



# A STROKE OF GENIUS

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE  
ART@SHAFE.UK  
WWW.SHAFE.UK

Our new term starts with a series of talks on a wide range of topics that I have given the title "A Stroke of Genius".



# A STROKE OF GENIUS

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2022- FEBRUARY 22ND 2023

## 1. Art at the Seaside

The Thames in Art

Angelica Kauffman

Gwen John

Augustus John

Can You Spot a Fake?

Vermeer's Complete Works (Part 1)

Vermeer's Complete Works (Part 2)

9. The World's Most Expensive Art

10. Charles Rennie Macintosh

11. Venice - City of Water

12. Edward Hopper

13. The 12 Greatest Art Forgers (Part 1)

14. The 12 Greatest Art Forgers (Part 2)

15. Mary Moser

16. Leonardo da Vinci

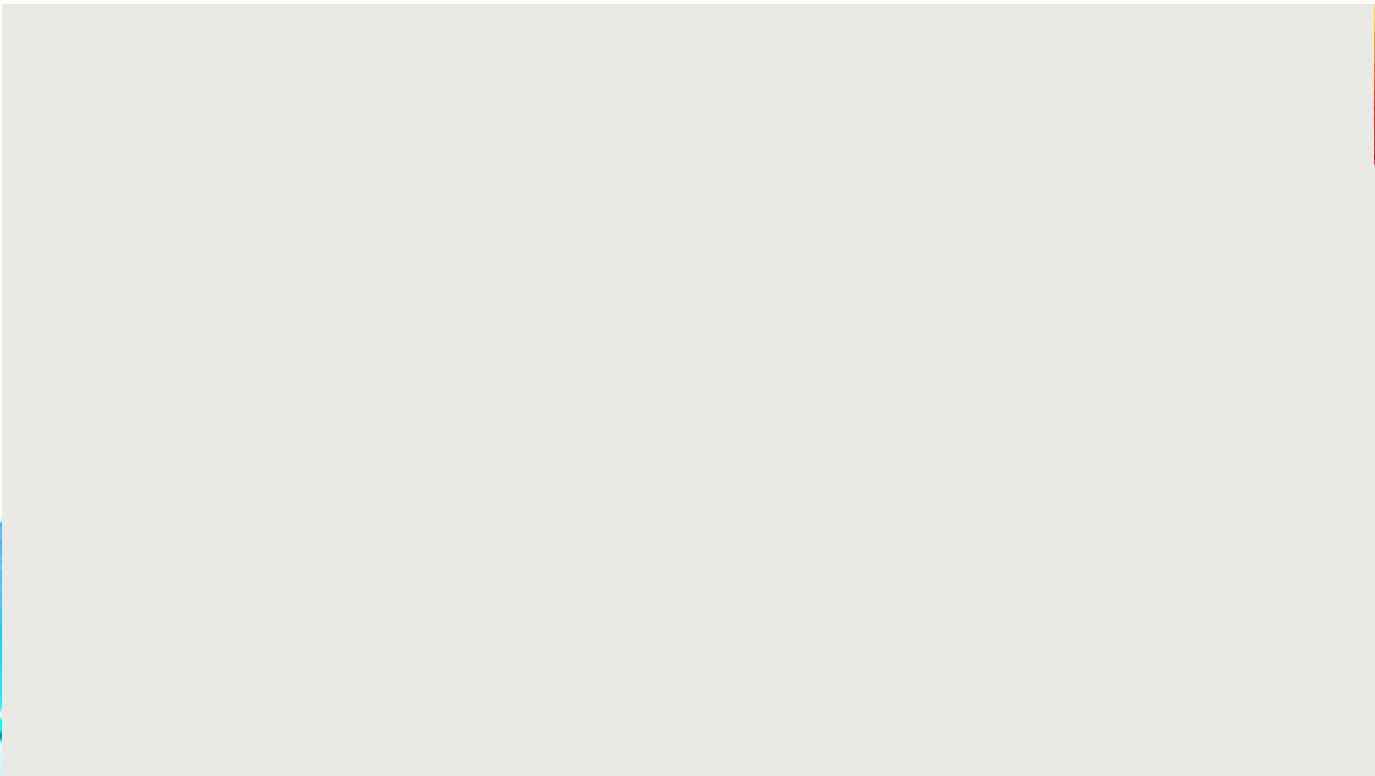
- Welcome to another series of sixteen talks. Each talk is about 75 minutes except for Vermeer. I decided to show you all his work which means I had to split the talk over two weeks and a ninth week.
- Today, following a long hot summer I am looking at the seaside both as a cultural phenomenon and as represented in art.

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# ART AT THE SEASIDE



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## ART AT THE SEASIDE

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Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), *Venus's bathing. (Margate) A fashionable dip*, c.1800, coloured etching, copyright Wellcome Collection

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), *Venus's bathing. (Margate) A fashionable dip*, c.1800, coloured etching, copyright Wellcome Collection

- This talk uses art to bring to life the British seaside holiday. It all started in the 1700s for the very rich as an alternative to visiting a spa as the sea water was regarded as medicinal. In fact, the first seaside town was, arguably, Scarborough which was already established as a spa town.
- There are so many works of art to choose from that I have approached it chronologically and tried to keep it fun.
- (CLICK) This is Thomas Rowlandson *Venus's Bathing* from 1800. From the beginning the practice of immersing the body in the sea was fraught with problems of impropriety. This image is the cartoonist Thomas Rowlandson making fun of the voyeurs on the cliff top enjoying the view of sea bathing in 1800. The solution was more control over the bathing machine experience...

### **THE BEGINNINGS**

- Seaside holidays started in the 1700s for the very rich.

- The British (a vicar) invented seaside holidays in 22 July 1736 (source *Daily Telegraph*)
- The first seaside town was Scarborough (?), it was already a spa town.
- Sea bathing was regarded as medicinal but it raised issues of propriety.

### **BATHING MACHINES AND HOLIDAYS**

- Bathing machines first appeared in Devon in 1735, it became part of the etiquette of bathing, it provided modesty and shelter and on some beaches every bathing machine had a Dipper, a dunking assistant. They had a flag to signal they wanted to return to shore. Their use waned in the 1890s and they stayed at the top of the beach and turned into beach huts. Beach huts evolved into holiday homes for the working class. In the 1930s George V and the upper classes started to use beach huts.
- The railway changed everything from 1840s onwards, it transformed small fishing villages into holiday resorts. Numbers increased so rapidly that the royal family abandoned Brighton in 1841. Blackpool experienced a massive boom. Mill owners closed the mills for one week a year for essential maintenance.
- Men and women were segregated and men bathed nude up to the 1860s
- Working class families could afford to visit seaside resorts from the 1850s and, if they went in the sea, they bathed nude.

### **THE SEASIDE AS WORKPLACE**

- The term 'seaside' implies holidays and holidaymakers but coastal towns were also where the fishing industry operated.
- British fishermen have been operating in Icelandic waters since the 14th century and have fished in the Grand Banks cod fishery off the coast of Newfoundland since the 17th century. Spanish

vessels fished those waters until the defeat of the Spanish Armada, when Britain was able to assert control. Between 1647 and 1750, about eight million tonnes of cod was taken from the Grand Banks.

- In the nineteenth century new trawler designs enabled Brixham to become 'The Mother of Deep-Sea Fisheries' and a great trawling fleet developed there. The technology spread and by the mid-nineteenth century Grimsby had become 'the largest fishing port in the world'. By the end of the 19th century, there were over 3,000 fishing trawlers in commission in Britain, with almost 1,000 at Grimsby. The design of the Brixham trawler spread around Europe and the rest of the world.

### **PIERS**

- The first piers were built in the early 19th century and started a landing stages. They grew into complex entertainment venues. The World's oldest seaside pier can be found in Ryde on the Isle of Wight. Ryde pier opened on July 26th, 1814. They evolved from wood to iron. Margate pier, originally a 1100 ft wooden jetty, became the first iron pier in 1855. Designed by Eugenius Birch he became one of the most famous pier designers of the age. The longest pier still open to date, is Southend. Reaching out 1.34 miles over the Thames estuary There were once over 100 piers and now there are just 55 surviving.

### **SEASIDE ART COLONIES**

- Newlyn - Stanhope Forbes, Henry Scott Tuke (and others)
- Lamorna - Lamorna Birch, Alfred Munnings (and others)
- St. Ives - Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Alfred Wallis, (also Sickert, Whistler and other)
- Walberswich, Suffolk - Philip Wilson Steer, Charles Rennie Macintosh, George Clausen (and others)

- Staithes, Yorkshire - Laura and Harold Knight (also Newlyn and Lamorna) and others
- Cullercoats, Northumbria - Winslow Homer
- Kirkcudbright - Glasgow Boys, Scottish Colourists

### **HOLIDAY CAMPS**

- Holiday camps were originally (1906) camps of tents. The first camp with all wooden huts was opened in 1920. In the 1930s large chains started to open, The first was Warners in 1931 and Butlins opened in 1936. By 1939 there were 200 holiday camps in the UK.
- After the war in the 1950s and 60s they flourished as they were "all in" and not too expensive.
- In the 1970s they declined as people started to use the new cheap, packaged holidays to foreign locations. Holiday camps were mostly shut down in the 1980s.

### **THE DAY TRIPPER**

- Beaches were closed during WWII but seaside holiday saw a huge resurgence after the war. The car enabled a family to visit the beach for a day. After WWII more and more families could afford a car.
- In 1909 Bournemouth council opened 160 beach huts. Recently a 12×10 foot beach hut sold for £330,000 at Mudeford Spit, Christchurch Harbour Dorset (Daily Mail)

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George Walker, engraver R & D Havell, *Sea Bathing*, Plate 17, 1813-14



William Heath (1795 - 1840), *Mermaids at Brighton*, c.1829

George Walker, engraver R & D Havell, *Sea Bathing*, Plate 17, 1813-14

William Heath (1795 - 1840), *Mermaids at Brighton*, c.1829. Depicts women sea-bathing with bathing machines at Brighton.

- Sea bathing started as a fashionable pursuit around 1750 and it became much more popular when George III and his family started to take his family bathing in Weymouth in 1783.
- Bathing machines hid the bather from public view until they entered the water. Note that men and women always bathed separately. Men would bathe naked and women wore thick, heavy woollen costumes. Women's costumes caused many problems, for example, it was reported at the time that they could ride up to their neck when they lay in the waves.
- Bathing machines had to be hired and were used by middle-class women. Working class men and women could not afford swimming costumes or bathing machines and so both sexes bathed together naked unheeding of any prohibitions. Bathing became the subject of much middle-class discussion and concern about issues of respectability and the correct way to behave.

