexual intercourse the man had slit her throat open while she was asleep, then left in the morning. The "**Camden Town murder**" became an ongoing source of **prurient sensationalism** in the press.
- For several years Sickert had already been painting lugubrious female nudes on

beds, and continued to do so, deliberately challenging the conventional approach to life painting—"The modern flood of representations of vacuous images dignified by the name of 'the nude' represents an artistic and intellectual bankruptcy"—giving four of them, which included a male figure, the title, The Camden Town Murder, and causing a controversy which ensured attention for his work. These paintings do not show violence, however, but a sad thoughtfulness, explained by the fact that three of them were originally exhibited with completely different titles, one more appropriately being *What Shall We Do for the Rent?*, and the first in the series, *Summer Afternoon*.

- Sickert **loved bamboozling historians**. A catalogue from 1911 shows the painting was exhibited as **Consolation**. It has also been suggested he later changed the title to *Father Comes Home* and then sold it as *The Germans in Belgium*.

Notes

- Sickert was fascinated with working-class life and with the **Camden Town Murder** which was a **prostitute called Emily Dimmock** who was murdered in **1907**. Sickert also took a keen interest in the crimes of **Jack the Ripper** that took place around 1888 in the Whitechapel area. Sickert believed he had lodged in a room used by the infamous serial killer. In 1976 a book was published **claiming that Sickert** had been forced to be an accomplice in **Jack the Ripper's murders** because of a statement from **Joseph Gorman** who claimed to be **Sickert's illegitimate son**. He later admitted **he had lied**. In **1990** another book claimed **he was the killer** and in **2002 Patricia Cornwell** published a third book in which she claims she has proof he was Jack the Ripper from **DNA evidence**. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography **dismisses such claims as 'fantasy'** as do historians.

Tate website + [comments]

- [Manet's *Olympia* combined the nude and the prostitute, categories that had been kept distinct.]
- 'Mapping the prostitute on to the nude – facing and confusing the body in art (as symbol) with the body in life (as commodity) – produced a subversive, modern, hybrid imagery which congealed into old-masterdom in its turn.' [By the end of the nineteenth century Manet's *Olympia* was hung alongside Ingres and was regarded as an 'old master'.]
- 'Murder does a certain amount of work for the realist body here. It raises the stakes in invoking an underside of prostitution which was once itself the underside of the nude.' [No one had combined the nude, prostitution and murder. That was Sickert's challenge.]
- 'The social profile of the prostitute was unskilled, poor working class, with local origins but displaced family relations (like Emily Dimmock, the youngest of fifteen children, who started her working life in a straw-hat factory in Bedford). Prostitution offered a temporary solution to pressing problems – like what to do

for the rent – and limited social and economic independence. Many women moved on or married out of it. Emily Dimmock, who was young, attractive, sociable and settled with Bertram Shaw, might have done so too. But she fell victim to a sex-murderer. After the impact of the Ripper crimes in 1888 this was the new narrative ending for the prostitute's life. Jack the Ripper switched the rails, as it were, from an imaginary trajectory that ended in shame, disease, poverty and a watery suicide to one that ended in bloody violence.' [The mid-nineteenth century fate of the fallen women (such as Watts and Augustus Egg) was poverty and suicide. At the end of the century Jack the Ripper changed this to murder.]

- Conservative artists such as Sir William Blake Richmond thought **Sickert's Camden Town Murder paintings** should be brought to the **notice of the police** as they were '**worse far than Prostitution** because it is done by a man [who] should know better' (letter from Sir William Blake Richmond to Robert Ross, 16 January 1911).

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Walter Sickert (1860-1942), *Girl at a Window, Little Rachel*, 1907, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Tate
 Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas (1834-1917), *Woman at a Window*, 1871, 61.3 x 45.9cm, Courtauld Gallery

- This painting is dominated by the **French window** of Sickert's **north-facing front room** at 6 Mornington Crescent. **Light falls softly** on the **dim figure** of the **red-haired girl**, seen looking across **Mornington Crescent Gardens**. The girl is **Rachel**, the daughter of his frame maker and she features in five known oil paintings by Sickert.
- Sickert delayed a trip to Paris to work on this sequence of paintings. He wrote to a friend to say that he had done too many 'slight sketches' and he wanted to create a few 'considered, elaborate works'.

Notes

- Rachel's surname was Sideman, and that she died in 1963 aged 70. However, on her marriage certificate her father's profession was listed as grocer. Neither Rachel or her father are listed in the 1911 London census.
- The bright exterior light falling into the dark room and softly illuminating the sitter's face was also used by Edgar Degas *Woman at a Window*, 1871-72.

- Sickert alternated the five paintings of Rachel with paintings of another model lying nude on his cast iron bed.
- Through the window Sickert shows the view across Mornington Crescent Gardens, on which the Carreras cigarette factory was built in 1928. The steeple visible on the horizon is that of St Matthew's Church in Oakley Square. Designed in Gothic Revival style by John Johnson, it was built in 1852–6 and demolished in 1977.
- In the Degas painting the woman, seated by a window against the light, looks serene. But the artist Walter Sickert recounted that Degas's work was painted around the time of the siege of Paris by the Prussians. According to Sickert, Degas gave the model a hunk of meat as payment, 'which she fell upon, so hungry was she, and devoured it raw'.

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Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942), *Variation on Peggy*, 1934–35, 57.8 x 71.8 cm, Tate

Detail from a page of the Radio Times of 16 November 1934

- The English actress **Peggy Ashcroft** is standing on the new Accademia Bridge in Venice looking back along the Grand Canal to the Santa Maria della Salute.
- *Variation on Peggy* presents a profile view of the actress, Peggy Ashcroft (1907–1991), dressed in a short-sleeved summer dress with her hair tied back in a bun. She is standing on the new wooden Accademia Bridge in Venice, looking back across the Grand Canal with the silhouette of the church of **Santa Maria della Salute** in the background. The painting was based upon a **black and white photograph** which appeared in a feature on famous female broadcasters in the *Radio Times*, 16 November 1934.
- A famous actress described how **Sickert fell in love with her** and then ‘when she faded out with Peggy [Ashcroft] became the sun, moon and stars’. At the time of their first meeting Ashcroft was **twenty-three** and just beginning to make a name for herself as a stage actress. **Sickert was seventy** and enjoying the last years of his career as something of a national treasure. She was attracted to ‘writers and creators, people who created from nothing’ He attended many of her early famous

performances and **witnessed her rise** to stardom, including her appointment as leading lady at the Old Vic theatre in 1931 and the role considered to be her finest, as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. She later recalled: 'I always **knew** when he was in the house ... If he liked a line he would break into **solitary applause**, usually at the matinées.'

Notes

- **Dame Edith Margaret Emily Ashcroft** (1907–1991), commonly known as **Peggy Ashcroft**, was an English actress whose career spanned more than sixty years. Born to a comfortable middle-class family, Ashcroft was determined from an early age to become an actress, despite **parental opposition**. She was working in smaller theatres even before graduating from drama school, and **within two years** thereafter she was starring in the **West End**. Ashcroft maintained her leading place in British theatre for the next fifty years. Always attracted by the ideals of permanent theatrical ensembles she did much of her work for the Old Vic in the early 1930s, John Gielgud's companies in the 1930s and 1940s, the Royal Shakespeare Company from the 1950s and the National Theatre from the 1970s. Well regarded in Shakespeare, Ashcroft was also known for her commitment to modern drama, appearing in plays by Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. Her career was almost wholly spent in the live theatre until the 1980s, when she **turned to television** and cinema with considerable success, winning an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress and several British and European awards.

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Thérèse Lessore (1884–1945), *Squared-up Photograph of Walter Richard Sickert*, c.1929, Islington Local History Centre, London

Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942), *The Servant of Abraham*, 1929, 61 x 50.8 cm, Tate

Thérèse Lessore (1884–1945), *Squared-up Photograph of Walter Richard Sickert*, c.1929, Islington Local History Centre, London

- The picture's source was a **photograph** of the **sixty-nine-year-old Walter Sickert** taken by his third wife, Thérèse Lessore. The photograph was taken from below so Sickert looms over the viewer. The penetrating gaze of the photograph has been replaced by a more ambivalent but difficult to read gaze. The photograph is squared up to assist with the transfer to the canvas.
- It is one of **three late self-portraits** casting the artist as a **Biblical character**, appropriating the monumentality of the Old Masters as well as provoking public perception of Sickert in the national press at the time. The *Manchester Guardian* named it a '**terrific statement of an artist ego**'. Sickert trained as an actor and his self-portraits portray various aspects of his character, or the aspects that he wishes to convey. This portrait is harder to interpret as the role is ambiguous and Sickert may therefore be making a comment on the nature of identity itself.
- Sickert had **become a celebrity** and the press followed his **witticisms** and peculiarities taking affectionate pride in his international reputation. The press

were **amused** by his frequent **change to the titles** of his paintings and of his **own name** when in 1926-7 he **dropped the 'Walter' and wanted to be known as 'Richard Sickert'**. Sickert used a press cuttings service and shamelessly played the role of ageing eccentric and this portrait may be another humorous and perceptive engagement with the nature of identity.

Reviews

- The *Manchester Guardian* wrote, 'Nowhere has he shown more conclusively his mastery of his material and complete understanding of exactly what he wants to do ... this terrific **statement of an artist ego** must stand as **one of the marking pictures of our time**. One would like to **see it in the Uffizi** beside the other self-portraits of famous artists.'
- The *Morning Post* wrote, 'Anyone who would solve **the enigma known nowadays as Richard Sickert** must see his self-portrait **'The Servant of Abraham'** as subscribed on the canvas itself, with his **customary blague**. The left eye, looking as purposely as the point of a fencing foil, arrests you as soon as you enter the Savile Gallery ... and the right eye, half shut in the shade, sardonically directs the attack on the intellectuality or humour of the visitor. The shaggy face cannot be read as easily as a tale with a happy ending. There is in it, as in his art, something that gives you seriously to think.'
- The *Saturday Review* wrote, 'A cruel caricature, following on the previous discovery that by stressing the character of the 'man who understands the commercial side of Art' which he frequently affects, he could turn himself into a rather formidable Jew. The portrait is an excellent rendering of one of his favourite impersonations; but it is not, of course, in the least like the real Sickert, the delicacy of whose expression that impersonation never for long concedes.'
- Another write commented, badge of suffering', symbolic of a man who has forfeited his pre-eminence and no longer occupies the position he once commanded'.

Notes

- It was painted in Islington and first exhibited in London in 1930.
- In the Biblical story the servant of Abraham was sent to find a wife for Abraham's son Isaac. The servant **found Rebekah** drawing water from a well and recognised her as the person he was looking for because she offered him water and water for his camels. The servant is named once as Eliezer, a Gentile, and is regarded as a loyal and faithful servant of his master and of God.
- See the reference to a long article with critics comments on the Tate site.

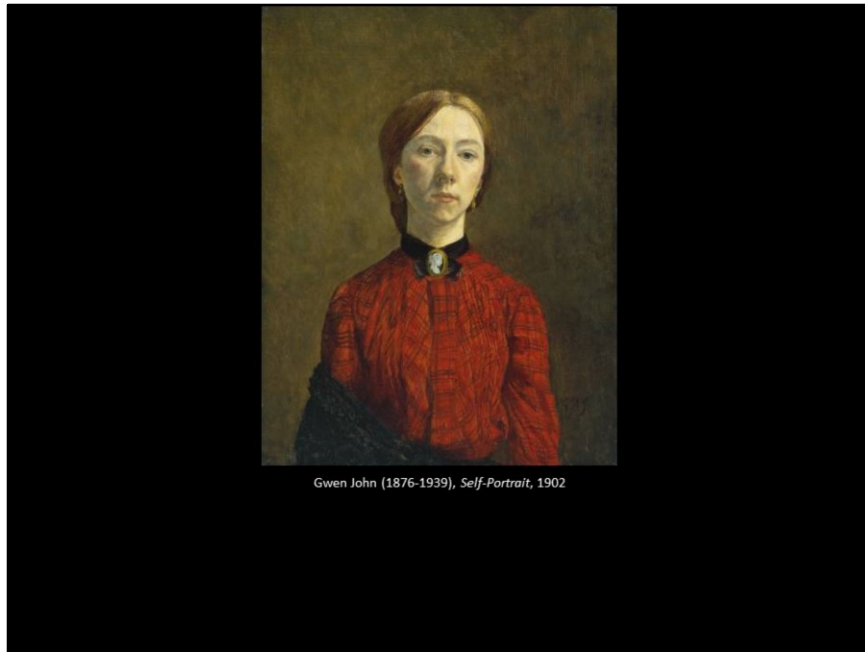
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GWEN JOHN (1876-1939)



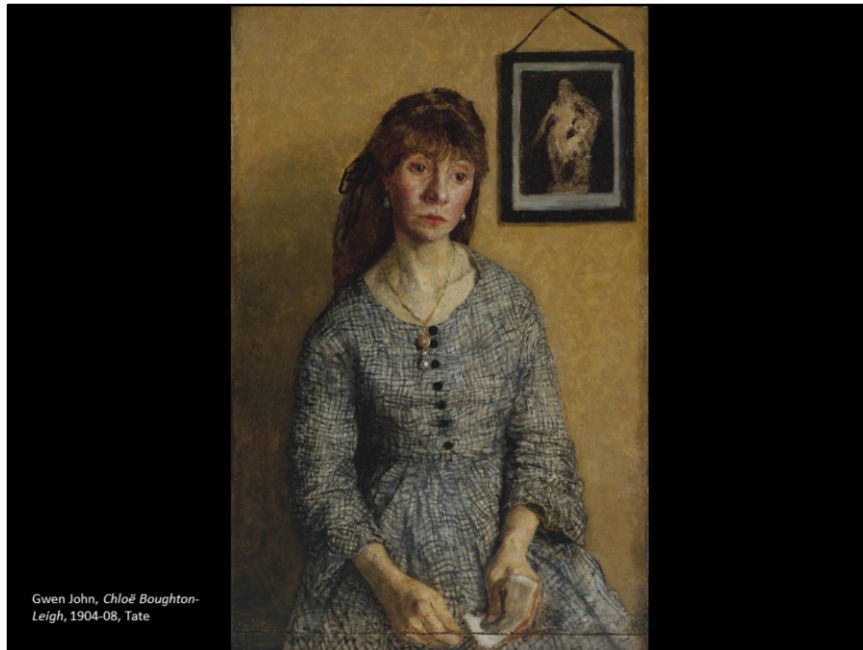


Gwen John (1876-1939), *Self-Portrait*, 1902

- Gwen John's work never exhibits any flashiness or contrived effects; it is always simple, plain yet deeply moving. This portrait was described by one critic [T. Martin Wood in *Studio*] as **'one of the greatest achievements in this exhibition because of its sincerity'** and in 1926 she was described as **'a sort of modern Vermeer'**. One reviewer [Nigel Gosling, 1968, *Observer Review*] **'The force of this almost obsessive reticence is astonishing ... the extreme subtlety and reticence of the exquisite tonal arrangements ... is a chief source of delight ... Its power within awesomely restricted means is reminiscent of Morandi's.'**
- Gwen John (1876-1939) was a Welsh artist who worked in France most of her life. She trained at the Slade School of Art from 1895 to 1898 where her younger brother, Augustus John, had already begun his studies. They lived together on fruit and nuts and even as students her brother's personal glamour made him a celebrity. Gwen was quieter and her reputation has steadily grown since her death. She **neglected her health** throughout her life and in **1900-01** she lived as a **squatter** in a derelict building.
- She and was taught in the traditional manner, which involved copying Old Master paintings. This training shows in the naturalism and carefully controlled colour

range of this picture. As a woman in a career still largely dominated by men, including her successful brother Augustus, Gwen had to struggle for recognition. The self-scrutinizing intensity of this image, and the isolation of the figure, registers some sense of this struggle.