- Men were allowed to bathe nude until the 1860s and it was regarded as respectable as long as they did not venture too near the ladies. In 1874 a rector wrote in his diary that he had to adopt the detestable custom of bathing in drawers, he wrote, **'If ladies don't like to see men naked why don't they keep away from the sight?'**
- There were many other issues of respectability for women. To begin with there was the apparently simple issue of women drying their hair. Respectable women were never seen with their hair loose except by their husbands when going to bed. Hair was a Victorian fetish and fashion and **'At the peak of the fad, in the forties and fifties, hair became something of a Victorian culture obsession: whole suites of jewellery were fashioned, as if through alchemy, from the plaited hair of family members, lovers, and friends, living and dead.'**
- There was no symmetry between the genders. Men could freely look at women bathing although a letter to *The Times* in 1850 said that men with telescopes were 'brutal', but women could never even glance at men bathing without losing their respectability and therefore femininity.
- Later bathing machines had a curtain that could be lowered to sea level and some resorts employed a dipper whose job was to push people under water and then help them back into the bathing machine. But we can see this was not a complete solution...

## **NOTES**

- The bathing machine was first developed in Margate about 1750 when most people bathed naked. Legal segregation of bathing areas did not end until 1901 and the machines became extinct by 1820. Boys and young men would bathe naked even in the Edwardian Era but middle class girls and women always had to



be fully covered with clothes that did not expose their shape.

- The fundamental problem was the naked body. Men had always bathed nude in Britain, unlike France and America. Men were not blamed for exposing themselves and people who objected were regarded as prudes. It was the responsibility of women not to look. The bathing areas were typically a long way apart but at Ramsgate at high tide 'the space between men and women was not more than two machines.' The issue was therefore the gendered gaze.
- It should also be pointed out that although women wore long woollen bathing costumes this was no guarantee they would not be exposed. It was reported in the Observer of 1856 that women lay in the sea feet towards the shore and the waves would carry the costumes up to their necks leaving their naked bodies exposed and even when there were no waves, women would jump up and down causing their costumes to cling to their upper bodies. One wonders if this was intentional and it should be seen in the context of working class groups who typically engaged in mixed nude bathing at this time. It should also be borne in mind that the most powerful supporter for the nude in art was Queen Victoria. It is clear that the Victorian attitude to nakedness is not as simple as is often thought.



Thomas Rowlandson  
(1757-1827), *Summer  
amusement at Margate, or  
a peep at the mermaids*,  
1813, hand-coloured  
etching, British Museum



Thomas Rowlandson (1757-1827), *Summer amusement at Margate, or a peep at the mermaids*, 1813, hand-coloured etching, British Museum

- Here is an exaggerated and humorous example of what was meant about men with telescopes.
- The women are queueing to enter the bathing machine and being pushed in by a dipper. In this case they reappear completely naked and frolic in the water. You may wonder if this is accurate but Margate was well known for what was called promiscuous bathing, that is men and women bathing together. According to the magazines of the period the crowds at Margate often used telescopes to get a better view of the "**nude groups and sportive syrens**" in the water. It was also reported that these "**magnifying mediums**" were as likely to be used by ladies as by gentlemen. The conclusion was that Margate was not a place which attracted "**truly modest women.**"

## NOTES

- "In the foreground is a low cliff or bank overlooking the sands; from

this four elderly men are eagerly and delightedly looking through telescopes at naked ladies disporting in the sea. An angry woman (right) tugs at the coat-tails of one of them; she has a tiny sunshade, and like her husband is grossly fat. Bathing machines are in the water, with hoods covering the steps to the sea. A fat bathing woman pushes a lady up the steps of a machine. Behind the spectators is a 'Circulating Library'; above the lower floors is a large balcony from which more men are gazing through telescopes. On the extreme right is a doorway placarded: 'Hot Sea Baths'; a fat man with a crutch walks in. In the background a jetty projects from the sands, with a windlass, and packages of goods. Behind are small vessels. For Margate as a plebeian watering-place." [1]

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[1] [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1935-0522-9-74](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1935-0522-9-74)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Rowlandson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Rowlandson)

<https://www.mimimatthews.com/2017/05/22/promiscuous-bathing-at-margate-victorian-outrage-over-indecency-at-the-public-beach/>



Isaac Cruikshank (1756?-1811?), *News from Worthing*. In a letter from a beast of burden to her brother Jack, published 25th May, 1807 by Laurie and Whittle, 53 Fleet Street, London

Isaac Cruikshank (1756?-1811?), *News from Worthing*. In a letter from a beast of burden to her brother Jack, published 25th May, 1807 by Laurie and Whittle, 53 Fleet Street, London

- Another danger of seaside entertainment was the obstinate donkey. This was printed in 1807 and shows a young women stuck in the sea as the donkey will not budge. The illustration was accompanied by a poem as if written by the donkey describing the pranks donkey's get up to. In the background on the left one is running with a young lady falling off and towards the centre another donkey has thrown the young woman.
- In conclusion it was all great fun for both sexes and was the beginning of the idea of the seaside being a place to relax and have enjoy oneself.
- But these was a more serious side...

## REFERENCES

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/ds.03595/>



J. M. W. Turner  
(1775–1851),  
*Margate*, c.1822,  
15.6 × 23.5 cm,  
Yale Center for  
British Art

J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Margate*, c.1822, 15.6 × 23.5 cm, Yale Center for British Art

- This is *Margate* by Turner and shows a ship foundering and the locals salvaging goods.
- It looks like a lee shore, that is the wind is blowing onto the shore so large sailing ships can find themselves driven onto the shore unable to escape. It appears that a ship is breaking up at the left and the townspeople are pulling on lines trying to rescue people and goods. The laws concerning ownership of goods found is complex depending on whether it floated away from a wreck or was intentionally thrown overboard. Here, it looks like a salvage operation and that required the owner to compensate the voluntary services that rescued the wreck whether they were requested or not. No doubt there was also the opportunity to pick up and walk off with any goods found.
- Turner had a close connection with the town. He first came in 1786, aged 11, to stay with an uncle, a fishmonger in the town.
- "Around 1786, Turner was sent to Margate on the north-east Kent

coast. There he produced a series of drawings of the town and surrounding area that foreshadowed his later work. By this time, Turner's drawings were being exhibited in his father's shop window and sold for a few shillings." As I said he was eleven years old.

- When this was painted in 1822 he was a well-established artist. By 1827 he would travel to Margate most Saturdays to escape London. He loved sailing and came by sea and stayed with **Mrs Sophia Booth** at her guest house in Cold Harbour.
- Turner stayed there on and off for **twenty years from 1827 to 1847**. After Sophia's husband Mr Booth died in 1833, Turner adopted the name Booth and lived at her guesthouse, becoming Sophia's long-term companion and calling himself Mr Booth and later Admiral Booth.

## **REFERENCES**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_Mallord\\_William\\_Turner\\_-\\_Margate\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_Mallord_William_Turner_-_Margate_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

<https://www.visitthanet.co.uk/see-and-do/arts-and-culture/turner-and-margate/> gives a detailed chronology of his visits to Margate but does not mention 1822.



J.M.W. Turner  
(1775-1851),  
*Hastings: Fish Market on the  
Sands, Early  
Morning*, 1824,  
44.5 × 66 cm,  
Hastings Museum  
and Art Gallery



J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), *Hastings: Fish Market on the Sands, Early Morning*, 1824, 44.5 × 66 cm, Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

### THE SEASIDE AS WORKPLACE

- Of course, the seaside was also a place of business.
- This picture again by Turner was probably intended to become an engraving but that never happened. In the centre is a group of fashionable women, a boy with a hoop, fishermen and fishwives with baskets of fish and, surprisingly, two figures in Greek costume, one with his arm in a sling. The latter figures are a reference to the **Greek War of Independence (1821-29) which had widespread support in Britain** at the time and Lord Byron raised funds for the Greek cause, travelled there but died of a fever at Missolonghi in 1824, the year this was painted.

### NOTES

- "It was probably intended as an engraving for W B Cooke's *Marine Views* but reproduction was never carried out. It shows an early morning fish sale on Hastings beach with the East Parade, Battery and Castle in the distance. In the centre is a group of fashionable women, a boy with a hoop, fishermen in their 'tanfrocks', fishwives

with baskets of fish and two figures in Greek costume, one with his arm in a sling. The latter are a reference to the **Greek War of Independence (1821-29) which had widespread support in Britain** at the time."

- Lord Byron raised funds for the Greek cause and travelled there but died of a fever at Missolonghi in 1824, the year this was painted.

### **REFERENCES**

<https://life-on-the-edge.org/2021/11/30/pre-raphaelites-at-the-seaside/>

John Constable (1776-1837), *Chain Pier, Brighton*, 1826-7, 127 × 182.9 cm, Tate



John Constable (1776-1837), *Chain Pier, Brighton*, 1826-7, 127 × 182.9 cm, Tate

## PIERS

- The other **great Romantic artist** of this period was **John Constable** and the other great seaside invention was the pier.
- This is Constable's view of the beach at Brighton, a popular seaside resort since **George IV, the Prince Regent built the Brighton Pavilion** and established it as a royal holiday location. In the background is the Chain Pier regarded as a **wonder of the age**. It was built to enable the **cross-channel ferry to berth** safely and visitors were allowed to walk down the pier. The pier became a major tourist attraction and people would pay 2d a day to walk down the pier. On one occasion 30 to 40 people stood at the end in a raging storm to experience the thrill of being soaked and blown around by the power of nature. I think Health & Safety would have something to say these days.
- These early piers evolved into **complex entertainment venues**. This pier opened shortly before it was painted by Constable and was eventually **destroyed by a storm** 70 odd years later.



## **NOTE**

- "Constable first went to Brighton in 1824, taking his wife Maria in an attempt to restore her failing health. He visited her frequently in the mid-1820s and made many drawings and sketches, but this is his only large painting of a Brighton subject.
- The 1820s were some of the busiest years of Brighton's development as a fashionable seaside resort. Here Constable shows the bustling life of the beach against a backdrop of Brighton's new hotels, residential quarters and the Chain Pier itself. The pier opened in 1823, shortly before Constable's first visit, but was destroyed by storm in 1896." [1]
- The Royal Suspension Chain Pier was the first major pier built in Brighton and was built in 1823, it was destroyed during a storm in 1896. It was 350 yards long and was used as a landing stage for packet boats from Dieppe but also had other attractions, such as a camera obscura. It was painted by John Constable in about 1826-27. Brighton became the busiest cross-channel port although in bad weather Newhaven's sheltered port was more attractive. The pier consisted of four enormous towers and two chains with ten-foot links were hung between them. One end of the chain was fixed in the cliff and the other embedded in the sea bed. In 1828 the pier was at the height of its popularity and up to 4,000 people a day paid 2d to walk along the pier. It was reported that during one storm thirty of forty people were covered by the sea breaking over the outer towers. It declined in popularity in the 1860s after the West Pier was opened in 1866 and the Palace Pier in 1891.
- The World's oldest seaside pier can be found in Ryde on the Isle of Wight. Ryde pier opened on July 26th, 1814. They evolved from wood to iron. Margate pier, originally a 1100 ft wooden jetty, became the first iron pier in 1855. Designed by Eugenius Birch he became one of the most famous pier designers of the

age. The longest pier still open to date, is Southend. Reaching out 1.34 miles over the Thames estuary There were once over 100 piers and now there are just 55 surviving.

## **REFERENCES**

[1] <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/constable-chain-pier-brighton-n05957>

William Holman  
Hunt, *Strayed Sheep*  
(*Our English Coasts*),  
1852, Tate



William Holman Hunt, *Strayed Sheep (Our English Coasts)*, 1852, Tate

- The Pre-Raphaelites were founded in 1848 by three artists, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and **this artist William Holman Hunt**.
- "In his book *Modern Painters* (1847) the writer and critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) exhorted young English artists to '**go to Nature in all singleness of heart**, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instructions; **rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing**; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth.'" [1]
- Hunt was a religious man and he was inspired by Ruskin's words to create works that were **true to nature** and therefore could **teach a religious and a moral lesson**. This work has two titles *Strayed Sheep* and *Our English Coasts*. When displayed at the Royal Academy it was *Our English Coasts* and visitors marvelled at the accuracy.(CLICK) For example, if you examine the sheep's ear you can see the sun shining through and illuminating the blood vessels.(CLICK, CLICK) The butterflies were captured by Hunt,

mounted and taken back to his studio where he meticulously painted them.

- There was a bigger meaning however, in 1852 there was **concern that the French would invade** and that our **coasts were poorly defended** so the painting is also drawing attention to the beauty of our English coasts and their lack of defence.
- The frame bore the inscription '**The Lost Sheep**' and when the painting was exhibited in France three years later the title was **Strayed Sheep**. The viewer would know that lost or strayed sheep refer to **those who have lost sight of God** and the picture was therefore seen as a **religious painting** concerning the need to observe religion faithfully otherwise we lose our way and become in danger of falling from the cliff, that is falling into sin.

## **NOTES**

- The scenic location painted rests on the cliffs at Fairlight Glen, beside Covehust Bay near Hastings, called the Lovers' Seat.
- It was exhibited at the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1853 under the title *Our English Coasts*, but the frame bore the inscription "The Lost Sheep", and it was renamed *Strayed Sheep* when it was exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855. It was acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1946, through The Art Fund.

## **REFERENCES**

[1] <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hunt-our-english-coasts-1852-strayed-sheep-n05665>



William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1852-4

William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1851-4, 77 × 155.1 cm, Royal Collection

### THE VICTORIAN SEASIDE HOLIDAY

- This is the **first great representation of a seaside holiday** in fine art.
- There is a lot going on. My tutor at the Courtauld wrote over 40 pages explaining the details of this painting.
- Previously Frith depicted figures from history or literature but this was the **first time any contemporary Victorian crowd had been painted**. The idea of painting modern life was a **revolutionary idea** of the Impressionists inspired by the writing of Charles Baudelaire but Frith's pictures **predates the first Impressionist exhibition by twenty years**.
- Many of Frith's fellow artists were against the idea of painting modern-life and one called it '**a piece of vulgar Cockney business**' and another '**a tissue of vulgarity**'. However, the **public loved it** and it was an immediate and enormous success. It was one of the few paintings at the Royal Academy for which a **guard rail** had to be installed to keep the public back – the ultimate sign of success.

In all, Frith had six guard rails over the years.

- It was bought from the artist by Messrs Lloyd who **sold it to Queen Victoria the same year, 1854, for £1,000**, the same price he paid but he retained reproduction rights and Frith may have earned as much as £3,000 from the sale of reproductions.
- **Victoria had stayed in Albion House** (built 1789) in Ramsgate before she became Queen. This is the **highest house** in the middle of Frith's painting. Victoria stayed in **Ramsgate aged 16 she nearly died of typhoid** and Sir John Conroy forced a pen into her hand to try to force her to sign authority to him, she resisted.
- Victoria had also entered the sea from a **bathing machine in Osborne**, Isle of Wight for the first time in 1847. She wrote in her

**'drove down to the beach with my maid & went into the bathing machines, where I undressed & bathed in the sea (for the 1st time in my life), a very nice bathing woman attended me. I thought it delightful till I put my head under water, when I thought I should be stifled.'**

Queen Victoria's Journal, 30 July 1847

- It was inspired by a holiday Frith and his family took to Ramsgate in 1851. He always painted from real people and liked to use friends and family as he found professional models often turned up drunk and had no sense of responsibility. The artist included a **self-portrait** (peeping over the shoulder of the man on the far right), while the **little girl paddling** in the centre staring directly at the painter is thought to have been his **daughter**.
- Frith is showing a world of mixed sexes, ages, classes and occupations but he maintains the important **class distinctions** and generally the lower classes are shown as deferential and

respectful. There is an **intellectual air** among the entertainment and seven women are reading books. One man is an idler and another appears to be flirting and two people are potentially voyeurs with telescopes watching women bathing. However, one is an **old man and the other a young person**. No bathers are shown in the painting and there are no coarse or vulgar displays. Interestingly for today's audience the woman in a white dress sitting on the sand in the centre is being entertained by someone who is placing **white mice** in front of her. Her face shows only mild interest and no sign of fear or even discomfort.

### NOTES

- My professor at the Courtauld devoted a large part of her doctoral thesis to this painting and she examined and analysed every person and their social role within society. Seaside holidays or weekends had become possible with the advent of the railway. Trains first reach Ramsgate in 1846 and although it involved changing at Canterbury the old station was in the centre of the town near the beach.
- The bathing machines had a curtain that could be lowered to sea level but as I said men were allowed to bathe nude until the 1860s. Legal segregation of bathing areas ended in 1901 and the machines became extinct by 1820.
- Frith is showing a world of mixed sexes, ages, classes and occupations but he maintains the important class distinctions and generally the lower classes are shown as deferential and respectful. There is an intellectual air among the entertainment and seven women are reading books. One man is an idler and another appears to be flirting and two people are potentially voyeurs with telescopes watching women bathing. However, one is an old man and the other a young girl. No bathers are shown in the painting and there are no coarse or vulgar displays.

- Granite Obelisk (known as the Royal Tooth Pick) erected 1822 to commemorate the departure (1820) and safe return of King George IV from Ramsgate Harbour. He was so pleased with his reception he named it a 'Royal Harbour' (the only one). Beyond the obelisk is the Royal Harbour, important during the Napoleonic Wars. The first railway was 1846.
- Many famous people stayed in Ramsgate—Augustus Pugin, George du Maurier, James Tissot, Vincent van Gogh, Wilkie Collins and Jane Austen amongst them.
- Frith went on to paint many other scenes of everyday life such as *The Derby Day* (1858) and *The Railway Station* (1862) for which Frith was paid an astonishing 8,000 guineas.

### **WILLIAM POWELL FRITH (1819-1909)**

- Born in Yorkshire to a house steward and cook and his parents took a keen interest in art.
- He was sent to school in Dover where he indulged in drawing.
- His formal training was at the Sass Academy and then the RA School in 1837 (aged 18).
- His father died and his mother moved to London and he made money portrait painting (Lincolnshire farmers at 5-15 guineas).
- Member of the Clique, which included Augustus Egg, Richard Dadd and Henry O'Neil and rapidly established himself as a genre painter.
- His painting was at odds with the RA but his character and incident, sparkling detail and high finish made his work popular and suitable for engraving.
- 1840 travelled abroad and had his first painting exhibited at the RA.
- ARA 1845 and RA 1852 (aged 33).
- He was friends with Charles Dickens and centre of the literary



life of London.

- In 1851 he visited Ramsgate and decided to take a commercial risk investing in *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)* and it was a success and sold to Lloyd then Queen Victoria for £1,000.
- His second panorama, *Derby Day* was a stroke of genius, few paintings have ever earned such universal acclaim.
- He had a wife with 12 children and a mistress with 7.
- He was an artist with a well developed business sense and he remained in the news throughout his life.
- Six of his paintings had to be railed off and his three most important works, *Ramsgate Sands*, *Derby Day*, and *The Railway Station*.
- He was criticised for his artistic philistinism by John Ruskin, Whistler and Oscar Wilde, and later Roger Fry and he was a staunch reactionary criticising the Aesthetic Movement, Oscar Wilde and Impressionism.

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'A very natural mistake', *Punch* (6 September 1856), p. 24

'A very natural mistake', *Punch* (6 September 1856), p. 24

- This is a couple of years later (1856) and we see that things are slowly starting to change in society with respect to women's role.

*Young Lady (who is in Hat and Coat of the period).* "Can I have a Machine now?"

*Bathing Woman.* "Not here, Sir! — Gentlemen's Bathing a little further down!"

- It is still 40 years before the **phrase 'New Woman' was first used** (by Irish writer Sarah Grand (1854–1943) in an influential article in 1894) to describe women seeking a radical change in society. I think what we see here is **Punch making fun of a fashion that is slightly masculinised** rather than a profound shift in society. However, it shows things were starting to change even as early as the 1850s.

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William Dyce (1806-1864), *Pegwell Bay, Kent - a Recollection of October 5th 1858*, ?1858-60, 63.5 × 88.9 cm, Tate



William Dyce (1806-1864), *Pegwell Bay, Kent - a Recollection of October 5th 1858*, ?1858-60, 63.5 × 88.9 cm, Tate

- This painting in the Tate **always sets me thinking**. It has a **profound calm** about it and shows a family shell and fossil collecting.
- It is by William Dyce who normally painted religious subjects and is the result of a holiday he took in **Pegwell Bay** in the autumn of 1858. It shows **his wife, her two sisters and his son** gathering shells and fossils and his interest in geology is shown by his careful recording of the flint-encrusted strata and eroded faces of the chalk cliffs. (CLICK) The significant element is barely visible, it is the faint trail of **Donati's comet** shown here (CLICK). [1]
- This painting has been analysed in various ways. One interpretation is that it is **about time** and it therefore invokes feelings of the sublime concerning the vast age of the earth. Critics at the time could not cope with it and described it as a travesty of the sublime because its microscopic detail prevents an overall unified view.
- It shows the **middle-class interest in geology**. **Charles Lyell** had published his ***Principles of Geology*** in three volumes between 1830

and 1833, and everyone was interested in the controversial attempt to reconcile the implications of geological time with Biblical scripture.

- The variety of ages in the figures may represent the passage of time, while the setting sun and the autumnal chill in the air serve as a reminder of death.