- She settled in **Paris in 1904**, working as a **model, becoming Rodin's mistress** and immersing herself in the artistic world of the metropolis. She lived in **France** for the **rest of her life**, exhibiting on both sides of the Channel.
- From **1910 to 1924** nearly all her work was purchased by her **patron John Quinn** an American art collector and this freed her from having to work as a model, mostly for women artists. The majority of her work is portraits, mainly of female sitters and her oeuvre is small, consisting of only 158 oil paintings.
- She drew **thousands of drawings** and thought a painting should be finished in **one or two sittings** and '**For that one must paint a lot of canvases probably and waste them**'. Her meticulous preparation shows the **influence** of James McNeill **Whistler** who she **trained under** in Paris at the Académie Carmen.
- Like many women artists she tried drawing her own body in the mirror but she complained in a letter to her brother about how difficult it was. **Even the Slade imposed restrictions** of women drawing from female models and so **friends would draw each other** but **kept silent** about the practice as 'the **respectability** of these middle-class women students would have been jeopardized if they had acknowledged at the time that they had worked from studies of their own bodies rather than those of anonymous working-class models'.
- When she lived in Paris she had to work as a model to survive. She posed nude for Auguste Rodin and for **other artists, mostly women**. In her dairies she wrote of many occasions when, working as a model, she felt **harassed or abused** by both men and women artists. For example, one of her clients, a woman artist, was kissing a man all afternoon and then told her not to tell anyone if she wanted to keep her job as a model, treating her as a child and discussing her as if she was not there. As a model she would be kept waiting for hours, shouted at, ignored, given no breaks, and propositioned by male artists. She developed fierce attachments to both men and women that worried some people and she later became Rodin's lover.



Gwen John, *Chloë Boughton-Leigh*, 1904-08, Tate

- The solitary figure, her downward gaze and the open book in her hand produce a sense of calmness and intensity that was typical of her work. Gwen John's quiet art with its subtle colour relationships, stands in contrast to her brother, Augustus John's, far more assertive work. She was once overshadowed by his work and his enormous reputation at the time but critical opinion now tends to view her as the more talented. Augustus predicted this reversal, saying '**In 50 years' time I will be known as the brother of Gwen John.**' And in 1952 she was described as '**one of the finest painters of our time and country**' [John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*].
- **Ellen Theodosia Boughton-Leigh** was known by her family as **Chloë** and met John through her **sister Maude** who studied at the Slade with John. The **subdued colouring, short foreground** and **self-absorption** of the sitter create a **deeply intense atmosphere**. John showed it in London, at the New English Art Club. Chloë, was, like Gwen John, a Catholic convert and latterly she and her sister Maude lived on Canvey Island. Maude was Gwen John's friend; both had studied at the Slade and probably met in Paris.

- John added a strip of wood at the bottom of the picture to enable her to paint the whole of the hands.

Notes

- Gwen John had to work as a model to survive in Paris and she posed nude for Auguste Rodin and became his lover. Rodin was much older and was the most famous artist of his time. John became fiercely attached to him and when the affair ended she became a Catholic and spent the rest of her life alone in a Paris suburb working as what she called 'God's little artist'.



Gwen John, *Girl with Bare Shoulders*, 1909-10?, 43.4 x 26 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gwen John (1876-1939), *Nude Girl*, 1909-10, 44.5 x 27.9 cm, Tate

- A profoundly **deliberate painter**, Gwen John offers the viewer an **audacious view** of womanhood stripped bare, and it is **calculated to shock**. The **nude** was considered, at the time, to be an **unsuitable subject for women painters** yet John boldly paints flaunting her nakedness. **Skinny, ascetic**, with skin the colour of alabaster, **Fenella Lovell** is depicted against a dingy wall, the unwilling victim of Gwen John's gaze. She is not nude, but naked, a lean-faced pale creature trapped in John's paired down palette of foggy greys, greens and yellows. As a female painter her perception of the nude was very different from that of a male artist. This is **not painted** as a conventional **female beauty** or an object of admiration or fantasy. It is simply a **woman without her clothes on**. This painting was made between 1909 and 1910, **three years** into John's love affair with Auguste **Rodin** and **five years after** her **insane mission to walk to Rome**, which reduced her to a **half-crazed, half-starved wreck**.
- The human body, a traditional theme in western art, was a tricky subject for

women artists at the turn of the century because of questions of morality and decorum. By using a narrow colour range and minimal setting, and suppressing biographical details, John draws attention to the naked body. At the same time, the character of the model, **Fenella Lovell**, comes across powerfully. So the viewer experiences this painting, disconcertingly, as a portrait of a contemporary woman with no clothes on, who seems to be uncomfortable that we are looking at her.

- **John intensely disliked the model.** In a letter to a friend she wrote, “**It is a great strain doing Fenella. It is a pretty little face but she is dreadful.**” In another letter she wrote, “Why I want to send the two paintings [to the New English Art Club] is because I may sell them and then I shall pay her what I owe and never see her again.” The paintings were exhibited but were not sold. *Nude Girl* began with the model clothed but it was altered as the painting progressed. It was **bought** by the Contemporary Art Society in **1911** and presented to the **Tate in 1917**. It was the **first of her paintings** to enter a **public art collection**. The clothed portrait has an unflinching gaze but the nude girl has a greater intensity.

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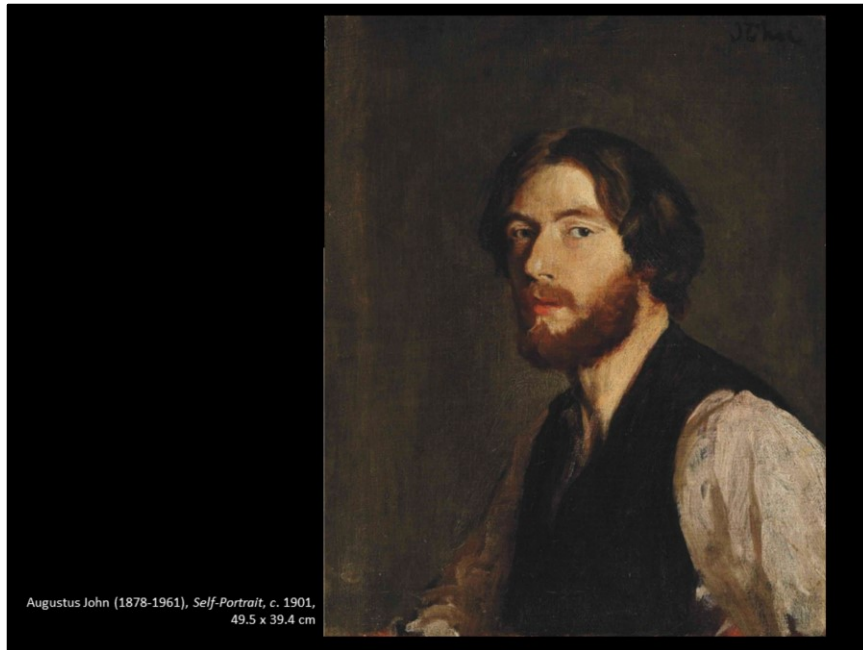
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AUGUSTUS JOHN (1878-1961)





Augustus John (1878-1961), *Self-Portrait*, c. 1901, 49.5 x 39.4 cm
Sold at Christie's 2012 for £30,000

- Was a Welsh painter who for a short time around **1910** was an **important exponent of Post-Impressionism**. He was the **younger brother** of the acclaimed artist **Gwen John**. He briefly attended the **Tenby School of Art** before leaving for the **Slade School of Art** in London. He became the **star pupil** of the drawing teacher Henry Tonks and was recognised as the **most talented draughtsman of his generation**.
- In 1897 he was **seriously injured** while swimming and his lengthy convalescence accelerated his artistic development. He studied in Paris, married in 1901 and started teaching at the University of Liverpool. He fell in love with the town Martigues in Provence and lived there from 1910 to 1928. Throughout his life he was interested in **painting the Romani people** (whom he called gypsies) and for a short time **travelled round Britain in a caravan** with his **wife, mistress** (who in 1907 became his second wife on the death of his first) and the **children of both women**.
- During **World War I** he painted **two huge murals** but they remained **unfinished**.

The bulk of his later work consist of **portraits**. He was known for the psychological insight of his portraits, many of which were **considered 'cruel'** for the truth of the depiction. There was an international outcry when **Lord Leverhulme cut out the head of his portrait** to hide it in his vault. Perhaps Lever was shocked because he appears not confident and bold but reflective and sad. The painting was reassembled in 1954 and is in the Leverhulme Gallery, Liverpool.

- **By the 1920s Augustus John was the leading British portrait painter** replacing John Singer Sargent. His most famous portrait is of Dylan Thomas.
- One critic has claimed that "the **painterly brilliance** of his early work **degenerated into flashiness and bombast**, and the **second half of his long career added little** to his achievement."
- **Augustus John's promiscuity** gave rise to rumours that he had **fathered as many as 100 children** over the course of his life.



Augustus John (1878–1961), *Colonel T.E. Lawrence*, 1919, 80 x 59.7 cm, Tate

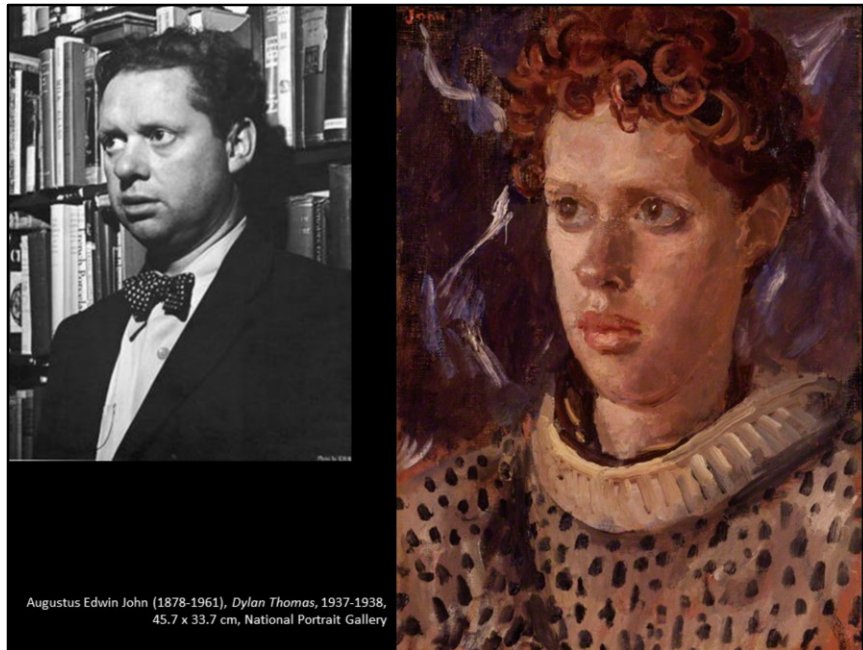
- Tate website
 - 'After service as a war artist in World War I, John found **fashionable success** with his portraits of **famous literary and society figures** such as **Thomas Hardy**, **James Joyce** and Lady Ottoline Morrell. Popularly known as 'Lawrence of Arabia', TE Lawrence became famous for his exploits as British Military liaison officer during the Arab Revolt of 1916-18. In 1919 he acted as adviser and interpreter for his friend the Emir Feisal at the Paris Peace Conference, where John painted many official portraits, including one of the Emir.'
- Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935) was known as Lawrence of Arabia because of his role during campaigns and the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. He was the **illegitimate son of an Irish nobleman** and an illegitimate Scottish governess. The Irish nobleman left his wife to life with the governess and they called themselves Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence. Lawrence went to school in Oxford and later studied History at **Jesus College, Oxford**. He served in Egypt and Arabia during the war and later became a diplomat. Between 1922 and

1935 he served as an **enlisted man**, retired from public life and wrote his most famous book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* an **autobiographical account** of his participation in the **Arab Revolt**. In 1935, Lawrence was **fatally injured** in a **motorcycle accident in Dorset**. He was riding a Brough Superior SS100 motorcycle when a dip in the road obstructed a view of two boys on bicycles. He swerved to avoid them, lost control and was thrown over the handlebars and died six days later. His **neurosurgeon** began a life long study of **head injuries** of motorcyclists which **led to** the use of **crash helmets** by both military and civilian motorcyclists.

- There is no reliable evidence of his sexuality and his friends considered him asexual. There is indirect evidence that he was a homosexual but no partners have been identified. There is also some evidence that he was a masochist which one of his biographers has suggested was connected to the childhood beatings he received from his mother for routine misbehaviour.

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Augustus Edwin John (1878-1961), *Dylan Thomas*, 1937-1938, 45.7 x 33.7 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- “This engaging portrait links one of the most important twentieth-century British portrait painters with one of the **most significant and notorious literary figures** of the period, **Dylan Thomas** (1914-1953). This portrait is one of two painted by Augustus John and is the product of a close acquaintance. The artist and sitter met in the mid-1930s at the Fitzroy Tavern in London's Charlotte Street, and furthered their friendship during many evenings there and in the nearby Marquis of Granby. John introduced Thomas to his future wife, Caitlin Macnamara. After their marriage in 1937, the Thomases met John fairly frequently whilst visiting Caitlin's mother who lived near John in Hampshire. It was in these circumstances that Dylan Thomas sat to Augustus John.” (NPG)
- Dylan Marlais Thomas (1914-1935) was a **Welsh poet** he poems "**Do not go gentle into that good night**" and "And death shall have no dominion"; the 'play for voices' *Under Milk Wood*; and stories and radio broadcasts. He acquired the reputation for being a **drunken and doomed poet** and **died** at the age of **39**. He was an undistinguished pupil at school and **left at 16** to become a journalist. When he was

20 'Light breaks where no sun shines' caught the attention of the literary world. He married in 1937 and he and his wife settled in a Welsh village and their relationship was defined by alcoholism and was mutually destructive.

- He became a popular poet but found it difficult to earn a living and took work at the BBC reading tours and radio broadcasts.
- He travelled to America in the 1950s and earned money reading but his drinking worsened. During his fourth trip to New York in 1953, Thomas became gravely ill and fell into a coma, from which he never recovered.



Some facts about Dame Laura Knight,

- Laura Knight (née Johnson, 1877-1970) one of the most famous and prolific female British artists started life in most impoverished circumstances, having to quickly learn how to fend for herself from an early age as together with her sister Eva ("Sis") she became orphaned in her late teens.
- She was the first woman to be elected as a Royal Academician.
- She was the only woman to be given War Commissions in the Two World Wars.
- In 1946, at the age of 69! She was commissioned as the only British artist to cover the Nuremberg Trials.
- The first female artist to be made a Dame of the British Empire at a time when such awards were rarely given and not so prolifically as today.
- The first husband and wife to be Royal Academicians.
- She became most famous in the 1920s, 1930.s and 1940.'s and then became known by the press as the grand old lady in the Art world; but kept on painting and exhibiting up to her death in her 93rd year
- The first woman to have had a retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy.
- She exhibited every year from 1903 to her death in 1970 (67 years) at the Royal Academy except for 1918 when she was ill

and 1922 when she was in USA). Such exhibits at the RA totaled same 284 works plus a further 176 at her retrospective exhibition. This number of works has not been exceeded by any other artist.

- At the 1928 Summer Olympics in Amsterdam she won the Silver Medal in Painting for *Boxer* (1917).
- She was also an author of three books, two autobiographies and one on the circus; wrote a play for Sir Barry Jackson and privately was a poet (none of which have yet been published).