## **NOTES**

- The artist-scientist on the right is holding a telescope.
- Discovered by Giovanni Donati on June 2, 1858, after the Great Comet of 1811 it was the brightest comet to appear during the 19th century. It has a period of about 2,000 years.
- The geologically unstable cliffs along much of England's south coast were (and still are) a paradise for those in search of fossils, including the famous fossil hunter **Mary Anning (1799-1847) of Lyme Regis**, who is credited with the discovery of the first plesiosaur skeleton. Plesiosaurs, meaning 'near to lizards' flourished from 203 million to 66 million years ago across all the oceans of the world.
- The *Illustrated London News* considered the work to be
  - **'a very curiosity of minute handiwork ... being painted in the finest of fairy like lines ... with a completeness and exactness which render every microscopic detail palpable to the naked eye'**
- but concluded that the ultimate effect of such representation was **'a rapid descent from the sublime to the droll'**.

## **WILLIAM DYCE**

- William Dyce (1806-1864) was born in Aberdeen, Scotland. After studying at the Royal Academy Schools in London and in Rome, Dyce became well known for his paintings, and between 1837 and 1843 was Superintendent of the Government School of

Design. He later won a competition to complete fresco paintings for the newly rebuilt Houses of Parliament, a project that occupied him almost until his death. However, Dyce was also interested in intellectual and scientific pursuits, for example, writing a prize-winning essay on electro-magnetism in 1830.

- As a deeply devout High Anglican, Dyce probably intended these figures to elicit feelings of wonder in the viewer – an idea that connects with the poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion of the sublime in which individual consciousness is subsumed by a sense of the eternal. On the other hand, the estrangement between the figures and between the figures and the scene could be seen to undermine the reference to the sublime.

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Winslow Homer, *The Gale*, 1883–93, 76.8 × 122.7 cm, Worcester Art Museum

Winslow Homer, *The Gale*, 1883–93, 76.8 × 122.7 cm, Worcester Art Museum

- The **great American realist painter Winslow Homer stayed for two years (1881-83) in Cullercoats** (pronounced 'colour-coats'). He lived through the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery and was concerned with the pressing issues of the day, race and the relationship between us the the environment.
- Homer travelled to France, England, the Bahamas, Cuba and Bermuda. In England, he painted scenes of heroism and resilience that he saw while staying in Cullercoats, a town on the North East coast.
- An **earlier version** of the painting that included Cullercoats Life Brigade House, men in foul-weather clothes and a ship was **denounced by the critics** when exhibited in New York and so Homer produced this **modified version based on the coast of Maine**. Critics were **full of praise** of his realistic representation as they felt he had not interpreted the scene but is showing us the way it was without his personal emotions intruding. The critics felt too many artists manipulate the scene in order to parade their subjective



feeling before us. One critic wrote of his weariness of "**insolent, conceited affectation by men who force themselves full before before all those who see their pictures.**"

## **NOTES**

- Cullercoats is a coastal settlement in the metropolitan borough of North Tyneside, Tyne and Wear, North East England. Historically in Northumberland, it has now been absorbed into the wider Tyneside conurbation, sitting between Tynemouth to the south and Whitley Bay to the north

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Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947), *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1885, 118.5 × 154 cm, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947), *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1885, 118.5 × 154 cm, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

- Stanhope Forbes painted the picture **entirely outside over a period of a year** overcoming the problems of **rain, wind, fainting models and rotting fish**. He could paint only when the **tide was out** and the **sky grey**.
- Here in *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* he depicts a **beach auction** of the fish that have just been caught. The **auctioneer or 'jowster'** would sell the catch to the highest bidder.
- Forbes was born in Dublin and studied at Lambeth School of Art and the Royal Academy School. He travelled to Paris and was influenced by en plein air painting and by the landscapes of Jules Bastien Lepage.
- Forbes lived in artistic colonies in Brittany and **settled in Newlyn in 1884**. Other artists were attracted to Newlyn, partly because of his reputation and his charismatic character but as the number of artists in Newlyn dwindled, Stanhope and his wife Elizabeth Forbes founded their **School of Painting in 1899**. This was to attract a



whole new generation of artists to the area.

- This picture brought the Newlyn School to the attention of critics and audiences when **exhibited to acclaim** at the Royal Academy in 1885.
- The Newlyn School painters were **not trying to improve the conditions** for the fishermen and their families. Forbes described Newlyn as a '**dirty hole**' and the artists complained of the continual **smell of rotting fish** and that the locals charged twice as much as the fishermen and their families in France. They went because of the social activity within the artists' community, it was **a cheap place to live** and because of the dream of having a painting accepted by the Royal Academy. **Harold and Laura Knight ordered 'furniture, linen and silver' from the Harrods catalogue' when they first arrived** (Barbara Morden, Laura Knight: A Life).

### **STANHOPE ALEXANDER FORBES (1857-1947)**

- Bio:Forbes. **Stanhope Alexander Forbes (1857-1947)** was '**father of the Newlyn School**'. He became an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1892 and a Royal Academician in 1910.
- Forbes was the son of a French woman and an English railway manager and was educated at Dulwich College and then the Royal Academy School. His uncle was a well-known art collector, James Forbes.
- He married the Canadian artist Elizabeth Armstrong (1859-1912) in Newlyn in 1889 and they founded the Newlyn School. She died of cancer when she was only 52 and he remarried a friend and former student called Maude ('Maudie ') Clayton Palmer (1880-1952) in 1915. His son died in WWI and he died in Newlyn, aged 89.
- Forbes and Henry Herbert La Thangue (1859-1929) went to Cancale, Brittany and painted en plein air, like Jules Bastien-

Lepage, which became a technique that Forbes used throughout his career.

- The Newlyn School grew to 50 artists including Frank Bramley, Henry Scott Tuke, his wife Elizabeth Forbes, Harold and Laura Knight (1877-1970) and Alfred Munnings.

### **NOTES**

- Newlyn is a fishing village near Penzance, Cornwall.
- The founding of the School was similar to the founding of the Barbizon School (1830-1870, near the Forest of Fontainebleau).
- Initially Forbes started this painting with a huge canvas 275 x 165 cm but later had to change to a large but more manageable 150 x 120 cm canvas.

### **THE BARBIZON SCHOOL**

- Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Charles-François Daubigny were inspired by John Constable in 1824 to paint direct from nature and they founded the Barbizon School. It later attracted Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley.

### **SEASIDE ART COLONIES**

- Newlyn - Stanhope Forbes, Henry Scott Tuke (and others)
- Lamorna - Lamorna Birch, Alfred Munnings (and others)
- St. Ives - Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Alfred Wallis, (also Sickert, Whistler and other)
- Walberswich, Suffolk - Philip Wilson Steer, Charles Rennie Macintosh, George Clausen (and others)
- Staithes, Yorkshire - Laura and Harold Knight (also Newlyn and Lamorna) and others
- Cullercoats, Northumbria - Winslow Homer
- Kirkcudbright - Glasgow Boys, Scottish Colourists

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Laura Knight (1877-1970, née Johnson),  
*The Fishing Fleet*, c. 1900, 123 x 84 cm,  
Bolton Library



Laura Knight (1877-1970, née Johnson), *The Fishing Fleet*, c. 1900, 123 x 84 cm, Bolton Library

- This is by Laura Knight but was **painted in Staithes**, Yorkshire, **shortly before her marriage to Harold Knight in 1903**. Staithes was a relatively small artists' colony, but the Knights knew and made friends with artists such as the Scot, Charles Mackie and the Impressionist painter from Oldham, Fred Jackson.
- Staithes and neighbouring Runswick had been the focus of artists since the 1880s and was recommended to Laura and Harold by a master at Nottingham School of Art.
- She had **attended an exhibition of Newlyn School artists** while at Nottingham School of Art in 1894 (aged 16-17) and had been deeply impressed. She had particularly admired Bramley's *A Hopeless Dawn*.
- This was her **most ambitious painting** at Staithes and it was signed using her maiden name **Laura Johnson** as she did not marry Harold until 1903. The muted greys and browns reflect her concern with the harsh and tragic lives of the local fishing community.

- From 1904 to 1907 they made three visits to the colony of artists at Laren in the Netherlands and **in 1907 they moved to Newlyn**. Her **colour palette lightened at Newlyn** and her brushwork became freer reflecting their pleasure in their carefree bohemian lifestyle.

### **STAITHES**

- Was another artistic colony but short-lived and smaller than Newlyn.

### **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.
- 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.
- 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.



Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier*, 1888-94, 62.9 × 92.7 cm, Tate, presented Lady Augustus Daniel 1951

- Another **small artist community** was in **Walberswick**, Suffolk, and the leading artist was **Philip Wilson Steer**.
- At the beginning of the 1890s he was the **leading follower of French Impressionism in England**. However, he has a Post-Impressionistic technique that produced a balance between the formal properties of the surface and the naturalistic representation of the subject. He had been influenced by **Whistler** and **Degas** but from about 1895 he began to reassess the work of the Old Masters such as **Constable and Turner** and he started to paint the English countryside.
- Steer made many visits to Walberswick in Suffolk (south of Lowestoft). *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier* was one of **the most authentic Impressionist works in Britain** and was regarded as either uncompromisingly avant garde and **according to one critic 'evil'**. The painting captures the warmth of late afternoon sunlight but unlike Monet there are darker elements.



- **At first** it appears **carefree** with two girls dancing down the pier in the sunshine but there is a closeness and a feeling of **claustrophobia** accentuated by the **three shadows** in the foreground. The girls **hold hands** in the shadow but they have parted perhaps signifying a friendship breaking apart. The long shadows at the end of the day suggest **night falling and death** but the flat perspective and the **heavily worked paint surface** bring us back from meaning to seeing paint on a flat surface. The painting balances precariously between **abstract pattern and profound meaning**.

## NOTES

- In 1927 he began to **lose his sight in one eye** and started to paint almost exclusively in watercolour with a looser style sometimes verging on total abstraction. He continued **to teach at the Slade until 1930**.
- Other artists who painted in the Impressionist style include **John Singer Sargent** (1856-1925) with ***Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*** (1885-6) and ***Claude Monet Painting by the Edge of a Wood***, ? (1885), George Clausen and Walter Sickert.
- In **1886 the New English Art Club** was founded by a group of about 50 young British artists many of whom had studied in **Paris** and at the **Slade School of Art**. It was set up by **15 founding members**, sought to establish an **exhibiting society** along French lines and all the artists were influenced by **Jules Bastien-Lepage** and the **Barbizon School (1830-1870)**. The NEAC decided to mount an exhibition **opposite the Royal Academy** in Piccadilly. The members included:
  - Philip Wilson Steer (the leading English Impressionist),
  - John Singer Sargent (the leading society portraitist),
  - George Clausen (the leading landscape painter),
  - Stanhope Alexander Forbes (the founder of the Newlyn

School),

- Frank Bramley (the leading realist painter),
- Henry Scott Tuke (painter of maritime scenes and naked young men),
- Laura Knight (the first woman to become an Academician),
- The Glasgow School, including Margaret MacDonald Mackintosh and her husband Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Bessie MacNicol, John Lavery and James Guthrie,
- Walter Sickert and Augustus John, Wyndham Lewis and Lucien Pissarro of the Camden Town Group.

### **PHILIP WILSON STEER (1860-1942)**

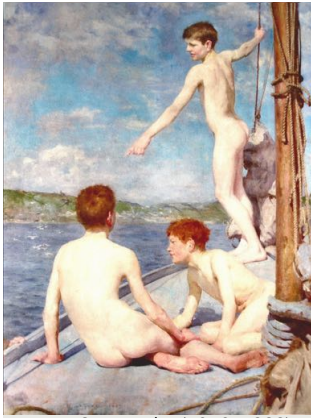
- **Bio:Steer.** Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942) was a British landscape and portrait painter and leader of the Impressionist movement in England.
- He was born in Liverpool, the son of a portrait painter. From 1880-1 he studied at the South Kensington Drawing School. He was rejected by the Royal Academy and went to Paris to study at Académie Julian, and then in the École des Beaux Arts under Cabanel.
- Between 1883 and 1885 he exhibited at the Royal Academy and in 1886 became a founder of the New English Art Club.
- In 1887 he spent some time at the Etaples art colony in Northern France and later painted a number of works at Walberswick.
- He was influenced by Whistler, Boucher, Gainsborough, Constable and Turner.
- He was a WWI painter of Royal Navy scenes. His self-portrait is in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

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Henry Scott Tuke (1858–1929),  
*The Bathers*, 1889, 116.8 × 86.3  
cm, Leeds Art Gallery



Henry Scott Tuke  
(1858–1929), *Ruby,  
Gold and Malachite*,  
1902, Guildhall Art  
Gallery

Henry Scott Tuke (1858–1929), *Ruby, Gold and Malachite*, 1902,  
Guildhall Art Gallery

Henry Scott Tuke (1858–1929), *The Bathers*, 1889, 116.8 × 86.3 cm,  
Leeds Art Gallery

- **Henry Scott Tuke** was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy (ARA) in 1900 and a full member in 1914. His work **fell out of favour after WWI** and it regained popularity when it was **discovered by gay artists in the 1970s**.
- Pictures of **naked youths outside a classical context were generally not acceptable at this time with the exception of figures bathing**. At this time it was normal for boys and men to bathe naked in rivers and the sea.
- This painting **was one of his greatest successes** partly because Tuke had been **appointed an ARA two years previously** and he had recently exhibited a painting of a ship at sea (*The Run Home*) and a portrait of a wealthy South African who lived in Falmouth (*Portrait of Alfred de Pass*).
- (CLICK) However, the **well-known dealer Colnaghi withdrew his**

**support** of the New English Art Club after seeing a **similar painting**, Tuke's *The Bathers* of 1886.(CLICK)

- Tuke's manliness was supported by his **reputation as a marine painter** and one reviewer of this painting described '**decorative beauty**' which implies effeminacy but also the '**sailors and boys**' which implies manliness.
- By showing a group rather than a single boy Tuke shifts from the **homoerotic** to the less threatening **homosocial**. The close association of healthy young men was part of the **public school model promoted by Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) at Rugby School**.
- The painting can be read in several ways:
  - as a celebration of athletic masculinity and the healthy sport of swimming;
  - a representation of the innocence, fun and the purity of youth;
  - unselfconsciousness in a natural setting and therefore celebrating man as part of nature;
  - an image of a lost rural idyll;
  - a depiction of the healthy sons of empire;
- The last point was important as health was an important issue at this time as the **health of the nation deteriorated rapidly from about 1880 to 1900**. From Also, Paul Clayton points out in 'How the Mid-Victorians Worked, Ate and Died' that, '**Within two generations, however, male health nationally had deteriorated to such an extent that in 1900, five out of 10 young men volunteering for the second Boer War had to be rejected because they were so undernourished. They were not starved, but had been consuming the wrong foods.**' The deterioration in the health of the 'rough boys' of the working class was regarded as a serious problem for the Empire and Tuke

shows the type of healthy working-class boys that the Empire needed.

## NOTES

- *Ruby, Gold and Malachite* – refer to the red, yellow and green tones used. This echoes an essay by John Addington Symonds, and may refer to the opening lines of a poem "The Sundew" published by Algernon Swinburne in 1866: "A little marsh-plant, yellow-green, // And pricked at lip with tender red". The poem describes a lovers' tryst in marshland, witnessed by a sundew. Swinburne's poem was the inspiration for Tuke's 1893-4 work, *August Blue* (Tate Britain), the title of Tuke's painting being a quotation from the closing lines of the poem.
- Tuke used several of his regular models for the work, including the brothers Richard and Georgie Fouracre, Bert White, Harry Cleave, and Charlie Mitchell (shown resting on the rocks in the lower left).
- The model in the left foreground is Charlie Mitchell (1885–1957), who was Tuke's boatman for 30 years. Tuke left Mitchell £1,000 in his will.
- The six young men are depicted near Newport Beach, Falmouth
- Many commenters noted Tuke's acquaintance with the Uranian movement and discerned a homoerotic charge.
- Tuke did **occasionally paint female nudes**, such as *Perseus and Andromeda* (1890), *Cupid and Sea Nymphs* (oil 1899, watercolour 1905) and *The Pearls* (1905, now lost) but he found it **difficult to find models who would pose naked outside**. It was also regarded as immoral for a man to be with a naked woman outside and so he was in danger of losing his reputation locally. For *The Pearls* he paid a professional model (Isa Watson) to travel from London and used her for both women in the painting.

In addition, he was heavily criticised for his rendition of female anatomy in his *Perseus and Andromeda* of 1890.

### NOTES

- The title *Ruby, Gold and Malachite* – referring to the red, yellow and green tones used in the work – echo an essay by John Addington Symonds, and may refer back to the opening lines of a poem "The Sundew" published by Algernon Swinburne in 1866.

### HENRY SCOTT TUKE

- **Bio:Tuke.** Henry Scott Tuke (1858-1929) was from a Quaker family and he was encouraged to draw from an early age.
- In 1875, he enrolled in the Slade School of Art under Alphonse Legros and Sir Edward Poynter. In 1877 Tuke won a scholarship, which allowed him to continue his training at the Slade and in Italy in 1880. From 1881 to 1883 he was in Paris where he met Jules Bastien-Lepage, who encouraged him to paint en plein air. While studying in France, Tuke decided to move to Newlyn where many of his Slade and Parisian friends had already formed the Newlyn School of painters. He received several well paid commissions after exhibiting his work at the Royal Academy of Art in London.
- He painted female nudes but they were not as successful and his male nudes were never overtly sexual, the model's genitals were rarely shown and there is almost never any physical contact.
- Tuke never married. In the 1880s Tuke became friends with Oscar Wilde and John Addington Symonds who referred to themselves as Uranians, a person who felt they had a female psyche in a male body.
- He was also an important maritime artist and from an early age could paint a ship's rigging from memory.



- He received many lucrative commissions which enabled him to travel abroad and in 1914 he was elected to the Royal Academy.
- Tuke used several of his regular models for the work, including the brothers Richard and Georgie Fouracre, Bert White, Harry Cleave, and Charlie Mitchell (1885–1957, shown resting on the rocks in the lower left) who was Tuke's boatman for 30 years. Tuke left Mitchell £1,000 in his will.

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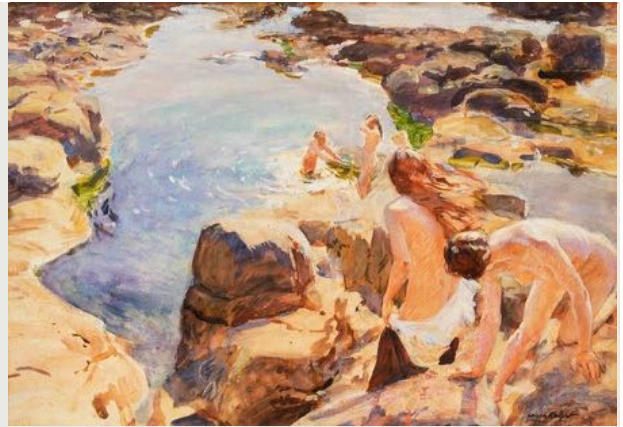
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Laura Knight, (1877-1970), *On the Cliff, Cornwall*, c. 1917, 63.5 × 76 cm, private collection



Laura Knight, (1877-1970), *The Bathing Pool*, 1912, 45.5 × 66 cm, private collection

Laura Knight, (1877-1970), *The Bathing Pool*, 1912, 45.5 × 66 cm, private collection

Laura Knight, (1877-1970), *On the Cliff, Cornwall*, c. 1917, 63.5 × 76 cm, private collection, sold by Sotheby's 2009 for £645,050.

- **Laura Knight hired models from London** and studied the nude in the open air in Newlyn and this increased her confidence and enabled her to free herself from the rigidity imposed by continually drawing the nude from static plaster sculptures.
- She painted **women in the open air** on the rocks or cliff-tops around Lamorna. Although there was some resentment locally about the use of nude models, the landowner, Colonel Paynter of Boskenna, allowed Knight and other artists a free rein.
- This piece, ***The Bathing Pool***, painted in 1912, is almost certainly Lamorna, the bathers in a granite rock pool exposed by the low tide. The first painting she did of women on cliffs and bathing was ***Daughters of the Sun*** which was completed in 1911 and well received when **shown at the Royal Academy**, but was subsequently damaged and destroyed. We have black and white photographs and it was similar to *The Bathing Pool* painted the

following year and a number of other paintings of women bathing.

- In recent years examples of Knight's plein-air compositions from Cornwall have attracted **high prices** at auction. This painting for example sold in 2019 for £132,000.
- (CLICK) She also painted a number of pictures of women on clifftops such as this one, *On the Cliff, Cornwall*, painted on the cliffs above Lamorna as the sun was setting. The women are professional models, one of whom married Harold's brother. One is sewing and the other threading a needle. It was sold by Sotheby's in 2009 for £645,050, the highest price ever paid for a painting by Knight.

#### **NOTES**

- Lamorna Cove is about four miles from Newlyn and Boskenna Farm is about three miles from Lamorna Cove.
- Knight used three professional models from London who she summoned to Cornwall when she painted *Daughters of the Sun* in 1911. One of these models, an ex-Tiller-Girl named Dolly Snell who later married Harold's brother and became Mrs Edgar Knight.

#### **REFERENCES**

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Bruce Angrave, *Newquay*, c. 1930



Frank Newbould, *Cornwall*, c. 1931



Arthur C Michael,  
*Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear*, British Railways,  
1948-65

Bruce Angrave, *Newquay*, c. 1930

Frank Newbould, *Cornwall*, c. 1931

Arthur C Michael, *Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear*, British Railways, 1948-65

### **BRITISH RAILWAYS TRAVEL POSTERS**

- "English Travel Poster produced for British Railways (BR) between 1948-1965 to promote rail travel to Whitley Bay in Tyne and Wear. The poster shows a young woman in a **green bikini** (invented in 1946 by French designer Louis Réard) delighted with her find, a starfish. Behind her many people can be seen on the sandy beach enjoying the sunny day and St Marys Lighthouse can also be seen. Artwork by Arthur C Michael, a painter and etcher who worked mainly in watercolour. He illustrated books and periodicals and also designed posters for London & North Eastern Railway (LNER)" [1]
- There were many other examples of eye-catching art produced by artists for the railways to promote holiday travel.