References

- <http://www.damelaurnight.com/>



Laura Knight (1877-1970), *Self-Portrait with Nude*, 1913, National Portrait Gallery

- **Laura Knight** (born Johnson) was an artist who worked in the figurative, realist tradition and was an English Impressionist. She was created a Dame in 1929 (aged 52) and was elected a Royal Academician in 1936, the first since 1778. Her large retrospective at the RA in 1965 was the first for a woman.
- Her father died shortly after she was born and her mother struggled financially but managed to send her France to study in a Paris atelier. She returned and her mother managed to enrol her at the Nottingham School of Art aged 13. She started teaching art when she was 15 and her mother fell ill and won a scholarship and gold medal from the South Kensington Museum (which became the V&A in 1899). She met Harold Knight when she was 17 and they married in 1903 when she was 26.
- She became a central figure in the **Newlyn** artists colony with Alfred Munnings.
- In 1913, she painted a nude, *Self Portrait with Nude* showing her painting the artist **Ella Naper**. Using mirrors she painted herself and the model as seen from the point of view of someone entering the studio. As an art student she was not permitted to paint nude models, only casts, which she deeply resented. It was first shown in Newlyn and was well received but rejected by the RA. The *Daily Telegraph* art critic

called it '**vulgar**' and suggested it '*might quite appropriately have stayed in the artist's studio.*' She continued to exhibit it throughout her career and it continued to receive criticism but it was purchased by the NPG after her death and **is now considered both a key work in the story of female self-portraiture and as symbolic of wider female emancipation.**

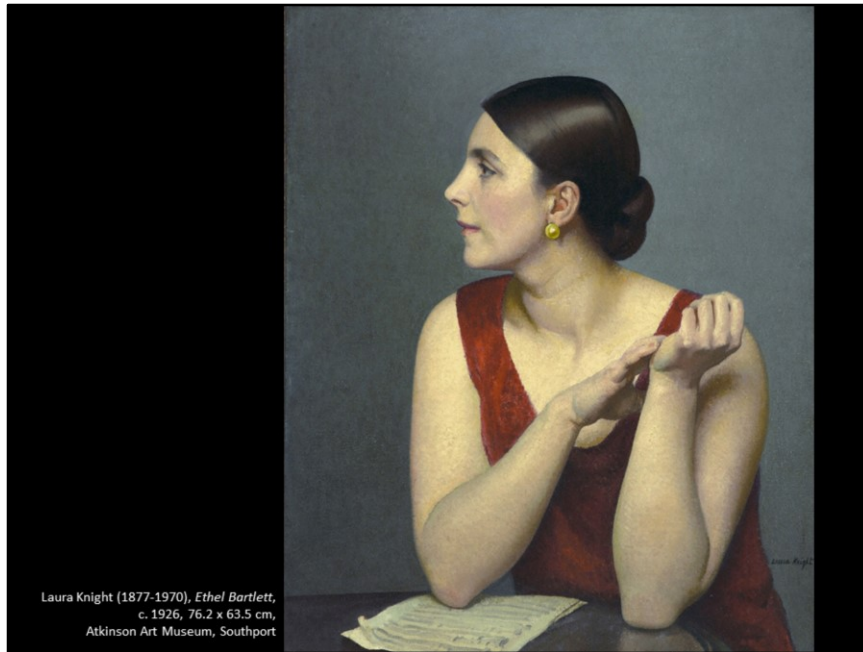
- She painted the world of **theatre and ballet** and was a **war artist** during WWII. She was also interested in marginal groups, such as **gypsies and circus performers.**
- A woman artist painting a nude was very difficult during the nineteenth century as few art schools allowed women students to attend life classes. One of the first was the Slade towards the end of the century. It was one thing to paint a working class model another for a middle-class Slade woman student to pose naked. Women students painted themselves in the mirror and other women students but did not acknowledge this.
- In 2015 Simon Schama described the painting as a "**masterpiece**" and "**incomparably, her greatest work, all at once conceptually complex, heroically independent, formally ingenious and lovingly sensual.**"

Notes

- **Edward Poynter, first principal at the Slade, in his inaugural address in October 1871:**

*'There is unfortunately a difficulty which has always stood in the way of female students acquiring that thorough knowledge of the figure which is essential to the production of work of a high class; and that is, of course, that they are debarred from the same complete study of the model that is open to the male students...But I have always been anxious to institute a **class where the half-draped model might be studied**, to give those **ladies** who are desirous of obtaining sound instruction in drawing the figure, an opportunity of gaining the necessary knowledge...It is my desire that **in all the classes, except of course those for the study of the nude model, the male and female students should work together.***

- The Royal Academy did not allow women in its School although in 1860, Laura Herford was admitted by accident to the RA Schools after submitting drawings with only her initials, L.H. This was later called 'the invasion' and in the next ten years an additional 34 women were admitted as students. Following a number of petitions it was resolved in 1883 to open a women-only class to sketch the partially draped figure but this was withdrawn a month later and women were not allowed to sketch the partially draped figure until 1893. By this time there were life classes for women across the country and the Royal Academy was perceived as old-fashioned.



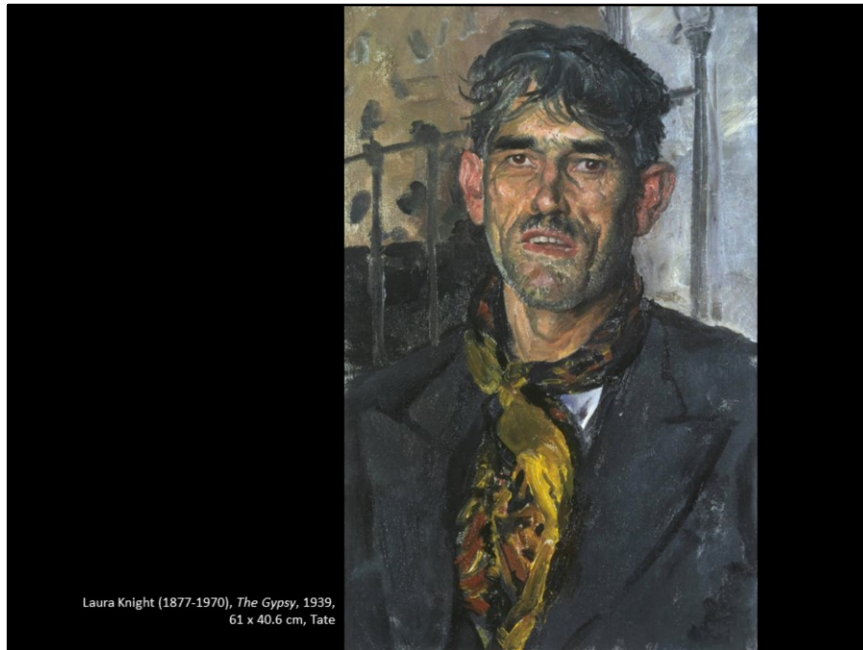
Laura Knight, *Ethel Bartlett*, c. 1926, 76.2 x 63.5 cm, Atkinson Art Museum, Southport

- During WWI, with the imposition of conscription in 1916, her husband Harold Knight, registered as a conscientious objector, and was eventually required to work as a farm labourer. Wartime censorship included restrictions on painting around the British coastline, which caused problems for Laura Knight.
- This is one of her finest portraits. The sitter was **Ethel Bartlett** (1896-1978) a **young pianist** whose serene beauty captivated Knight and her husband Harold Knight. The sitter was the wife of the famous pianist Rae Robertson and they toured Europe and America as duet pianists. Shown at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition of 1926, Ethel Bartlett confirmed Knight as the country's pre-eminent painter of women, a stamp of approval that freed her to take risks.
- Later in 1926 Harold Knight spent several months at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, in America, painting portrait commissions of surgeons. Laura joined him there and was given permission to paint at the Baltimore Children's Hospital and in the racially segregated wards of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. One of the most stunning results was a portrait of Pearl Johnson, a long-serving John Hopkins nurse who soon became a friend. An energetic campaigner against segregation, Johnson took Knight to lectures and concerts to observe this early phase of the Civil Rights

movement.

Laura Knight (1877-1970, née Johnson)

- English artist in the figurative, realist tradition who embraced Impressionism. She became one of the most successful and popular painters in Britain.
- Her father died shortly after her birth and so she was brought up in tight financial circumstances. She was sent to **France** to study in an **atelier** at the **age of 12** but she shortly returned and entered the **Nottingham School of Art** when she was 13 paying no fees. Her mother **Charlotte Johnson** did part-time work at the School. When she was 15 she took over her mother's teaching duties when her mother became seriously ill. She won a scholarship and a gold medal from the South Kensington School.
- She was criticized for 'drawing like a man' as she used thick outlines and drew from the shoulder rather than the wrist.
- She gave private lessons to **support** herself and her sister, **Sissie (Evangeline Agnes)** when her mother, her other sister and her grandparents died.
- She met **Harold Knight, then aged 17**, and the most promising student at the School and she was determined to copy his techniques. They became friends and were **married in 1903**.
- In **1894 they visited Staithes**, a Yorkshire fishing community, to paint. They returned with Sissie to live and work there.
- They also visited the artists colony at **Laren in the Netherlands**, a group of artists who had been painting in remote rural communities since 1850.
- They moved to **Newlyn in 1907** and then a nearby village called Lamorna. Laura and Harold Knight and Alfred Munnings became central figures in the artists colony. She found more freedom to express herself and developed a more Impressionistic style. About this time Knight began painting compositions of women in the open air, often on the rocks at Lamorna. Knight would sometimes use models from London who were prepared to pose nude.
- Created a **Dame in 1929** and in 1936 became the first woman to be elected as an **Academician** since its foundation
- She painted the theatre, ballet and marginalised communities, such as gypsies and circus performers. She was a war artist during the Second World War.



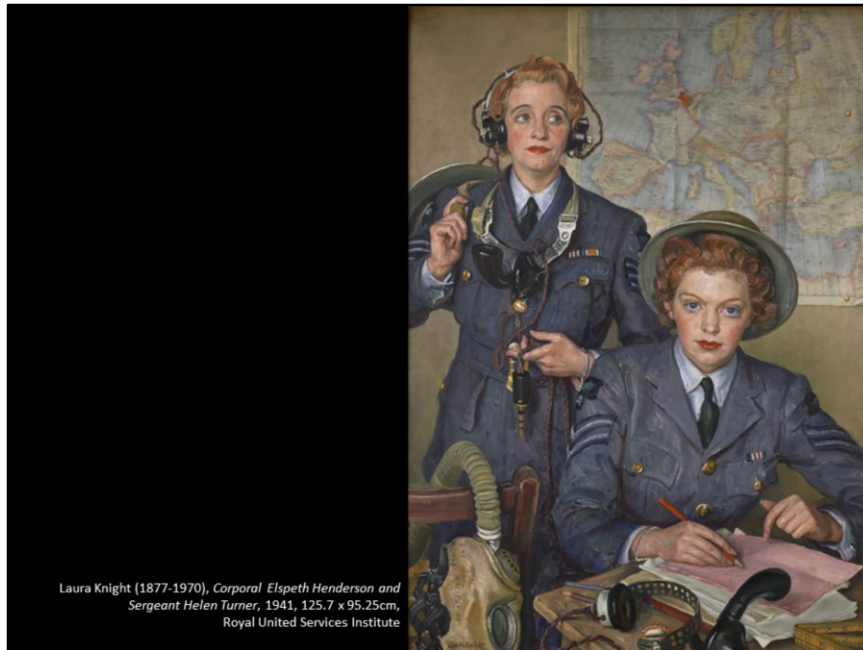
Laura Knight (1877-1970), *The Gypsy*, 1939, 61 x 40.6 cm, Tate

- The artist wrote (15 November 1957): 'He, **a gentleman called Mr Smith**, one wet day, at Iver, Bucks, in the camp there near the railway, posed for me in a little lean-to tent - just a corner in shelter, crowded **by a big double bed** where an old gipsy and his wife slept. I painted it in 3 or 4 hours. ... I haven't anything more to say about that Mr Smith except that he figures in several other pictures I painted at Iver - one in particular, his whole family which is somewhere in Scotland - wife, three children and his mother, a beautiful old Romany, queen of the camp.'



Laura Knight, *Corporal J. M. Robins*, 1941, 91.4 x 60.9 cm, Imperial War Museums

- London Gazette, 20 December 1940: 'Corporal Robins was in a dug-out which received a direct hit during an intense enemy bombing raid. A number of men were killed and two seriously injured. Though dust and fumes filled the shelter, **Corporal Robins immediately went to the assistance of the wounded** and rendered first aid. While they were being removed from the demolished dug-out, she fetched a stretcher and stayed with the wounded until they were evacuated. She displayed **courage and coolness** of a very high order in a position of extreme danger.'



Laura Knight (1877-1970), *Corporal Elspeth Henderson and Sergeant Helen Turner*, 1941, 125.7 x 95.25cm, Royal United Services Institute

- Corporal Elspeth Henderson and Sergeant Helen Turner celebrates two young women in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force who were awarded the Military Medal for Bravery in recognition of the way they had stayed at their posts after their building received a direct hit.
- In the last few days of August 1940 the Luftwaffe concentrated on knocking out the fighter airfields in the south-east of England; and Biggin Hill, one of the most important, suffered heavily.
- During this period, when there were six raids in three days, the then Corporal Elspeth Henderson was on duty in the operations room, responsible for maintaining the vital contact between the airfield operations staff and the controllers at Fighter Command headquarters, Uxbridge.
- On August 30 nine Junkers 88 bombers delivered a devastating attack on the airfield. An air raid shelter was completely destroyed, and a number of WAAFs sheltering in an adjacent slit trench were amongst the 39 people killed. Others were entombed, and Elspeth Henderson and Helen Turner were some of the first to help to dig them out.

References

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1527548/Elspeth-Green.html>



Laura Knight, *Ruby Loftus screwing a Breech-ring*, 1943, Imperial War Museum

Laura Knight (1877-1970), *Ruby Loftus screwing a Breech-ring*, 1943, 86.3 x 101.9 cm, Imperial War Museum

- Miss Ruby Loftus had been brought to the attention of the War Artist's Advisory Committee as 'an **outstanding factory worker**'. Laura Knight was expected to paint a studio portrait but the Ministry of Supply requested that she be painted at work in the Royal Ordnance Factory in Newport.
- Making a '**Bofors Breech ring**' was the **most highly skilled job** in the factory, normally requiring **eight or nine years training**. Loftus was **aged 21** at the time of the painting and had no previous factory experience. Her ability to operate the machine presented a considerable publicity coup at the time and she was probably placed at this machine for this reason.
- Knight had been painting circus performers and ballet dancers; industrial machinery was a wholly new element in her work but her technical accuracy was praised in contemporary reports.
- The painting received **enormous publicity** and was reproduced in most of the **daily newspapers**. Laura Knight was the most outstandingly successful women artist of the inter-war years and she was the best-known and most honoured woman artist.

She did not conform to gender expectations and campaigned actively and vocally to become the first female Royal Academician since the founding membership. She wrote, '**Can Women Succeed as Artists?**' and identified **inequality of opportunity** between men and women as the basis for the **latter's near exclusion** from the centre of the British art world.

- **It could be said that Knight, like Loftus, was proving herself in a traditionally male environment.** However, the press and society at large identified Knight and Loftus **not as beacons** of gender equality but as **outstanding exceptions** whose achievements highlighted the limitations rather than the potential of other women.

Notes

- *Ruby Loftus Screwing a Breech Ring* (1943) – in the autumn of 1942 the WAAC commissioned Knight to paint a portrait to bolster female recruitment to the ordnance factories, as the Ministry of Supply were concerned at the level of disaffection and absenteeism among women in the factories. The resulting painting is one of the largest oil paintings in the entire WAAC collection, and the largest single figure portrait it acquired throughout the war. The painting was first shown on 30 April 1943 at the Royal Academy and the next day was reproduced in eight British newspapers. The painting, along with Knight and Loftus, also featured in a British Paramount News short film shown in cinemas, and was reproduced in a poster version by WAAC. The success of the painting led to further industrial commissions for Knight throughout the 1940s. In 1945 she painted *Switch Works* at Ellison Switchgear in Birmingham. This was followed by paintings of operations at the Dow Mac concrete railway-sleeper works and at the Skefko ball bearing factory

References

- Imperial War Museum website
- Brian Foss, *War Paint, Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*, 2007



Laura Knight (1877-1970), *A Balloon Site, Coventry*, 1943, 102.5 x 127 cm, Imperial War Museums

- **Laura Knight** (1877-1970) was an English artist who worked in oils, watercolours, etching, engraving and drypoint. Knight was a painter in the figurative, realist tradition who embraced English Impressionism. In her long career Knight was among the most successful and popular painters in Britain. In 1929 she was created a Dame, and in 1936 became the first woman elected to the Royal Academy since its foundation in 1768. Her large retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1965 was another first for a woman. Although Knight was known for painting amidst the world of the theatre and ballet in London, and for being a war artist during the Second World War, she was also greatly interested in, and inspired by, marginalised communities and individuals, including Gypsies and circus performers. Her success in the male-dominated British art establishment paved the way for greater status and recognition for women artists.
- Laura Johnson was born in Derbyshire and her father died shortly after she was born so she grew up in a family struggling with financial problems.
- Her husband, Harold Knight registered as a conscientious objector, and was eventually required to work as a farm labourer. Wartime censorship included

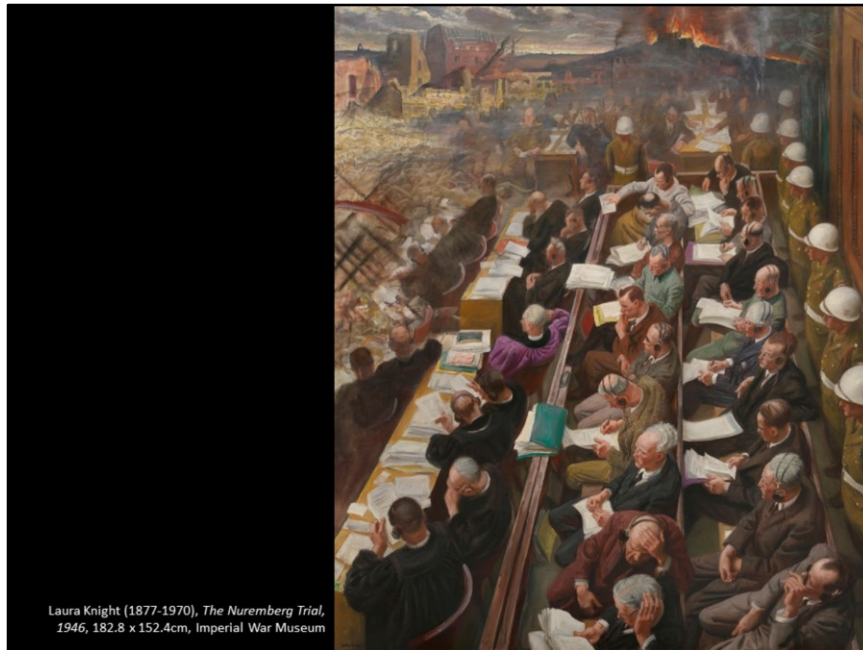
restrictions on painting around the British coastline, which caused problems for Laura Knight.

- In September 1939 Knight was asked to produce a recruitment poster for the Women's Land Army. Knight hired two Suffolk Punch horses and a plough from a farmer and painted them outdoors in a cherry orchard on the Averills' farm in Worcestershire. Her original design for the WLA poster was rejected for placing too much emphasis on the horses rather than the women working. A new design, with a single woman, was accepted. Knight painted her 1940 Royal Academy entry, January 1940, showing a similar scene at the same time. During the Second World War, Knight was an official war artist, contracted by the War Artists' Advisory Committee on short-term commissions.
- *A Balloon Site, Coventry* (1942) – shows a team of women hoisting a barrage balloon into position with the chimneys of industrial Coventry in the background surrounding the spire of Coventry Cathedral. WAAC commissioned the work as a propaganda tool to recruit women for Balloon Command, and Knight's composition succeeds in making the work appear both heroic and glamorous.

References

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Knight

<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/15503>



Laura Knight (1877-1970), *The Nuremberg Trial*, 1946, 182.8 x 152.4cm, Imperial War Museum

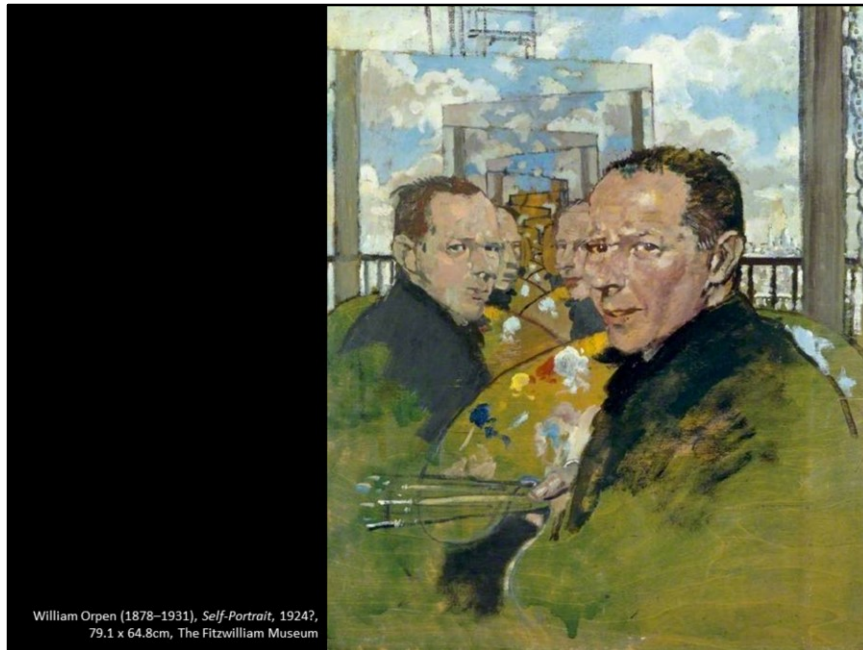
- The defendants are shown sitting on two benches with a line of military police behind them and two rows of lawyers in front of them. The rear and left walls of the court room are missing to show the rubble and bomb damage of the surrounding city.
- Imperial War Museum, “Knight was appointed a ‘**war correspondent**’ for this commission and made a special BBC broadcast from Nuremberg. She gained special access to the broadcasting box just above the prisoners where she was able to make charcoal studies of the main protagonists amongst the lawyers and the accused. Her painting reproduces faithfully the courtroom scene and is, in effect, a group portrait of the prisoners who are shown wearing the cumbersome headphones necessary to hear a translation of the proceedings. Knight was **deeply disturbed** by what she heard during the trial and the painting shows a landscape of desolation floating above the courtroom like a **shared nightmare**. We are invited to contemplate the dreadful consequences of totalitarian power. The international tribunal at Nuremberg tried **twenty-one leading Germans**, headed by **Hermann Goering**. Eleven of the accused were sentenced to death, three to life

imprisonment and a further four were given lesser prison terms.”

- Kenneth Clarke sneered at Laura Knight’s work and described it as ‘commonplaceness’ because she had been trained in Nottingham rather than London.



WILLIAM ORPEN (1878-1931)



William Orpen (1878–1931), *Self-Portrait*, 1924?, 79.1 x 64.8cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum

- Major Sir William Newenham Montague Orpen, KBE, RA, RHA (1878–1931) was an Irish artist who worked mainly in London. William Orpen was a fine draughtsman and a popular, **commercially successful, painter of portraits** for the **well-to-do in Edwardian society**, though many of his most striking paintings are self-portraits.
- Between 1911 and 1913, John Singer **Sargent promoted Orpen's work** and he soon built a lucrative reputation, in both London and Dublin, for painting society portraits.
- Orpen's ability to produce the **swagger portraits** that Edwardian high society greatly valued. Group portraits of a type known as conversation pieces were also hugely popular and Orpen painted several. By the start of World War One, Orpen was the **most famous and most commercially successful artist working in Britain**.

Notes

- William Orpen (1878-1931) was **born in Ireland**, the **son of a solicitor**. Both his parents were keen amateur artists and his eldest brother became a well-known architect. Orpen had a **happy childhood** and was a **naturally talented painter**. At

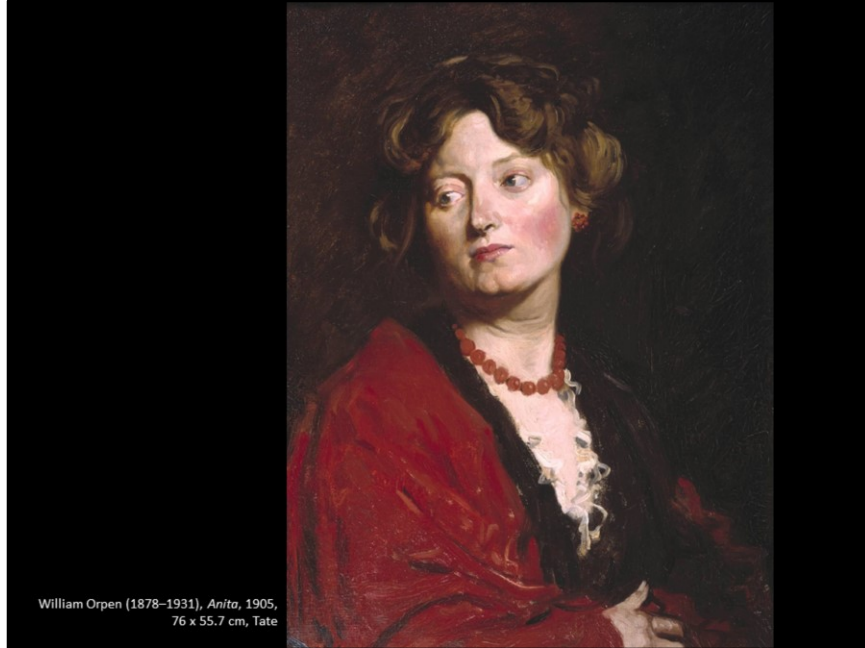
13 he enrolled at the **Dublin Metropolitan School of Art** and **won every major prize** including the British Isles gold medal for life drawing. He studied at the **Slade School of Art** from 1897 to 1899 and experimented with different techniques including **incorporating mirrors** in his paintings to have images within images. He included **false frames** and frequently made reference to other artists in his painting. His teachers at the Slade, Henry Tonks and Philip Wilson Steer made sure he became a member of the New English Art Club.



William Orpen (1878–1931), *The Mirror*, 1900, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Tate

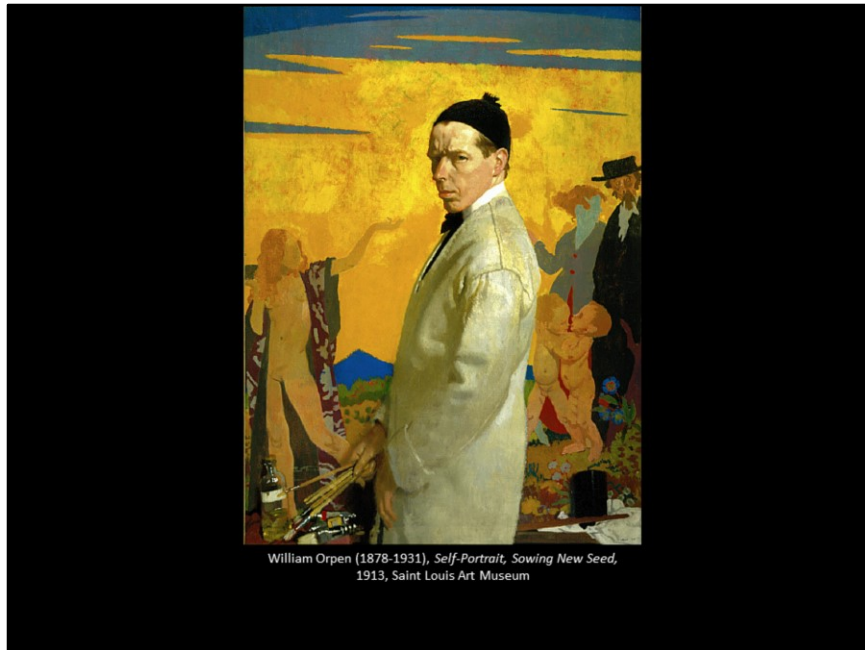
- The sitter in this portrait is **Emily Scobel**, a model from the Slade School of Art. Orpen was **briefly engaged** to her. The room is apparently an accurate portrayal of Orpen's lodgings, but the shallow pictorial depth and decorative, or 'aesthetic,' arrangement of objects is **based on Whistler's famous portrait of his mother** in profile. The concave mirror on the wall reflects the artist painting at his easel. This is a device which Orpen borrowed from a 15th-century painting by Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, which he would have seen on display at the National Gallery.
- Orpen's *The Mirror*, shown at the NEAC in 1900, references both **Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait** of 1434 and also elements of seventeenth-century Dutch interiors, such as muted tones and deep shadows. Orpen depicted the 'Arnolfini' convex glass in several other paintings, including *A Mere Fracture* in 1901, during this period.
- Whilst at the Slade, Orpen became engaged to **Emily Scobel, a model and the subject of *The Mirror***. In 1901, **she ended their relationship** and Orpen married Grace Knewstub, the sister-in-law of Sir William Rothenstein. Orpen and Knewstub

had three daughters together but the marriage was not a happy one and, by 1908, Orpen had begun a long running affair with Mrs Evelyn Saint-George, a well-connected American millionairess based in London, and with whom he also had a child.



William Orpen (1878–1931), *Anita*, 1905, 76 x 55.7 cm, Tate

- “Anita Bartle, the sitter in this early portrait by Orpen, was a journalist and author in Dublin. At the time he painted it, Orpen had just returned from a visit to the Prado in Madrid, where he had studied **portrait sketches by Rubens**. His training at the Slade in the 1890s had been in drawing rather than painting. He wanted to try a **modern version of Rubens's direct technique**, and used this portrait of a friend as an **exercise**. Orpen uses **only red, with black and white**, and leaves **visible the brushstrokes**, in the manner of an oil sketch. He later gave the portrait to the sitter as a wedding present.” (Tate)



William Orpen (1878-1931), *Self-Portrait, Sowing New Seed*, 1913, Saint Louis Art Museum

- When the war started Orpen had many contacts in the army and as a result the *Daily Mirror* reported that Haig had made him official artist to the Army. Although not true the department in charge of war artists, the Department of Information, had little choice but to appoint him as a Major with a military aide, a car and a driver plus a batman and an assistant. He painted many pictures of the front but did not submit any to the Department. When he was reprimanded for that he arranged for Haig's office to move the officer who had issued the reprimand.



William Orpen (1878–1931), *Winston Churchill*, 1916, 148 x 102.5cm, National Portrait Gallery
Lent by Trustees of the Churchill Chattels Trust, 2012

- This is a moving portrait of the **young Winston Churchill**, painted when he was **42**. He appears to be **sunk, despondent, depressed** and under some great burden. Yet, in the eyebrows and the jawline there is a defiance.
- Paul Moorhouse of the National Portrait Gallery wrote, “Churchill was enduring the **ignominy of blame** for the **deaths of 46,000 men**. As **First Lord of the Admiralty**, responsibility for the **disastrous Battle of Gallipoli** was levelled at him. **Demoted**, Churchill **resigned** and submitted to a commission of enquiry. Quite apart from the professional disgrace, the thought of so many lost lives must have been an insufferable mental weight. But mainly it is to do with the capacity of art to intimate truth, however unpalatable. Though harrowing, Orpen’s portrait of Churchill is stamped with an unmistakeable and deeply affecting **veracity of feeling**. And that, for me, is one of the hallmarks of great art.”