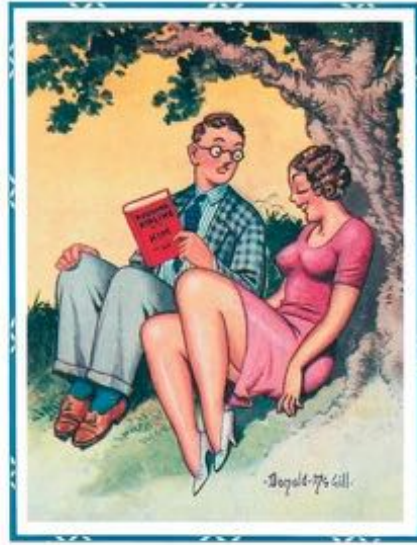
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Whitley Bay

“Do you like Kipling?”  
“I don’t know, you naughty boy,  
I’ve never kippled!”



Donald McGill (1875-1962), *Do you like Kipling?*, 1930s

- Donald McGill (1875-1962), *Do you like Kipling?*, 1930s
- And I must not forget the **saucy postcard**, an art form in itself.
- The 1930s were when these postcards became popular. They often featured stereotypes such as the **hen-pecked husband**, the **fat vicar** and the **drunk** and the saucier they were the better they sold. At their peak **16 million a year** were sold. Many artists worked on them but the **biggest name was Donald McGill** (1875-1962). When he was 32 he gave up a secure job to produce saucy postcards and he continued to do so until his death aged 87. During his lifetime **he sold over 350 million cards** making him, by that measure, the most successful artists of all time.
- It seems surprising now that this innocent fun was thought to undermine the moral fibre of the country and shops were raided and closed down and McGill was **subjected to a show trial in 1954** and sentenced to a huge fine.
- This is **one of his most popular postcards**, about 6 million copies were sold (The Guinness Book of World Records). A similar joke was first published in 1917 but McGill's artwork brings it to life.

## **REFERENCES**

<https://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/10/02/like-kipling/>



Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981), *Sandpipers*,  
*Alnmouth*, 1933, 63.5 ×  
76.2 cm, Tate



Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981), *Sandpipers*, *Alnmouth*, 1933, 63.5 × 76.2 cm, Tate

- "Throughout her life, most of Nicholson's work depicted either flowers or landscape. This painting was made during a **holiday on the Northumberland coast**. It is typical in its reduction of the scene to a few **simple areas of colour**. Despite this abstraction it is still **very evocative**, not least because of her **application of real sand** to the paint denoting the beach. Nicholson's paintings have an air of freshness and of the back-to-basics attitude upon which she based her lifestyle." [1]
- **Rosa Winifred Nicholson** (née Roberts) was the **daughter of a politician and granddaughter of the 9th Earl of Carlisle** who was friends with William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. She started painting as a teenager and attended the Byam Shaw School of Art in London shortly before and after the First World War.
- In 1920 when she was 27 she **married the artist Ben Nicholson** who mother and father were artists. She had three children in 1927, 1929 and 1931. **In 1931 he met Barbara Hepworth** who he later married and they separated. In 1934 she had triplets and from 1932 to 1936

she lived half of each year with her three children in Paris where she befriending many artists including Piet Mondrian and Constantin Brancusi. She married John Skeaping in 1925 and they divorced in 1933. She married Nicholson in 1938 and they divorced in 1951.

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Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Southwold, Suffolk*, 1937, 57.9 × 89.9 cm, Aberdeen Art Gallery

Stanley Spencer (1891-1959), *Southwold, Suffolk*, 1937, 57.9 × 89.9 cm, Aberdeen Art Gallery

- This is ***Southwold*** by Stanley Spencer. Southwold is just north of Walberswick on the East Suffolk coast and near Wangford. **Stanley Spencer** visited it several times in 1924 while staying with his brother and **Hilda Carline** who he married the following year in Wangford. Spencer **divorced his wife Carline in 1937 and married Patricia Preece**. He realised the marriage was a sham as Preece was a lesbian and he tried to reestablish relationships with his first wife Carline and tried to persuade her to return to Southwold on a second honeymoon. He failed and travelled there alone and stayed in the same lodgings where they had spent their honeymoon in 1925 and he took a bus to Southwold each day where he produced one of his most popular and much reproduced paintings of the beach. At first glance it is a happy beach scene but we are cut off from the beach and by implication family happiness by the sea wall in the foreground. In despair Spencer wrote long letters to his wife every few days. Eventually in 1950 she agreed to a reunion but shortly after was diagnosed with breast cancer and died. Spencer

continued to write long letters for the rest of his life often mentioning the happy times and long walks they had in Southwold.

### **NOTES**

- He painted several nude pictures of Patricia Preece and in 1937, *Double Nude Portrait: The Artist and His Second Wife*, known as the *Leg of Mutton Nude*, a painting never publicly exhibited during Spencer's lifetime. She refused and he went to their on his own during the winter of 1937, alone in Southwold, Suffolk, Spencer begin a series of paintings, *The Beatitudes of Love*, about ill-matched couples. These pictures, and others of often radical sexual imagery, were intended for cubicles in the Church-House where the visitor could "meditate on the sanctity and beauty of sex".

### **REFERENCES**

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Dining room, Butlin's Holiday Camp at Pwllheli, early 1960s

### THE RISE OF THE HOLIDAY CAMP.

- On a happier note, the previous year, in 1936 William 'Billy' Butlin founded his first holiday camp in Skegness which doubled in size within a year and he opened a second in Clacton-on-Sea.
- Based on his own experiences of mundane and cramped boarding houses, he wanted to **create a kind of fantasy world and escape for the working man**, building a luxurious and affordable seaside resort in miniature. This is exactly what he did. [1]
- **By 1939 there were three to four hundred holiday camps** in the UK, ranging in size from 50 beds to 6,000. During the war they were used as army camps and Butlin persuaded the Government to pay for new camps in Filey, Ayr and **Pwllheli (pronounced 'puh-thee-lee')**. In the 1950s and 60s they became very popular but by the 1970s overseas holiday, particularly to Spain became affordable and the holiday camp declined in popularity.
- This month (September 2022) Butlin's holiday resorts were sold back to their former owners for £300 million. There are now three Butlin's Resorts in Skegness, Minehead and Bognor Regis which together

attract over **1.5 million guests a year.**

### **NOTES**

- **Sir William Heygate Edmund Colborne Butlin** MBE (29 September 1899 – 12 June 1980) was a South African-born British entrepreneur.

### **REFERENCES**

- [1] <https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2019/07/30/the-holiday-camp-phenomenon/>



J. Greenup, *Butlins Holiday Camp, Clacton-on-Sea*, LNER poster, 1940

J. Greenup, *Butlins Holiday Camp, Clacton-on-Sea*, LNER poster, 1940

- An advertisement placed in a May 1936 edition of the *Nottingham Journal* boasts of the facilities on offer at the '**wonderful £50,000 Holiday Camp:**'
- **FREE: Golf, Tennis, Bowls, Bathing, Dancing, and Concert Parties. Boating, and licensed club. FOUR good meals per day cooked by experienced Chefs.** Cosy Elizabethan Chalets with electric lights, carpeted floors, running water, bath and first class sanitary arrangements.
- The benefit and the lure of Butlin's lay in its inclusivity – there were **no extra costs** – and its affordability, with prices in 1936 being as low as **45 shillings a week**. An advertisement in the *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 17 August 1937, lauds Billy Butlin and his '**biggest idea of holiday happiness ever known**. With the true art of showmanship, he made the camp attractive, entertaining – in fact, you cannot spend a single dull moment there.'" [1]

## REFERENCES



[1] <https://blog.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/2019/07/30/the-holiday-camp-phenomenon/>



Paul Nash (1889–1946) , *Totes Meer (Dead Sea)*, 1940–41, 101.6 × 152.4 cm, Tate

Paul Nash (1889–1946) , *Totes Meer (Dead Sea)*, 1940–41, 101.6 × 152.4 cm, Tate, presented by the War Artists Advisory Committee 1946

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR

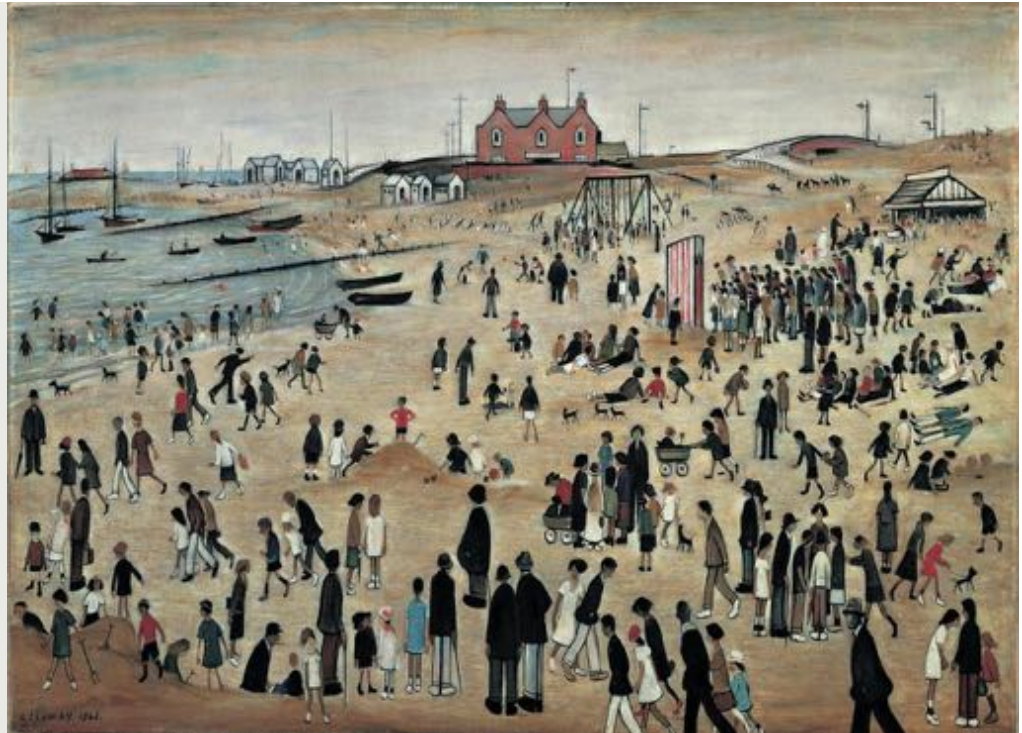
"This painting, the title of which [*Totes Meer*] is German for 'dead sea', was made during the first half of the Second World War. It was inspired by a **wrecked aircraft dump at Cowley in Oxfordshire**.