References

<http://www.npg.org.uk/blog/what-makes-a-great-portrait.php>



William Orpen (1878-1931), *The Refugee*, 1918, 76.2 x 63.5cm, Imperial War Museum

- This is an interesting image as it is one that Orpen almost got court-martialled for painting.
- Late in 1917 Orpen spent two weeks in hospital with blood poisoning. There he met a young volunteer Red Cross worker from Lille named Yvonne Aubicque. The two began a relationship that was to last ten years and Orpen painted several portraits of her. Two of these he submitted to the official censor early in 1918. Orpen **named both paintings A Spy** and in March 1918 was interviewed by the **military censor** responsible for the war artists, Lieutenant-Colonel A.N Lee. Lee made it clear that if the title was intended as a joke it was in very **bad taste** coming so soon after the **execution of both Edith Cavell and Mata Hari** but if the subject **really was a spy** then Orpen could be **facing a court-martial**.
- Orpen gave Lee a **fantastical story** that the woman in the picture was a **German spy** who had been **executed by the French** but who, in an attempt to save herself, had at the last moment **revealed herself naked** in front of the **firing squad**. Lee knew the story was nonsense and had Orpen recalled to London to be reprimanded at the War Office. There, **Orpen retracted** the firing squad story but

was **ordered to remain in London**. Orpen ignored this and, **quite illegally**, made his way **back to France**. There he contrived to receive a phone call from Haig's private office, within earshot of several of Lee's colleagues from Army Intelligence, inviting him to dinner with Haig to discuss what he would like to paint next. Lee dropped his objections to Orpen working in France and Orpen agreed to **rename the two pictures *The Refugee***.

- In a further twist, Ms Aubicque became involved with Orpen's chauffeur Grover-Williams after the artist left France - and the pair both spied for Britain during WWII. Grover-Williams was caught and shot and Yvonne returned to Britain, where she became a judge at dog show Crufts
- In May 2010, a third version of *The Refugee* surfaced on the ***Antiques Roadshow*** television programme. The Imperial War Museum had assured its owner that it was a copy by someone other than Orpen but the programme's art expert, Rupert Maas, determined it was painted by Orpen himself as a **'thank-you' present to Lord Beaverbrook** for helping him **avoid being court-martialled** in March 1918. The picture was estimated to be worth £250,000.
- An inscription on the picture reads 'copy by person unknown' but Mr Maas suspected the painting was by Orpen after discovering his trademark signature Nepro Mailliw - his name spelled backwards - had been inscribed on the work.
- The reason may be that strict rules prevented military artists from painting personal subjects while on tour, but Orpen was so smitten with Yvonne Aubicque, daughter of the Mayor of Lille, that he could not resist.

References

<http://www.sothebys.com/content/sothebys/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/irish-art-l15134/lot.27.html>



William Orpen (1878–1931), *Le Chef de l'Hotel Chatham, Paris*, 1921, 127 x 102.5 cm, Royal Academy of Arts

William Orpen (1878–1931), *Sir William McCormick*, 1920, 127 x 101.6cm, Tate

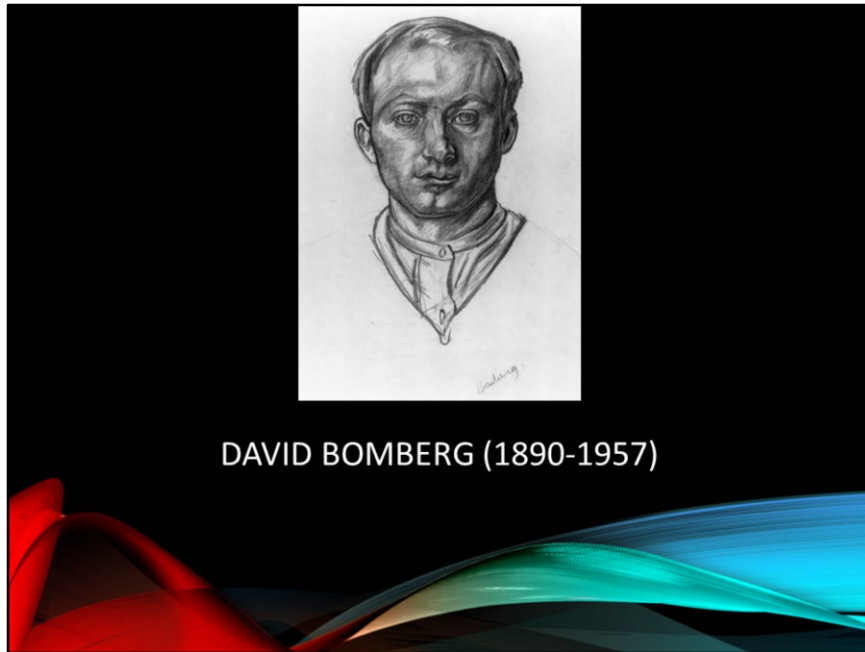
- **After the war** Orpen returned to painting **society portraits** and, commercially, enjoyed **great success**. He was never short of portrait commissions to work on and throughout the 1920s often **earned £35,000 per year** and could easily charge **2,000 guineas for a picture**.
- Throughout the 1920s he maintained homes and studios in both **Paris and London** and exhibited at the Royal Academy each year.
- His **1921 RA submission** was a **portrait of the head chef** at the Hotel Chatham in Paris. The Tate Gallery were keen to acquire the painting using funds from the Chantrey Bequest. After Orpen assured the Tate that picture met the conditions required by the Bequest and that he had painted the picture entirely in Britain, the Tate announced the purchase. Several people then came forward to say that they had seen Orpen paint the picture **in Paris**. Orpen **withdrew** from the purchase and gave the Tate a portrait of Sir William **Symington McCormick** instead. Orpen subsequently submitted *Le Chef de l'Hotel Chatham, Paris* to the Royal Academy as his diploma painting.

Notes

- RA website, “Orpen's painting is a tour de force of monumental portraiture. The crisp white folds of the chef's uniform, the still-life of bottle and wine and the chops are all painted with dazzling technique set against a dark background. Orpen was inspired by artists such as Velázquez and Manet, but in his choice of subject he elevates the working man by portraying him with a swagger and authority equal to any nobleman. The painting depicts Eugene Grossrieter (“Chester”), second chef at the Hotel Chatham, Paris.”
- Sir William McCormick (1859–1930) was a Scottish literary scholar, particularly of Chaucer, and administrator. He was Chairman of the University Grants Committee, Chairman of the Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and Chairman of the British National Opera Company. He came to live in London in 1920, the date of this portrait.

References

- <http://www.racollection.org.uk/ixbin/indexplus?record=O1650>



- **David Bomberg** (1890–1957) was an English painter, and one of the Whitechapel Boys.
- In the 2011 BBC series, British Masters, Bomberg was singled out as being **one of the greatest painters of the 20th Century**. He is one of the six artists included in Dulwich Picture Gallery's 2013 summer exhibition, "Nash, Nevinson, Spencer, Gertler, Carrington, Bomberg: A Crisis of Brilliance, 1908-1922"



David Bomberg (1890-1957), *Self-Portrait*, 1913-14, chalk, 55.9 x 38.1 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- The self-portrait, was probably made while the artist was still a student at the Slade School.
- Bomberg was one of the **most audacious** of the **exceptional generation** of artists who studied at the **Slade** School of Art under Henry Tonks, and which included Mark Gertler, Stanley Spencer, C.R.W. Nevinson and Dora Carrington. Bomberg painted a series of complex geometric compositions combining the influences of cubism and futurism in the years immediately preceding World War I; typically using a limited number of striking colours, turning **humans** into simple, **angular shapes**, and sometimes overlaying the whole painting a strong grid-work colouring scheme. He **was expelled** from the Slade School of Art in 1913, with agreement between the senior teachers Tonks, Frederick Brown and Philip Wilson Steer, because of the **audacity** of his breach from the conventional approach of that time.
- Bomberg is now recognised as one of the **most exceptional** and original artists of his generation, but he died in 1957 in near obscurity. Son of Jewish immigrants

from the East End of London, he was one of the pioneers of early modernism. During the First World War Bomberg fought at the Somme and, having witnessed the atrocities, he spent the rest of his artistic career trying to find or create order, moving frequently, painting and drawing the landscapes of Palestine, Spain, Cyprus, Cornwall and London.

Notes

- **David Bomberg** (1890-1957) was **born in Birmingham**, the seventh of eleven children of a **Polish-Jewish leatherworker**. When he was 5 the family moved to Whitechapel where he spent the rest of his childhood. He studied art at City And Guilds and returned to Birmingham to train as a lithographer but quit to study under Walter Sickert at Westminster School of Art from 1908 to 1910. **Sickert was an early influence** alongside Roger Fry's 1910 exhibition ***Manet and the Post-Impressionists***, where he first saw the work of **Paul Cézanne**.
- Bomberg had **financial difficulties** but with the help of John Singer Sargent he was able to attend the **Slade** School of Art. The emphasis in teaching at the Slade was on technique and draughtsmanship to which Bomberg was well-suited—**winning the Tonks Prize** for his drawing. He rapidly moved away from traditional techniques under the influence of the Futurists, Francis Picabia and Gino Severini, and Fry's ***Second Post Impressionist Exhibition*** in 1912, which displayed the works of Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and the Fauvists alongside those of Wyndham Lewis, Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. He was **expelled from the Slade** because of his radical approach but was noticed by Wyndham Lewis and Filippo Marinetti and he then travelled to France with Jacob Epstein and met Amedeo Modigliani, André Derain and Pablo Picasso. On his return he exhibited at the Camden Town Group (1913) and the London Group (1914). He refused to join the Vorticists or submit an article for their magazine BLAST.



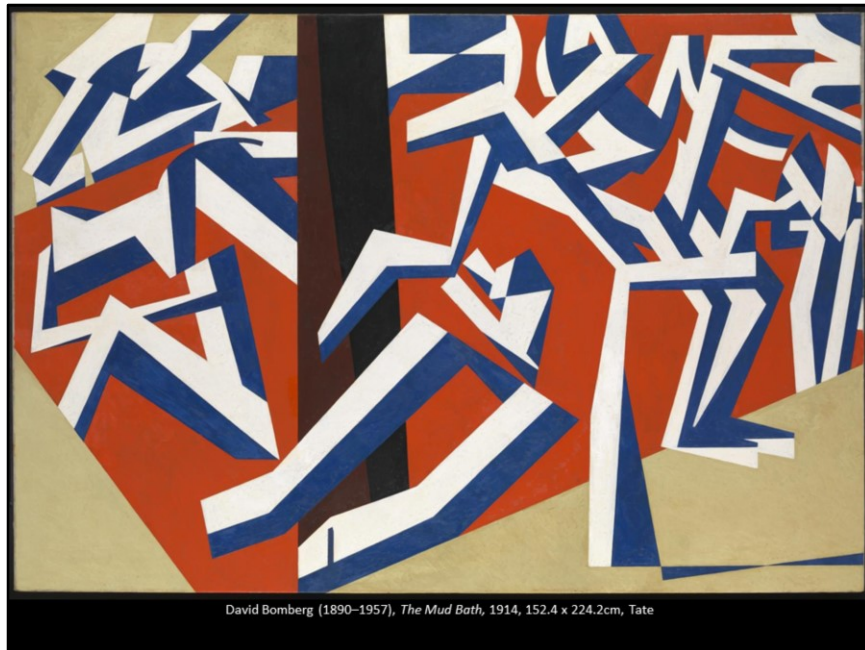
David Bomberg (1890–1957), *Vision of Ezekiel*, 1912, 114.3 x 137.2 cm, Tate

- Tate website “Bomberg was closely associated with the **Vorticist group** in London. His ability to organise forms into powerful compositions is evident in this painting which was carefully prepared in several preliminary drawings. The subject is taken from the Old Testament and illustrates the occasion when God guided the prophet to a valley full of bones and commanded him to speak. 'There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together.' Skeletal yet animated the figures appear to emerge from the platform. The brilliant colours emphasise the exultation associated with resurrection. Bomberg may have chosen this text after the sudden death of his mother. The pair had been close and he may have found consolation in this positive theme.”
- It is unclear to which particular vision of Ezekiel the title refers. Mrs Lilian Bomberg, the artist's widow, has suggested the vision of the Valley of the Dried Bones (Ezekiel, chapter 37), where bones are miraculously revived to life. Bomberg may well have chosen the subject himself, as he was deeply interested in the Old Testament and Jewish history.
- Miss Alice Mayes and Peter Richmond both confirmed the story that Wyndham Lewis not only hung the painting behind a door so that it could scarcely be seen,

but also did not include it in the catalogue (actions which they attributed to jealousy). Miss Mayes said that in return Bomberg refused to allow Lewis to reproduce any of his drawings in *BLAST*.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bomberg-vision-of-ezekiel-t01197/text-catalogue-entry>



David Bomberg (1890–1957), *The Mud Bath*, 1914, 152.4 x 224.2cm, Tate

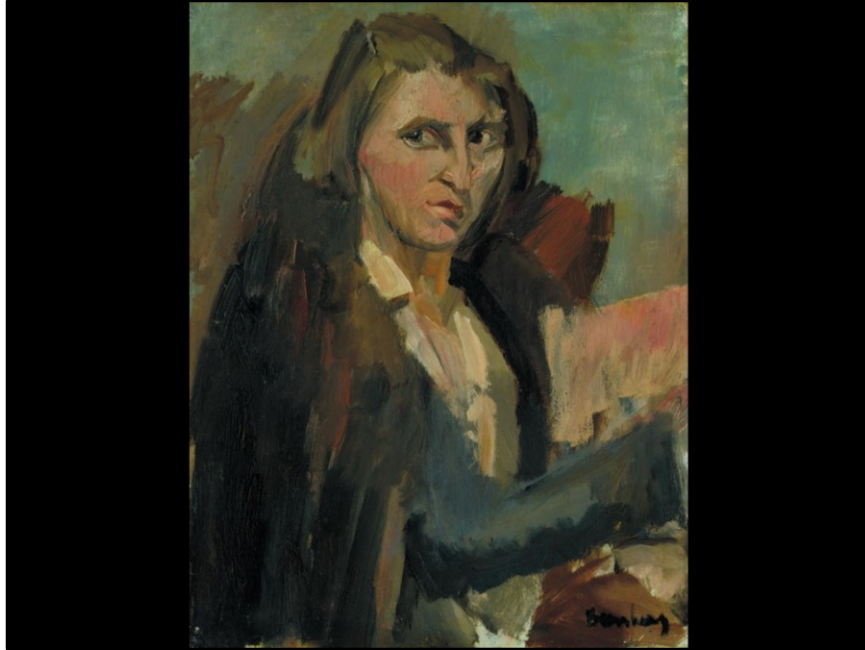
- Tate, "The way in which Bomberg reduces the human figure to a series of geometric shapes may reflect his fascination with the machine age, which he shared with the Futurists and Vorticists. This painting could also represent the human form, stripped to its essential core. The scene is based on steam baths near Bomberg's home in east London, which were used by the local Jewish population and which also had religious associations. They were, perhaps, a place for both physical and spiritual cleansing."
- In 1914 he had a solo exhibition which attracted a positive review from Roger Fry and international artists. His masterpiece ***The Mud Bath*** (1914) was hung outside causing **'the horse drawing the 29 bus ... to shy at it as they came round the corner of King's Road.'**
- He continued to be dogged by financial problems and when the war started he enlisted and was sent to the Western front. The war brought about profound changes in his outlook. The mechanized slaughter of his brother, friends and supporter destroyed his faith in the aesthetics of the machine age. He brought together the geometric energies of his pre-war work as an "English cubist" with

the tradition of figurative observation of the English landscape school of Turner, Constable, Girtin and John Sell Cotman. There followed his great period of painting and drawing in landscape, in Spain, Cyprus and Cornwall. A six month stay in the Soviet Union led to his resignation from the Communist Party in London.



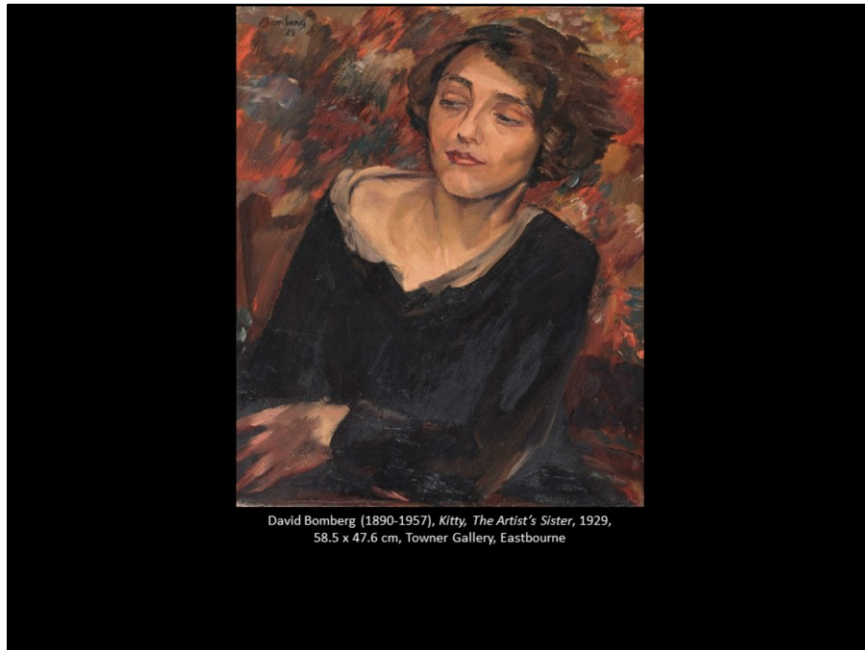
David Bomberg (1890–1957), *Jerusalem, Looking to Mount Scopus*, 1925, 56.5 x 75.2 cm, Tate

- In 1917 the British Government had declared support for the 'establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'. Six years later Bomberg, a Jewish artist from the East End of London, was commissioned by a Zionist organisation to paint images of Jewish settlements in Jerusalem. However, Bomberg was not a supporter of Zionism and found the British Government officials in Jerusalem more congenial patrons. The painstakingly detailed depiction of buildings in this painting probably reflects their desire to see a faithful description of the ancient city which they hoped to restore and protect from modernisation.



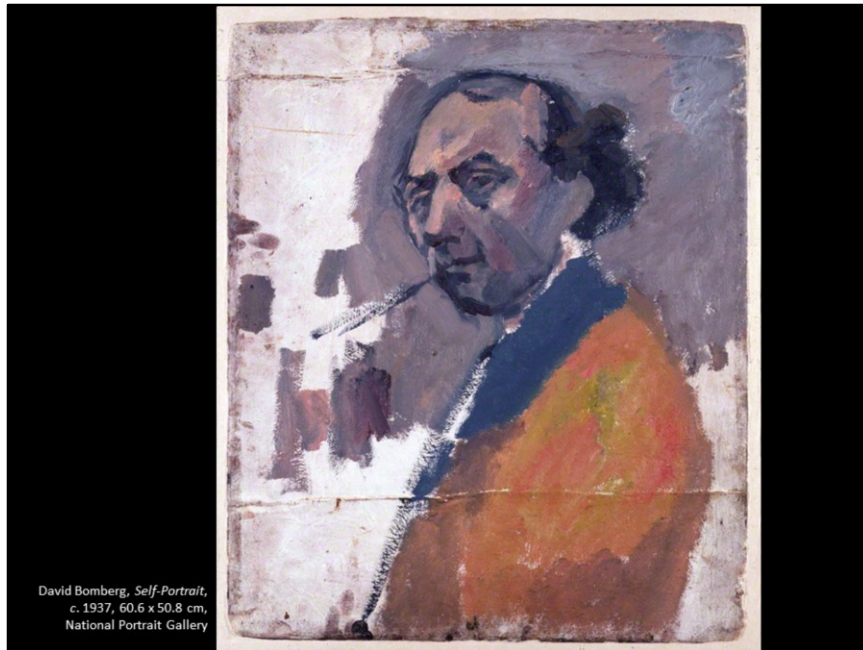
David Bomberg (1890–1957), *Lilian Painting David (Painting Lilian)*, 1929, 66 x 51.4cm, Tate

- Whether because his **faith in the machine age had been shattered** by his experiences as a private soldier in the trenches or because of the pervasive retrogressive attitude towards modernism in Britain Bomberg moved to a more figurative style in the 1920s and his work became **increasingly dominated by portraits and landscapes** drawn from nature. Gradually developing a more expressionist technique he travelled widely through the Middle East and Europe.
- Tate, "This portrait shows Bomberg's second wife, Lilian, painting him at the same time as he is painting her. She later wrote, 'We recognized the total commitment to art in each other'. The portrait that Lilian Bomberg was painting at the same time no longer exists. Portraits of artists' lovers abound in art. But here Bomberg chooses to portray his wife as a working artist, rather than as his muse. Bomberg had recently returned from Toledo where, influenced by El Greco, a sixteenth-century Greek artist who worked in Spain, he developed a loose and expressive style which characterised his later work."



David Bomberg (1890-1957), *Kitty, The Artist's Sister*, 1929, 58.5 x 47.6 cm, Towner Gallery, Eastbourne

- Encouraged by his sister Kitty and her husband James Newmark, both Bomberg and Lilian joined the Communist party. Bomberg painted banners for demonstrations and attended mass unemployment rallies. In July they visited Russia for five months and gradually grew disillusioned with the Communist's effect on art. On return to London they resigned from the Communist Party.



David Bomberg, *Self-Portrait*,
c. 1937, 60.6 x 50.8 cm,
National Portrait Gallery

David Bomberg, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1937, 60.6 x 50.8 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- From 1945 to 1953, he worked as a teacher at Borough Polytechnic (now London South Bank University) in London, where his pupils included **Frank Auerbach** and Leon Kossoff.
- In the 2011 BBC series, *British Masters*, Bomberg was singled out as being **one of the greatest painters of the 20th Century**. He is one of the six artists included in Dulwich Picture Gallery's 2013 summer exhibition, "**Nash, Nevinson, Spencer, Gertler, Carrington, Bomberg: A Crisis of Brilliance, 1908-1922**"

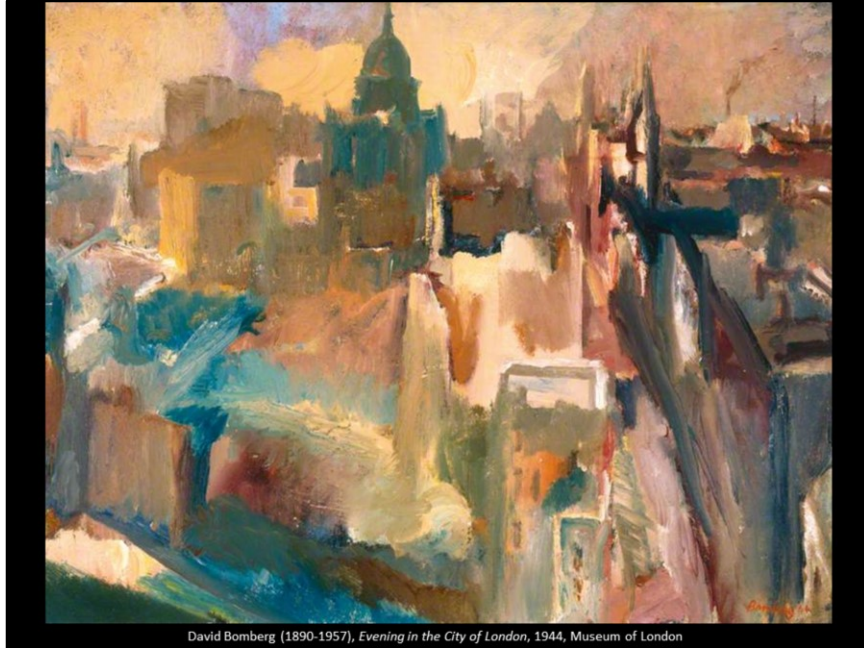


David Bomberg (1890-1957), *Bomb Store*, 1942, 74.5 x 97.2 cm, Tate Britain

- During the Second World War, he tried to become involved with the War Artists' Advisory Committee, but his application was twice rejected. His single commission as a war artist, a series of *Bomb Store* paintings (1942) expressing Bomberg's expanded first-hand sense of the destructive powers of modern technology in warfare. These *Bomb Store* paintings convey a premonitory sense of the massive explosion that destroyed the underground store two years later, killing 68 people.

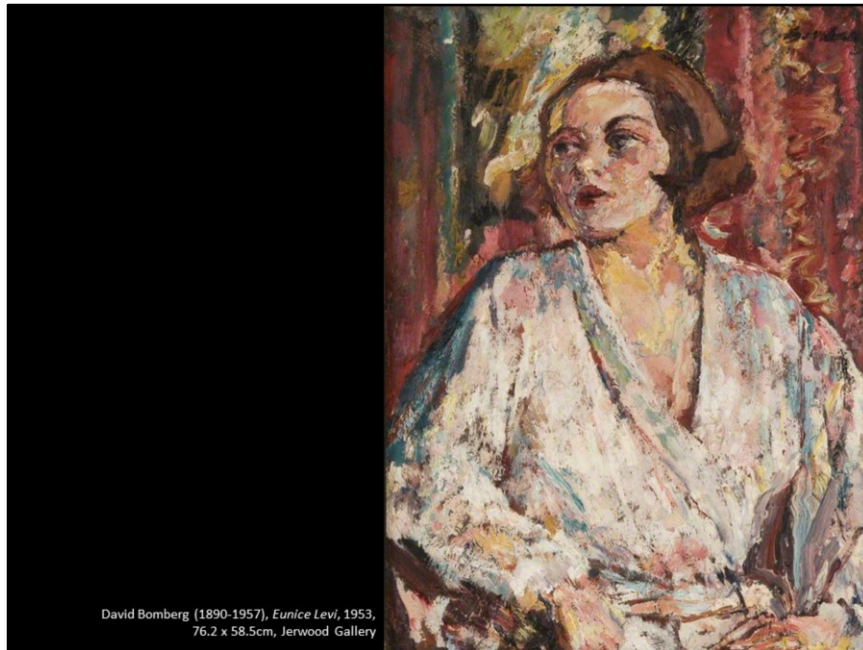
References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bomberg-bomb-store-t06998>



David Bomberg (1890-1957), *Evening in the City of London*, 1944, Museum of London

- During World War II, he painted *Evening in the City of London* (1944), showing the blitzed city viewed rising up to a triumphant, surviving St Paul's Cathedral on the horizon, since described as the "**most moving of all paintings of wartime Britain**" (Martin Harrison).
- This view of the bomb-damaged City of London is taken from the tower of St Mary le Bow Church in Cheapside. Newgate Street and Cheapside are represented by the dark diagonal on the right. St Paul's Cathedral dominates the distance.
- This is Bomberg's only painting of bomb-damaged London, but his strong blocks of warm colour seem to express optimism. He once said: 'I want to translate the life of a great city ... into art that shall not be photographic, but expressive'. David Bomberg had come to London in 1908 from his native Birmingham. He became associated with the modern styles of art, particularly futurism.

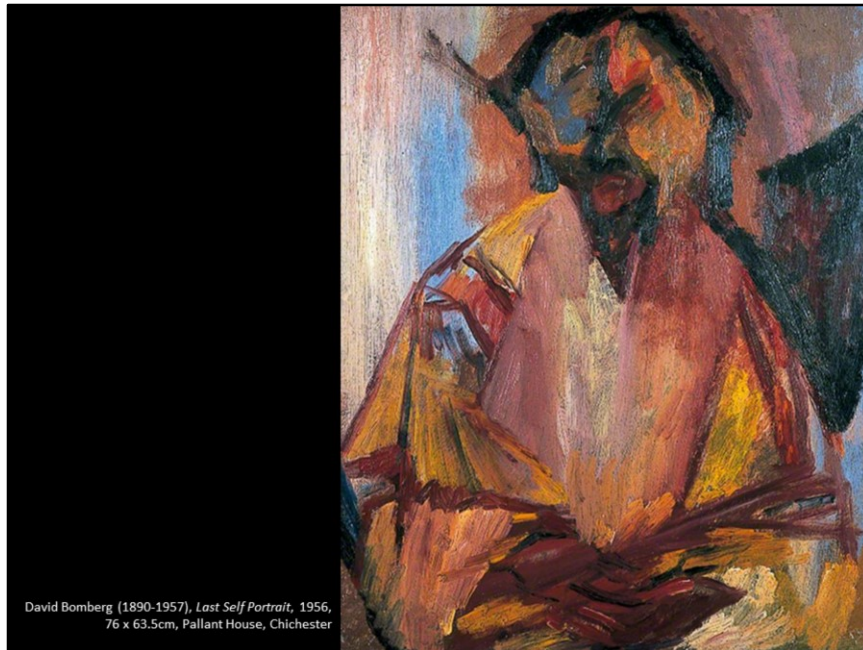


David Bomberg (1890-1957), *Eunice Levi*, 1953, 76.2 x 58.5cm, Jerwood Gallery

- Jerwood Gallery, "This portrait depicts **Bomberg's neighbour, Eunice Levi**, and was painted at the artist's home on Rosslyn Hill, Hampstead. Bomberg had moved to this address with his second wife, the artist Lilian Holt, in 1948. In this portrait Eunice Levi sits in a white robe in front of what could be an abstracted view from a window. **Bomberg's thick painterly style** can be seen vividly within this painting, through the built up layers of wonderfully vibrant and colourful brushstrokes.
- The portrait was painted a year after **Bomberg's recovery from a long bout of depression**, which was brought on by the **repeated rejections** of his requests for commissions and **failure to sell work**. He was **bitterly disappointed** when **Tate rejected** the purchase of his works in **1937** and these continuing fits of depression prevented Bomberg from painting. In an attempt to inspire her husband to start painting again, Lilian began placing a vase of flowers on a table in their living room and encouraged him to paint them. Initially reluctant, Bomberg soon began buying flowers every day to paint. This portrait can therefore be viewed as one of many paintings accomplished with a fresh eye, by a **newly inspired Bomberg**."