Nash based the image on photographs he took there. The artist described the sight: '**The thing looked to me suddenly, like a great inundating sea ... the breakers rearing up and crashing on the plain. ... nothing moves**, it is not water or even ice, it is **something static and dead**.' He created an unsettling atmosphere by setting the scene at night and including a **solitary owl in flight**." [1]

## REFERENCES

[1] <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/nash-totes-meer-dead-sea-n05717>

Laurence Stephen Lowry (1887–1976), *July, the Seaside*, 1943, 66.7 × 92.7 cm, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre



Laurence Stephen Lowry (1887–1976), *July, the Seaside*, 1943, 66.7 × 92.7 cm, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre

### AFTER WWII

- "We associate a beach in July with scenes of sunshine, sunbathers and paddling in the sea. But **Lowry's tongue-in-cheek version shows each painted character fully clothed**, many with hats and coats on, and a few who are brave enough to venture into the sea. Some are entertained at the swings or at the Punch & Judy show, others are playing in the sand, digging holes or building sandcastles in the cold.
- At this point in his career, Lowry had been painting his **Northern industrial street scenes for many years**. In *July, the Seaside*, he has effectively **transported the same figures from his townscapes**, and placed them onto the beach – including their attire. Socially, the British working class would **indeed travel by the trainload to the seaside** for their annual holidays. This was a time when **travelling abroad was for the wealthy** and our British coastal towns were packed with tourists from the cities during the summertime.
- It is interesting to note that when this work was painted in 1943,

Britain was in the **middle of the Second World War**. Perhaps the painting contains an element of the sobering impact war has on the usual joyful association we have with a beach in Summer."  
[1]

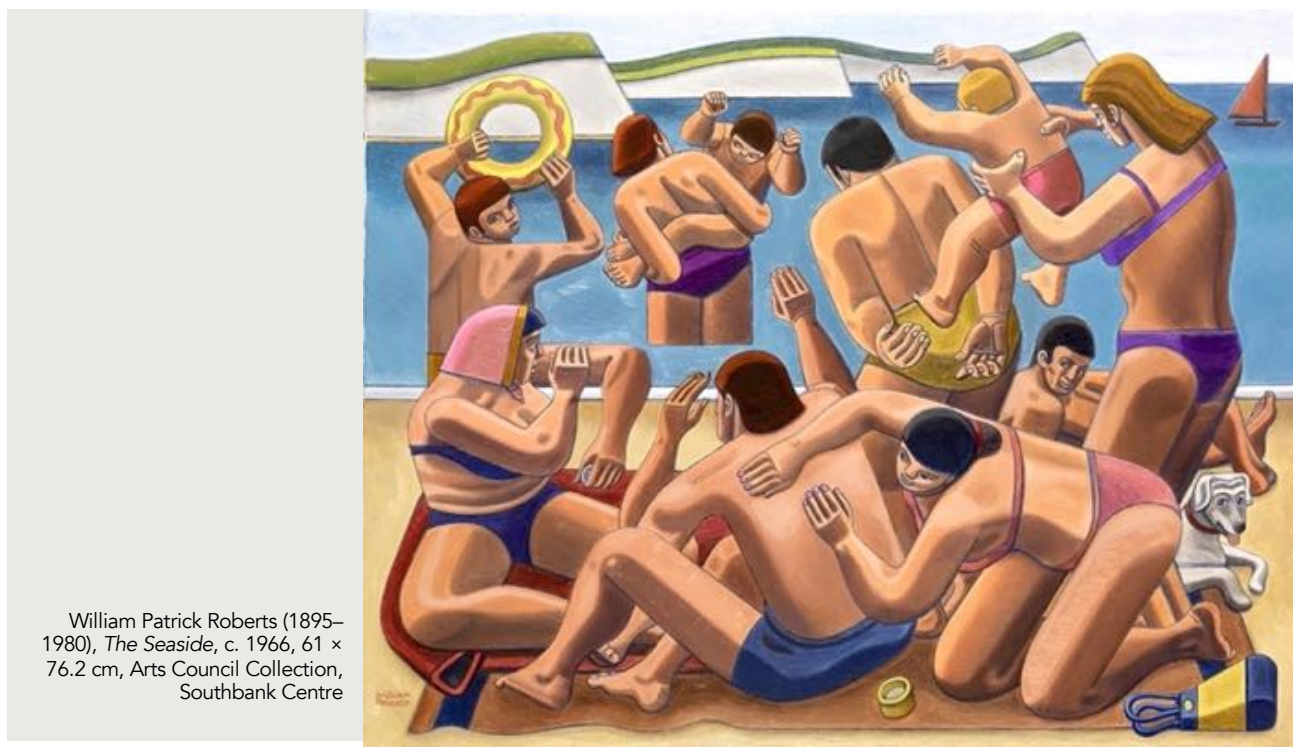
### **NOTES**

- Another rare beach painting by Lowry sold at Christie's for £1,538,000. The record for a Lowry is £5.6m in 2011.

### **REFERENCES**

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[1] <https://www.northernsoul.me.uk/painting-the-north-l-s-lowrys-july-the-seaside-1943/>



William Patrick Roberts (1895–1980), *The Seaside*, c. 1966, 61 × 76.2 cm, Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre

- "'The Seaside' is a celebration of **people enjoying a day at the beach**. Despite being regarded as somewhat of a **recluse**, William Roberts spent most of his career **painting and drawing ordinary people** going about their life at home, work and play. He was particularly drawn to **individuals at leisure**, and painted people sunbathing, playing musical instruments, skipping, on see-saws and playing snooker. In works like 'The Seaside' the angular forms of his early works have given way to more rounded almost sculptural figures. The composition is tightly packed with people, and their limbs create a rhythm and sense of movement across the painting." [1]

## NOTES

- **Bio:Roberts.** William Patrick Roberts (1895-1980) was a **pioneer in the use of abstraction** before WWI. He was born into a **working-class family** in London and showed a talent for drawing from an early age. He **left school at fourteen** to become an apprentice



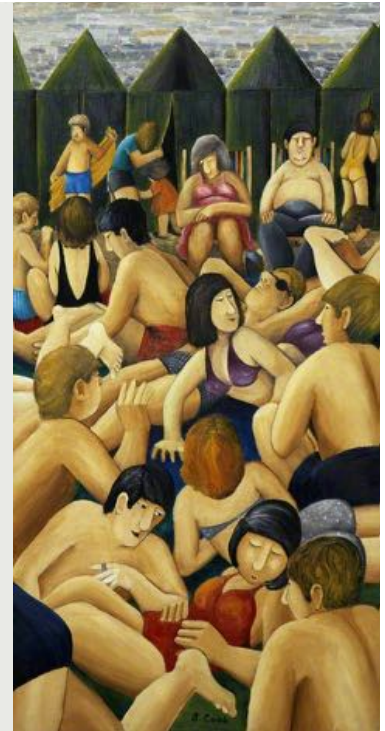
poster designer. He attended **St. Martin's School of Art** and **won a scholarship to the Slade**. He joined the Slade in 1911, studying under Henry Tonks and Wilson Steer. His fellow students included **Dora Carrington, Mark Gertler, Paul Nash, Christopher Nevinson, Stanley Spencer and David Bomberg** who was to become a **close friend**. He joined **Roger Fry's Omega Workshop** then **Wyndham Lewis's Vorticists**. He served as a **gunner on the Western front at Ypres** before becoming an official war artist. He met Sarah Kramer and they had a son and married in 1922. He was also a **talented portrait painter and Sarah would be his model and muse for the next sixty years**. In the 1950s when avant garde art was abstract he found representational art was more to the public's taste and he produced a series of sensational, dramatic works for the Royal Academy that received a lot of press coverage. He became an ARA in 1958 and retired from teaching in **1960** but his **artistic output remained prolific**. There was a **major retrospective of his work at the Tate in 1965** and he was offered and rejected an OBE. The following year he was pleased to **become a Royal Academician**. He died **intestate and 475 of his paintings and drawings are held by the Tate** and remain there until the period when claims against the estate has expired in 2025 (30 years after his son's death).

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-seaside-william-roberts/9wHolbYlxEcKqA>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Roberts\\_\(painter\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Roberts_(painter))



Beryl Cook (1926–2008), *Beach at Looe*, 1975, 76 × 38 cm, The Box, Plymouth



Beryl Cook (1926–2008), *Beach at Looe*, 1975, 76 × 38 cm, The Box, Plymouth

- **Beryl Cook was born in Surrey in 1926** and when she and her family moved to **Plymouth to run a boarding house she started painting as a hobby**. She displayed her work in the boarding house and her guests encouraged her to exhibit them. Her first exhibition was in 1975 and to her surprise they **sold like hot cakes**.
- She was **loved by the public** and her work sold for up to £40,000 but she was **snubbed by the major art galleries**.
- She would sketch on little cards surreptitiously and then spend weeks drawing the composition. She would only ever paint people enjoying themselves.
- **The Tate does not own a single Cook** and her work has been described as '**trite, patronising, and reduces human life to a repetitive variety act**'. I think it is honest and joyful and I sometimes think that life is a repetitive variety act.
- (CLICK) Last year I walked five miles along the coast to Looe and this is what I found, **a real life Beryl Cook scene**. **We turned around**



**and walked back again.** I don't like crowded beaches but I do like Beryl Cook.

#### **REFERENCES**

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Martin Parr (b. 1952), *The Last Resort 40*, 1983–6, 100 × 125 cm, printed 2018, presented by the artist and Rocket Gallery 2002



**Martin Parr** (b. 1952), *The Last Resort 40*, 1983–6, 100 × 125 cm, printed 2018, presented by the artist and Rocket Gallery 2002