References

- <http://www.jerwoodgallery.org/collection/18/portrait-of-eunice-levy>



David Bomberg (1890-1957), *Last Self Portrait*, 1956, 76 x 63.5cm, Pallant House, Chichester

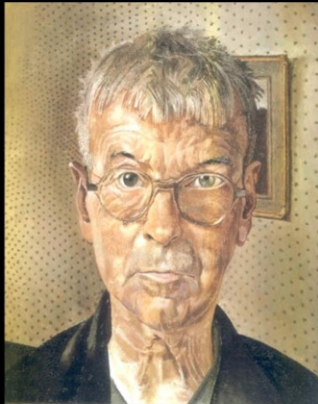
- “Like a final testament, Bomberg's intensely moving 'Last Self Portrait' is filled with a tragic awareness of his impending mortality. His wife Lillian described it as a "prophetic picture...he knew that this was the last portrait and that he was going to die." Bomberg didn't use a mirror, for there is no attempt to provide a literal likeness. It reveals instead Bomberg's state of mind, asserting with painful honesty his belief in 'the power of individual vision’.” (Art UK)
- Tate, “Throughout the 1930s Bomberg's art became broader and more impassioned as he sought to convey the essence of his response to landscapes in Scotland and Spain. This work met with little approval in Britain, and during World War II his outstanding series of *Bomb Store* paintings did not lead to further commissions from the War Artists Committee, despite his repeated requests. His last years were darkened by the **realization that his art remained overlooked and even belittled in Britain**. His final landscapes and figure paintings include some of his most powerful works.”
- We must ask if his Jewishness was a factor in the belittling of his work. It is

instructive to consider the mood of the 1930s when many Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi Germany sought to enter Britain. Many believe that we welcomed fleeing Jews but "The process...was designed to keep out large numbers of European Jews - perhaps 10 times as many as it let in." Around 70,000 had been admitted by the outbreak of the war, but British Jewish associations had some half a million more case files of those who had not. The unsuccessful public campaign to persuade the government to rescue Jews from mass murder faded quickly from the public consciousness and the myth was born that Britain did all it could for the Jews between 1933 and 1945. After the war Oswald Mosley's fascist supporters returned and instead of blaming the Jews they used the euphemism 'aliens'. However, it was clear to supporters what this meant and Jews were taunted in the streets with 'Not enough Jews were burned in Belsen'.

- The Jews that did enter before and after the war brought a new intellectual culture of artists, musicians, scientist, engineers, philosophers and many other leaders in their field. Although they started with nothing and their numbers were small their impact was substantial and positive although it did challenge the established British culture.

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- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/jun/08/immigration.immigrationandpublicservices>



STANLEY SPENCER (1891–1959)





Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Self-Portrait*, 1912, drawing

Stanley Spencer, *Self-Portrait*, 1914, Tate

Stanley Spencer, *Self-Portrait*, 1923, Spencer Gallery

Stanley Spencer, *Self-Portrait*, 1939, 39.7 x 55.2cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum

Stanley Spencer, *Self-Portrait by Gaslight Looking Downwards*, 1949, 57 x 47cm, Reading Museum and Town Hall

Stanley Spencer, *Self-Portrait with Patricia Preece*, 1937, 61 x 91.2cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum

Stanley Spencer, *Self-Portrait*, 1959, Tate

Note that this is a selection of the many self-portraits Spencer painted. They are all honest and penetrating; none of them tries to elevate or glamorize the artist.

1. Spencer's Early Life, 1891 to 1914

- **1891, A crow fell down the chimney at Fernlea** on Cookham High Street, flapped around the room, flew out of the window and **Stanley Spencer was born**. The date was June 30th 1891 - and the family thought it was a good omen. He was the eighth surviving child of Annie and William Spencer, a piano teacher, and he was joined a year later by his younger brother

- Gilbert. This is a picture of the **house today** and this is how the High Street looked in the 1880s. The Kings Arms Hotel is four houses away from Fernlea.
- 1891-1907, his father did not think the local school was satisfactory and could not afford a private school so Spencer was **educated by his sisters Annie and Florence** in the shed at the bottom of the garden next door but as Spencer did not like school work so they allowed him to draw instead. **Painting was not an important subject** for the Spencer family but there were a number of reproductions on the walls and when he was old enough his mother took him to the **Summer Exhibition** at the Royal Academy.
 - **1907**, Spencer was stimulated by reading from the **family bible** and enjoyed taking **long, solitary walks**. He spent time drawing with the wife of a local landowner, **Lady Boston** who, in 1907, arranged for him to go to **Maidenhead Technical Institute**.
 - **1908-12** he studied at the **Slade under Henry Tonks**. Contemporaries included Christopher Nevinson, David Bomberg, and Paul Nash. **1912** he exhibited *John Donne Arriving in Heaven* at Roger Fry's **Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition**. He was considered to be influenced by **Gauguin**. However, he was more influenced by **Giotto and Mantegna** and when asked what he thought of Picasso he said 'I haven't got past Piero della Francesca yet'. Paul Nash called him 'the last of the Pre-Raphaelites'. He so loved Cookham that he would come home for tea on the train. This was noted and gave rise to the nickname, 'Cookham', which Spencer himself used.
 - ❑ **This first self-portrait** is a drawing was done while he was at the Slade. It was the year of the second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries.

1. World War One, 1914 to 1918

- ❑ **1914** he began work on this second self-portrait which was painted in Wisteria Cottage, a decaying Georgian house Spencer rented, from the local coalman in Cookham, for use as a studio. Its dark, rich colours and strongly modelled form was inspired by a reproduction of the head of Christ by the Italian Renaissance artist Luini.
- **1915-18** he attended the **Slade School of Art** between 1908 and 1912 and so his career started at the same time as the **First World War**. During the war his **poor physique** caused him to apply for ambulance duties. He enlisted in the **Royal Army Medical Corp** and was sent to Bristol and later Macedonia. He requested a transfer to the infantry in 1917.
- **1918**, he returned to **Cookham** in December 1918 to hear his brother Sydney had been killed in action three months previously and he lost '**the all pervading joy I felt as a child**' and the 'serenity of spirit'. His much

loved brother had been killed in the last few weeks of the war and returning to the work after the war he found it difficult to continue, often stating "**It is not proper or sensible to expect to paint after such experience.**" Many artists felt the same and although in Europe some artists reacted against the slaughter by rejecting all social, cultural and artistic standards in Britain and among many artists in Europe there was what has been called a "**return to order**". The excesses of modernism were rejected and there was a return to more conventional figurative painting. **Cubism was partially abandoned** even by its creators, Braque and Picasso, and **Futurism**, which had praised machinery, violence and war, **was rejected by most of its adherents**. The return to order was associated with a revival of classicism and realistic painting.

2. 1920 to 1927, *The Resurrection, Cookham*

- **1919** lived and worked at Cookham. He became a member New English Art Club until 1927.
- **1920-21** he lodged with Henry Slessor and his wife at Bourne End near Cookham.
- **1922** he accompanied the **Carline family** on a holiday to Yugoslavia, became **engaged to Hilda Carline** and moved to Hampstead.
- **1923, aged 32, he painted this third self-portrait.**
- **1925 married Anne Hilda Carline** and had two daughters Shirin (1925) and Unity (1930). When he first met Hilda he became a changed man in his own words the old Stanley Spencer 'was now no longer so' and the **new 'lust or what you will was sweeping me along'**.
- **1926 completed *The Resurrection***, one of his '**major, most memorable achievements**'. *The Times* critic would call it '**the most important picture painted by any English artist during the present century ...** What makes it so astonishing is the combination in it of careful detail with modern freedom in the treatment of form. It is as if a **Pre-Raphaelite had shaken hands with a Cubist.**'

3. The Sandham Memorial Chapel. Burghclere, 1926-32 (National Trust)

- **1927** Spencer received commissions including the **Sandham Memorial Chapel** (1927-1932). It was in 1927 that he held his first **one-man exhibition** at the Goupil Gallery. The centre piece of the exhibition was ***The Resurrection, Cookham***.

4. Cookham, 1932-1935, The Church House Project

- **1932** moved to 'Lindworth', a large house in Cookham. Began work on '**Church-House**' idea. Elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. Dudley Tooth became his sole agent.

5. Divorce and Remarriage, 1935-1938

- **1935 resigned from the Royal Academy** after the rejection of *The Dustman* and other works from the Summer Exhibition and the controversy resulted in his popularity declining.
- **1937 he was divorced** by his wife Hilda Carline and immediately married Patricia Preece. His second marriage was a disaster, never consummated and his wife manipulated and exploited him. Spencer tried to win back Hilda but never succeeded. He began work on the *Beatitudes of Love* series.
- ☐ **1937**, this **fourth self-portrait** shows Spencer with Patricia Preece.
- **1938 in financial difficulties**, left Cookham and went to stay with the Rothensteins in London. Dudley Tooth took over managing his business affairs. Began *Christ in the Wilderness* series in bed-sit in Swiss Cottage.

6. Port Glasgow, World War Two, 1935-1945

- **1939-41** stayed at the White Hart Inn, Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire, with George and Daphne Charlton. In March 1940 the War Artists Advisory Committee commissioned Spencer to paint the **Port Glasgow shipyards**, which occupied him until 1946. Went to live in Epsom with his children and then moved back to Cookham.
- ☐ **1939**, this fifth self-portrait shows him with paintbrush and palette.

7. Resurrection Pictures, 1945-1950

- **1945 began *The Resurrection, Port Glasgow* series (1945-1950)**. His reputation improved as a result of his war commissions
- ☐ **1949**, this **sixth self-portrait** shows just before the scandal of the obscenity charge and the death of Hilda.
- **1950 Alfred Munnings**, the President of the Royal Academy, **initiated a prosecution** against Spencer for **obscenity** but Munnings then resigned and the new President persuaded Spencer to re-join the RA. **Hilda died** of breast cancer in November. This followed years of mental health problems during which Spencer visited her weekly and sent long letters, some of over one hundred pages. He continued to send letters after her death.

8. Final Years, 1951 to 1959

- **1954 he visited China** as a guest of the Chinese authorities.
- **1955** there was a **retrospective** exhibition at the Tate Gallery.
- ☐ **1959 seventh and his final self-portrait** was painted from 12 to 16 July. He was knighted in 1959 and died of bowel cancer on 14 December aged 58 at the Canadian War Memorial Hospital, Cliveden, Berkshire. His last years until his death in 1959 were financially successful although his reputation

and his sale prices did not soar until after his death.



Stanley Spencer (1891–1959), *Daphne*, 1940, 61 x 50.8 cm, Tate

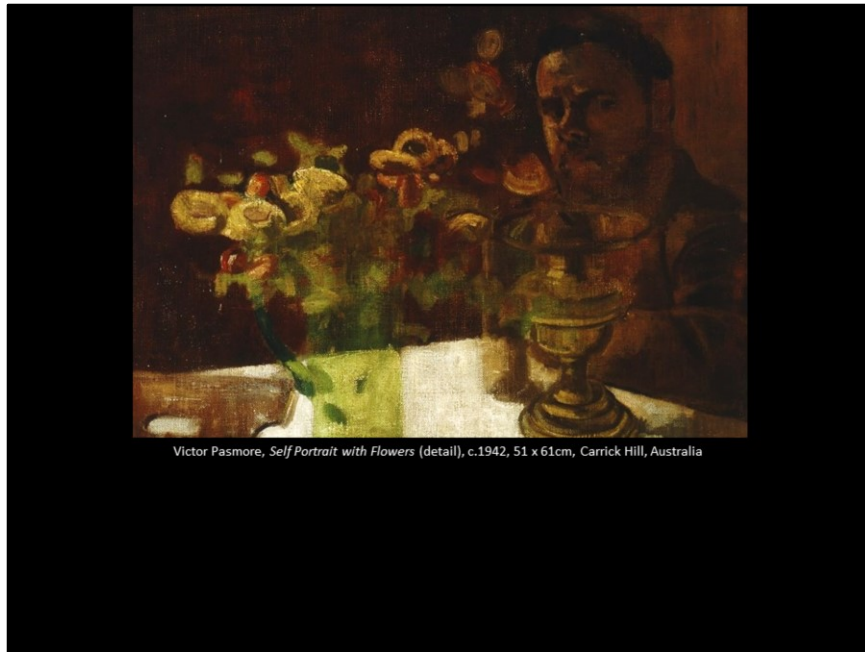
- Tate site, 'Daphne Charlton was a student at the Slade School of Art in London, as was Stanley Spencer, and her husband George taught there. The Charltons were introduced to Spencer in 1939 and from then on he often visited them at their Hampstead home. All three went on a painting holiday together in the summer of 1939 to Leonard Stanley, a remote village in Gloucestershire. During this stay Daphne Charlton painted Spencer's portrait. In April 1940, back in London, she sat for this portrait every day for about two to three weeks. The hat she wears was bought for three guineas in a shop in Bond Street in December 1939, especially for the sittings. Spencer painted another portrait of her without her hat.'

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-daphne-n05148>



Victor Pasmore was born in Surrey and when his father died he was forced to find a job, which was at London County Council. He studied painting part-time and was associated with the Euston Road School between 1937 and 1939. He experimented with abstract art and painted romantic landscapes of the Thames. He was a leading figure painter of the early 20th century. During WWII he was a conscientious objector but was called up. He refused orders, was court-martialled and imprisoned and then exempted from military service. After the war he was commissioned to produce a mural for a bus station in Kingston and he continued to specialise in abstract work.



Victor Pasmore, *Self Portrait with Flowers* (detail), c.1942, 51 x 61cm, Carrick Hill, Australia

- In 1933-1934, he became a member of the London Artists' Association and the London Group, where he met and was influenced by painters such as Walter Sickert and Ben Nicholson, who were experimenting with modernism. He painted some abstract works but they were never exhibited and he later destroyed them. He felt he had failed to understand abstract principles.
- In 1938, due to Kenneth Clarke's patronage he was able to paint full-time and felt himself to be a professional artist.
- In 1942, he moved to a new house in Chiswick and this may have been painted in their new house. The tone is dark and he looks out with a stern expression. This is one of a number of domestic scenes inspired by Vermeer. There is a rich touch of emerald green in the transparent glass jug. The flower shapes are abstracted and there are no flower stems in the glass jug. The use of colour seems to have been influenced by Walter Sickert's Camden Town period 1906-18.

Notes

- Pasmore was born in 1908 in Surrey and his early interest in painting was

encouraged by his family. By 17 he was an enthusiastic amateur landscape painter. His father's death in 1926, when he was 18, prevented him from attending art college and he worked as a clerk at London County Council for 11 years attending evening art classes. His work from this period is intensely realistic.

- He studied painting part-time at the **Central School of Art** and he was associated with the formation of the Euston Road School and the first exhibition of abstract art after the war. After experimenting with abstract art he painted a number of romantic, lyrical pictures of the Thames in the style of **Turner and Whistler**. He was also one of the leading figure painters of the early twentieth century. He was a conscientious objector during the Second World War but his application was refused and he was called up. He refused orders and was court martialled and sentenced to 123 days imprisonment. This qualified him to go to tribunal and this gave him an unconditional exemption from military service.

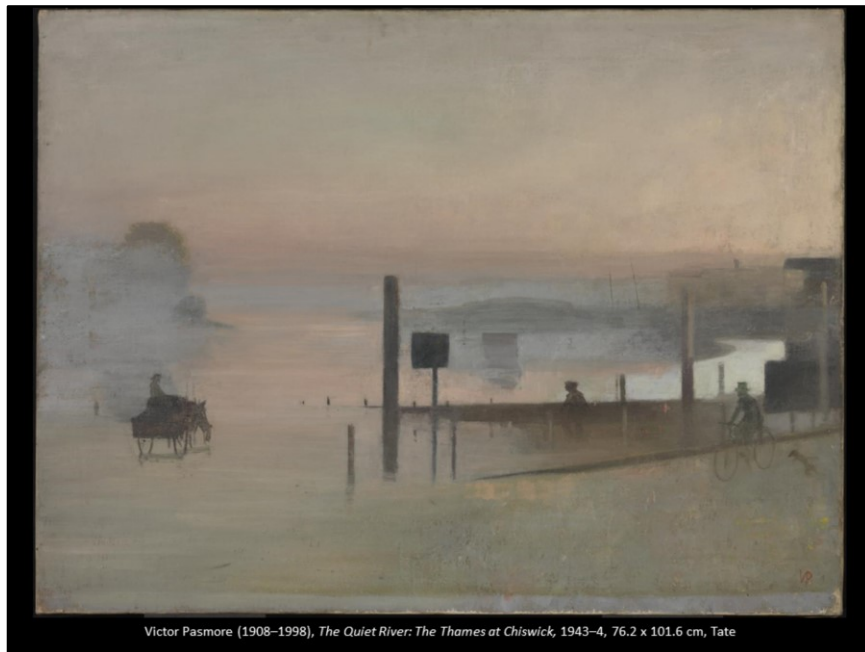
References

<http://carrickhill.sa.gov.au/the-story/artworks/british-artists/victor-pasmore-b-1908>



Victor Pasmore (1908–1998), *Reclining Nude*, 1942, 30.5 x 40.6cm, Tate

- In 1937 Pasmore was instrumental in setting up the Euston Road School of Painting, with two other painters, Claude Rogers and William Coldstream. The purpose of the Euston Road School was to teach traditional disciplines and the adoption of an objective approach to the chosen subject.
- When war started in 1939 the Euston Road School where he had been teaching closed. He registered as a conscientious objector, but was forcibly enlisted, imprisoned and discharged. He met and married fellow artist Wendy Blood in 1940, and began a series of small intimate studies of her and their life together. These paintings of his domestic life are soft, delicate and calm, in total contrast to the violence of wartime events.
- This is one of them and it presents Wendy Pasmore in a quiet and intimate manner, with the parted curtains adding to the private nature of the scene.



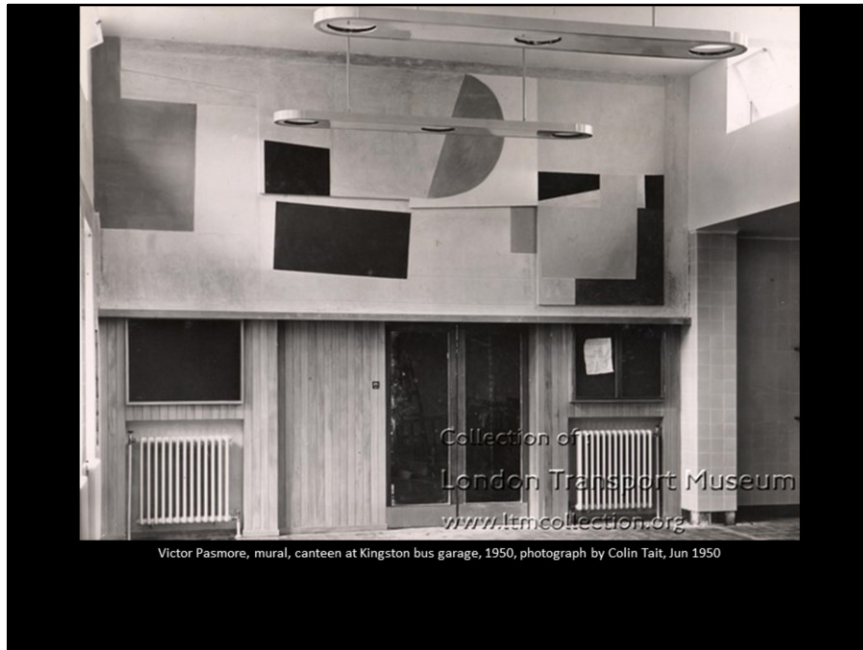
Victor Pasmore (1908–1998), *The Quiet River: The Thames at Chiswick*, 1943–4, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, Tate

Victor Pasmore (1908–1998), *The Quiet River: The Thames at Chiswick*, 1943–4, 76.2 x 101.6 cm, Tate

- “In the mid-1940s **Pasmore painted a series of views of the Thames** at Chiswick. In doing so he was following a tradition which goes back to nineteenth century painters, including **Turner and Whistler**. Pasmore was aware of these precedents when he worked on the series and, like those artists, concentrated on the subtle light variations and the atmosphere of the scene. The timeless romanticism of the diffused light and the horse and cart belie the reality of the place, which was then an industrial area: the dark form on the right is the roof of an especially odorous vitamin factory.” (Tate)

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<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/pasmore-abstract-in-white-green-black-blue-red-grey-and-pink-t11978/text-summary>



Victor Pasmore (1908–1998), mural, canteen at Kingston bus garage, 1950, photograph by Colin Tait, Jun 1950

- **In 1948** Pasmore reached a watershed. At this time he made a total commitment to abstraction, with constructional collages influenced by Charles Biederman and Ben Nicholson. This developed into an interest in architecture, and he was appointed consultant director of urban design for Peterlee New Town, 1955-1957. Durham University appointed him master of painting in 1955.
- **In 1950**, he was commissioned to design an **abstract mural for a bus depot in Kingston upon Thames** and the following year Pasmore contributed a mural to the Festival of Britain that promoted a number of the British Constructivists.
- From **1954 to 1961** he was leader of the art course of **Kings College, Durham** where he developed a course inspired by the 'basic course' of the **Bauhaus** that became the model for higher arts education across the UK. As a result he has had a major influence on art teaching in Britain.
- Pasmore was a **supporter** of fellow artist **Richard Hamilton**, giving him a teaching job in Newcastle and **contributing** a constructivist structure to the exhibition ***This Is Tomorrow***.



Victor Pasmore (1908–1998), *Abstract in White, Green, Black, Blue, Red, Grey and Pink*, c.1963, Perspex and painted wood, 81.5 x 91 x 46 cm, Tate

- This work is a large, abstract relief sculpture suspended from the ceiling at the Tate. It is a transparent Perspex sheet pierced by 23 long wooden blocks with their smaller ends painted in the colours listed in the title.
- In 1954 **Pasmore explained** that **abstract stress their status as real objects** whereas **representational works refer to objects** other than themselves. In addition, as paintings are two-dimensional an abstract painting cannot fully participate in this role of 'abstract work as real object'. So abstract works must become sculptures in order to fully enter into their relationship with real space. This explains the relief work in his paintings and in this work the Perspex sheet acts as a type of canvas to frame the work while allowing it to become fully three-dimensional. Pasmore went on to say,
 - "Whereas in representational art the spectator is confined to a point which is always at a distance from the object, in abstract form he must handle, feel, move around and get into the work if he is to fully apprehend the intentions of the artist."
 (Victor Pasmore, 'What is Abstract Art?', *Sunday Times*, 5 February 1961,

p.21.)

- In the 1950s and 60s Pasmore and others were involved in 'constructivist' art which did not involve carving or modelling but required the artist to assemble the work as if it were the three-dimensional equivalent of a two-dimensional collage.
- In 1983, he was elected to the Royal Academy.
- **Pasmore was a leading figure in the promotion of abstract art** and reform of the fine art education system. From 1943–1949, he **taught at Camberwell School of Art**. Beginning in 1947, he developed a purely abstract style under the **influence of Ben Nicholson** becoming a leading figure of the revival of interest in **Constructivism**. **Herbert Read** described Pasmore's new style as "**The most revolutionary event in post-war British art**".

References

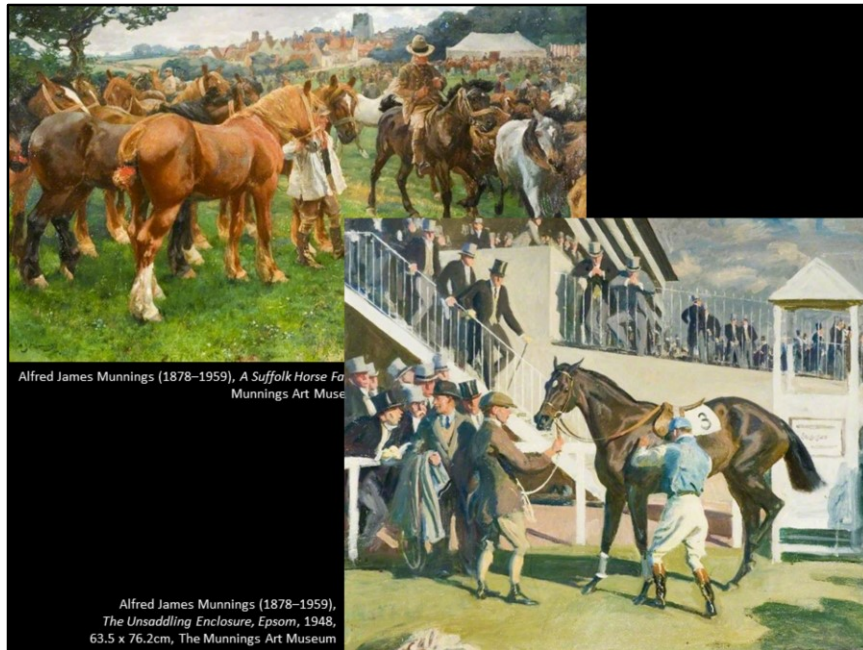
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A NEW WAY OF SEEING

1950 onwards





Alfred James Munnings (1878–1959), *A Suffolk Horse Fair, Lavenham*, 1901, 127 x 203.2cm, The Munnings Art Museum

Alfred James Munnings (1878–1959), *The Unsaddling Enclosure, Epsom*, 1948, 63.5 x 76.2cm, The Munnings Art Museum

Peter Blake (b. 1932), *The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* record sleeve design, 1967 (made), colour offset lithograph on paper and card

Also involved were Jann Haworth (b. 1942, designer), Michael Cooper (1941- 1973, photographer), EMI Records, The Gramophone Co Ltd (publisher), Parlophone (publisher)

- Many of the artists I have selected this term lean towards or endorsed modernism. In parallel, there were thousands of artists who painted realistically and continued to paint landscapes and portraits, the old favourites of the British system and the Royal Academy.
- The ongoing conflict with modernism is best illustrated by an anecdote involving **Alfred Munnings, President of the Royal Academy**. In 1949, during his valedictory speech an inebriated Munnings attacked modernism. The broadcast was heard by **millions of listeners to BBC radio**. Munnings claimed that the work of **Cézanne, Matisse and Picasso had corrupted art**. He recalled that Winston Churchill had

once said to him, "**Alfred, if you met Picasso coming down the street would you join with me in kicking his ... something something?**" to which Munnings said he replied, "**Yes Sir, I would**".

- But something was just about to happen that changed Britain completely...

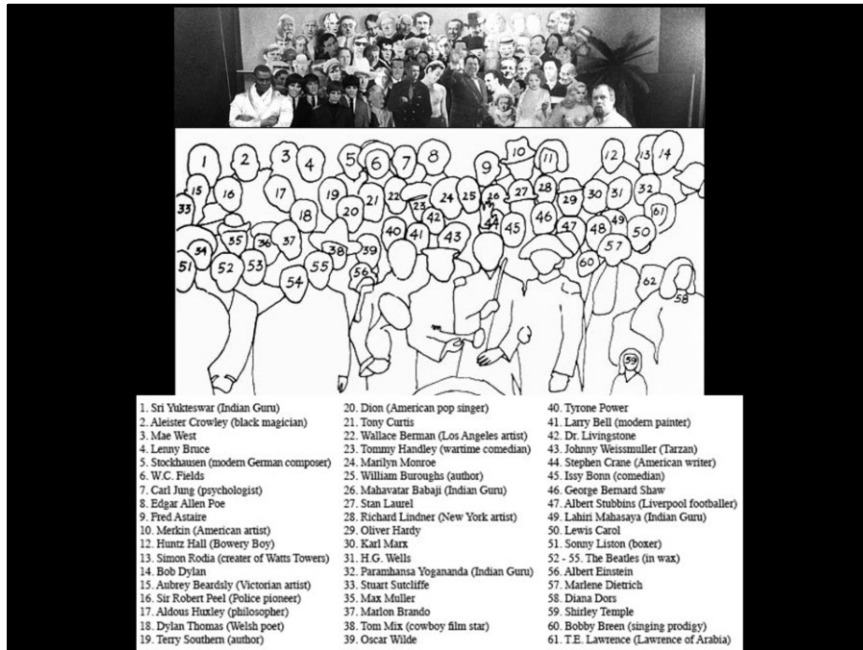
Notes

- Alfred James Munnings (1878–1959) was known as one of England's finest painters of horses, and as an outspoken critic of Modernism. Engaged by Lord Beaverbrook's Canadian War Memorials Fund, he earned several prestigious commissions after the Great War that made him wealthy.
- Munnings was elected president of the Royal Academy of Art in 1944. He was made a Knight Bachelor in 1944, and appointed a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in the 1947 New Year Honours.
- As of 2007, the highest price paid for a Munnings painting was \$7,848,000 for *The Red Prince Mare*



Peter Blake (b. 1932), The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band record sleeve design, 1967 (made), colour offset lithograph on paper and card

The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, released by EMI Records in 1967, is arguably the most famous album sleeve of all time. The image on the album cover is composed of a collage of celebrities. There are 88 figures, including the band members themselves. Pop artist Peter Blake and his wife Jann Haworth conceived and constructed the set, including all the life-sized cut-outs of historical figures. The set was photographed, with the Beatles standing in the centre, by Michael Cooper. Copyright was a problem as Brian Epstein, the Beatles' manager, had to locate each person in order to get permission to use their image in this context.



Famous personalities were represented in the photograph by cardboard cutouts but the PR effort was enormous as every star had to be contacted for permission.

1. Sri Paramahansa Yogananda (Indian Guru)
2. Aleister Crowley (black magician)
3. Mae West
4. Lenny Bruce
5. Stockhausen (modern German composer)
6. W.C. Fields
7. Carl Jung (psychologist)
8. Edgar Allen Poe
9. Fred Astaire
10. Merkin (American artist)
11. Bowery Boy Leo Gorcey, insisted on a \$400 fee and was promptly airbrushed out
12. Huntz Hall (Bowery Boy)
13. Simon Rodia (creator of Watts Towers)
14. Bob Dylan
15. Aubrey Beardsley (Victorian artist)
16. Sir Robert Peel (Police pioneer)

17. Aldous Huxley (philosopher)
18. Dylan Thomas (Welsh poet)
19. Terry Southern (author)
20. Dion (American pop singer)
21. Tony Curtis
22. Wallace Berman (Los Angeles artist)
23. Tommy Handley (wartime comedian)
24. Marilyn Monroe
25. William Burroughs (author)
26. Mahavatar Babaji (Indian Guru)
27. Stan Laurel
28. Richard Lindner (New York artist)
29. Oliver Hardy
30. Karl Marx
31. H.G. Wells
32. Paramhansa Yogananda (Indian Guru)
33. Stuart Sutcliffe (the fifth Beatle, he left to pursue a career as an artist but died of a brain haemorrhage in 1962 aged 21)
- 34.
35. Max Muller
- 36.
37. Marlon Brando
38. Tom Mix (cowboy film star)
39. Oscar Wilde
40. Tyrone Power
41. Larry Bell (modern painter)
42. Dr Livingstone
43. Johnny Weissmuller
44. Stephen Crane (American writer)
45. Issy Bonn (comedian)
46. George Bernard Shaw
47. Albert Stubbins (Liverpool footballer)
- 48.
49. Lahiri Mahasaya (Indian Guru)
50. Lewis Carol
51. Sonny Liston (boxer)
52. The Beatles (in wax), John Lennon (1940-1980)
53. Ringo Starr (b. 1940)
54. Paul McCartney (b. 1942)
55. George Harrison (1943-2001), he died of lung cancer
56. Albert Einstein
57. Marlene Dietrich

- 58. Diana Dors
- 59. Shirley Temple
- 60. Bobby Breen (singing prodigy)
- 61. T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia)

References

- <http://performingsongwriter.com/sgt-peppers-album-cover/>



- Next week I summarise where we have reached so far, from Expressionism, Post-Expressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, Dada, Surrealism and Abstraction.