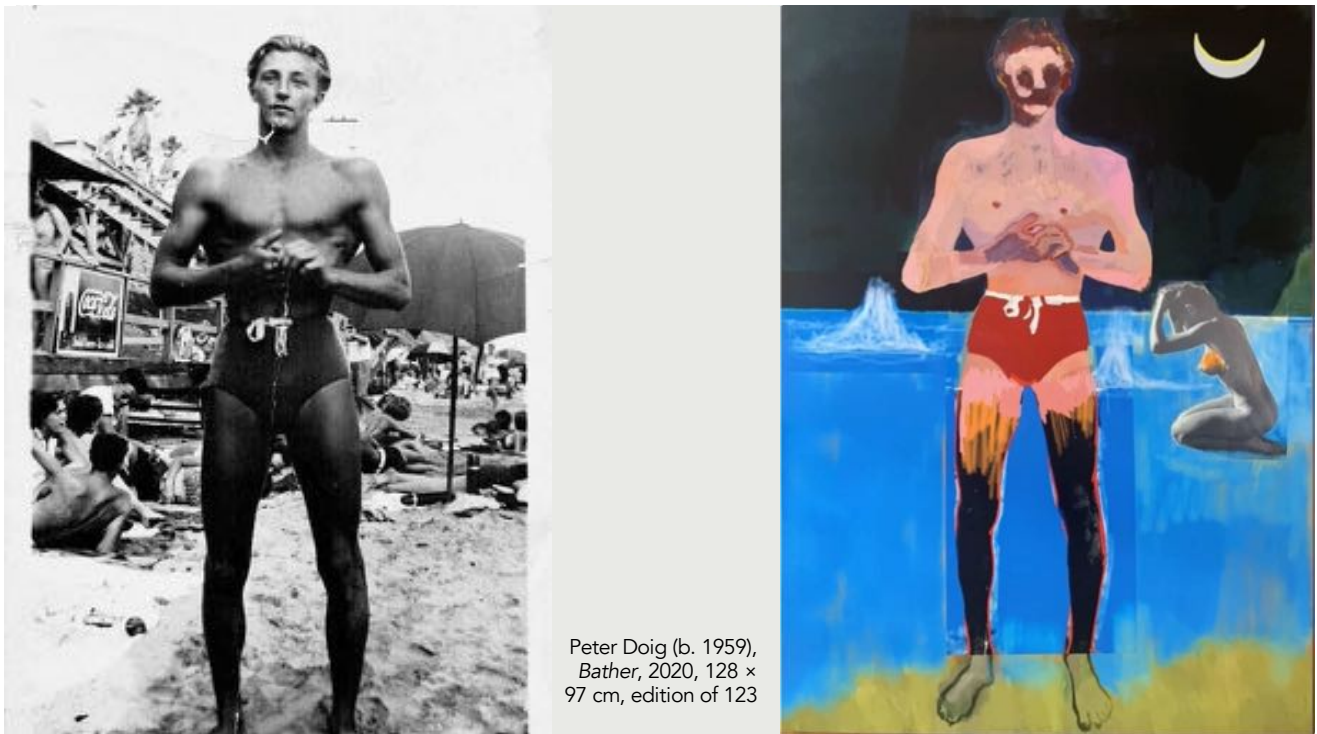
- "*The Last Resort* is a series of forty photographs taken in **New Brighton, a beach suburb of Liverpool**. Shot with a medium format camera and daylight flash, the photographs are an early example of Parr's **characteristic saturated colour** ... In the 1980s *The Last Resort* was seen as an **indictment of the market-led economic policies** of the Conservative government led by **Margaret Thatcher** (Prime Minister 1979-90). Some critics understood Parr's depiction of an area of **economic deprivation** and his focus on his subjects' personal indulgences as a political statement decrying the excesses of Thatcherism.
- **More recently**, in her monograph on Parr, Val Williams has proposed a **less political reading** of the pictures. In her view, *The Last Resort* typifies Parr's **incisive eye for the eccentric** ... In this image, a woman with heavily freckled shoulders is sunbathing face down on a white towel. Her face is turned away from the camera, and her red hair pinned with a series of plastic combs. Her young daughter crouches nearby, her pink swimsuit tied round her neck

with a bright blue bow. She appears to be playing with a red plastic bucket. Other buckets and a spade lie in the foreground of the picture, denoting a family day out at the seaside. The **ordinariness of the scene** is **undermined** by the **unintentionally comical location** of the family on a patch of concrete right in front of a **large piece of haulage machinery**, possibly a crane. Huge tank-like wheels loom over the reclining figure. ... **The scene suggests a futuristic wasteland where families share beach space with industrial machinery**, and this, as much as the fluorescent colours of the toys, gives it a recognisably 1980s aesthetic: **science-fiction films** of the period conveyed a sense of **post-industrial apocalyptic dread** that this image seems to **gently satirise**. Here the machine is neither aggressive nor benign; it is simply part of the landscape." [1]

- Films include *Mad Max* (1979), *Escape from New York* (1981) and *When the Wind Blows* (1986).

## **REFERENCES**

[1] <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/parr-the-last-resort-40-p11922>



Peter Doig (b. 1959), *Bather*, 2020, 128 × 97 cm, edition of 123

- I end with the Scottish artist **Peter Doig** (b. 1959) and one of the **most recent works of the seaside**. Doig has become one of the **most celebrated living figurative painters** and here is a **reimagining** of a **publicity photograph of Robert Mitchum** in the early 1940s. It is one of a number of paintings of the same subject and the beach and bathing are common themes in his work. Since 2002 he has **lived in Trinidad** a country he lived in for four years as a young child.
- His style draws on the work of **Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch** inspired by movies and advertisements. His work has a **dreamlike quality and is ambiguous in its meaning**. Robert Mitchum's face is grossly distorted. Behind him is a **naked woman**. Is this a **romance**? She is holding her head in her hands. Is she **adjusting her hair or does this signify anguish**?
- His work has set records at auction. In 2007, his painting *White Canoe* sold at Sotheby's for \$11.3 million, then an auction record for a living European artist and in February 2013, his painting, *The Architect's Home in the Ravine*, sold for \$12 million at a London

auction.

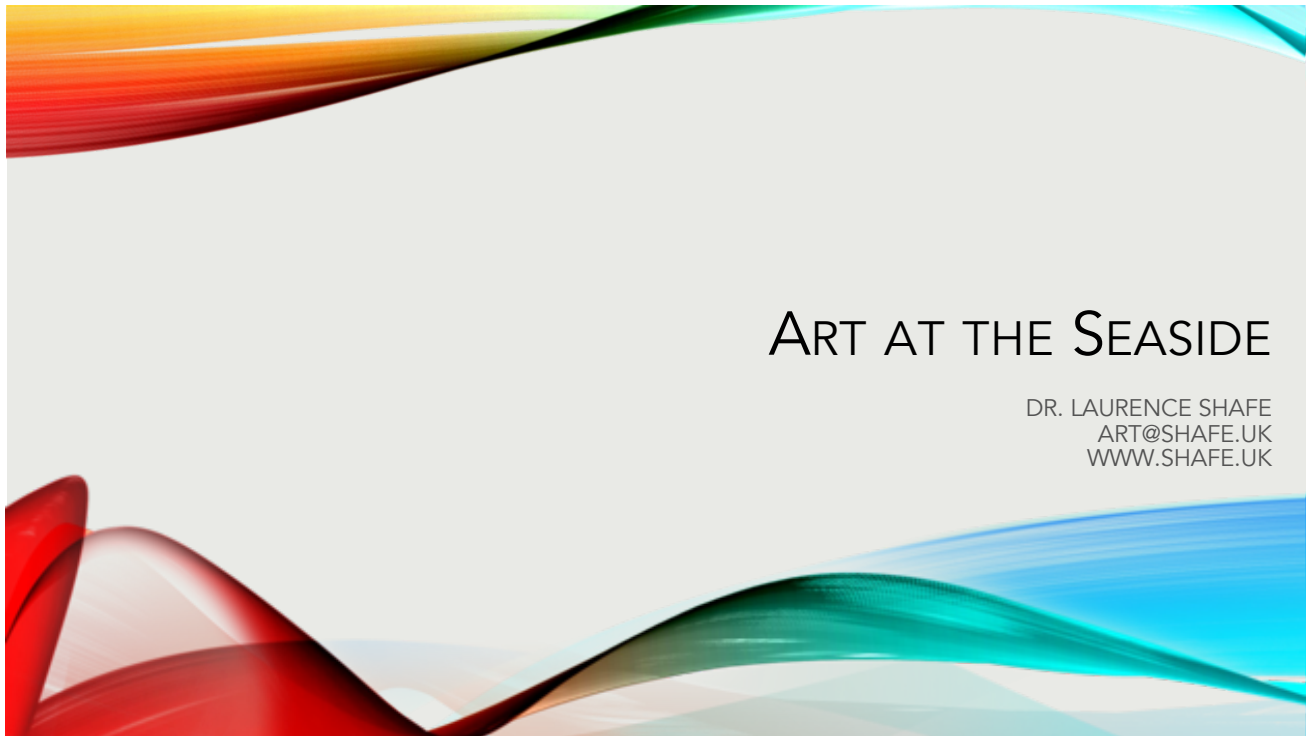
- Art critic Jonathan Jones said about him: "**Amid all the nonsense, impostors, rhetorical bullshit and sheer trash that pass for art in the 21st century, Doig is a jewel of genuine imagination, sincere work and humble creativity.**"

## NOTES

- "The bather is recurring motif in the work of Peter Doig and was first **inspired by an early 1940s photo of a young Robert Mitchum** looking muscular in tight swimming trunks. Doig often meshes the landscape and people of his adopted home of Trinidad with personal history and pop culture. Although it's nighttime, Doig enhances the dreamlike quality of the work with the near luminescent sea and the vibrant-coloured flesh of the man. Beside him a **naked woman holds her head in her hands**, adjusting her hair or in a state of anguish? Like always the meaning is kept ambiguous." [1]
- **Bio:Doig.** Peter Doig (b. 1959), born in Edinburgh and moved to Trinidad when he was three as his father worked in shipping and trading. He moved to Canada when he was seven and to London Wimbledon School of Art when he was 20. Then St. Martin's School of Art and Chelsea School of Art. He returned to Trinidad in 2000 to take of artistic residency with his friend and fellow artist Chris Ofili. He is also professor of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf. He has had many major solo exhibitions around the world and his work is held by over twenty major international art galleries.
- In 2016, a former Canadian corrections officer began a \$5 million lawsuit against Doig over a picture he claimed was by Doig despite the artist's denial it was his work. A Chicago court ruled in Doig's favour later that year, finding that the painting was actually the work of a similarly named man, Peter Doige.

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<https://artistthesolution.blogspot.com/2020/08/night-bathers-by-peter-doig.html> analysis  
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/sep/13/peter-doigs-bather-night-wave-an-unsettling-dreamscape> Bather (Night Waves), 2019



# ART AT THE SEASIDE

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE  
ART@SHAFE.UK  
WWW.SHAFE.UK

That concludes my brief overview of 250 years of the British seaside told through well known and less well known works of art.

Thank you.





# A STROKE OF GENIUS

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2022- FEBRUARY 22ND 2023

1. Art at the Seaside

**The Thames in Art**

Angelica Kauffman

Gwen John

Augustus John

Can You Spot a Fake?

Vermeer's Complete Works (Part 1)

Vermeer's Complete Works (Part 2)

9. The World's Most Expensive Art

10. Charles Rennie Macintosh

11. Venice - City of Water

12. Edward Hopper

13. The 12 Greatest Art Forgers (Part 1)

14. The 12 Greatest Art Forgers (Part 2)

15. Mary Moser

16. Leonardo da Vinci

Next week is 'The Thames in Art' based on a talk I recently gave at the Lightbox, Woking.