

From David Bomberg to Paula Rego

The London Group in Southampton

28 June - 1 November 2014



Nevison CRW Loading Timber at Southampton Docks

Southampton City Art Gallery has Britain's largest collection of work by The London Group. The collection was started in 1954 after a highly successful London Group exhibition held during that year, and it has continued to be built up until today. For the first time, the gallery is showing the historic works together alongside contemporary work by current members in a dynamic show representing many of Britain's greatest 20th and 21st century artists including David Bomberg, Walter Sickert, LS Lowry, Henry Moore, Vanessa Bell, William Scott, Nina Hamnett, Jacop Epstein, Graham Sutherland, Mary Fedden and Paula Rego. Several of the artists including Lowry and Christopher Nevison created paintings about Southampton.

The London Group

The London Group was formed by an amalgamation of the Camden Town Group and the English Cubists (later Vorticists) in 1913. This grouping of radical young artists came together as a reaction to the stranglehold that the Royal Academy had on exhibiting contemporary art. Founder members included Spencer Gore, Wyndham Lewis, Walter Sickert and Jacob Epstein. It has a written constitution and a number of officers to run the Group's affairs. Members are elected to the Group based on a democratic election. The first exhibition was in 1914 and The Group has exhibited continually ever since. In 2014 The London Group is thriving and has more members than ever before, representing all artistic forms from painting to video and performance.

Women Artists

The London Group, significantly showed work by women artists, a group whose work was excluded from exhibition at the beginning of the century. This theme is drawn out in the show which includes important works by some of Britain's leading female artists.

Rare sketch books by Vanessa Bell are on show alongside 'Father and Child' a large decorative panel made by Bell and Duncan Grant as part of a commission for Lady Dorothy Wellesley in Sussex. Vanessa Bell first exhibited with the London Group in 1918 and showed regularly with them until her death in 1961. In the early 1920s Bell was called "the most important woman painter in Europe". Art critic and painter Roger Fry included Bell's work in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition in London in 1912, where they hung alongside works by Matisse, Picasso and Derain.

Another key work shown is a portrait of Horace Brodzky by Nina Hamnett. Known as 'The Queen of Bohemia', Nina Hamnett was the Tracy Emin of her time. She lived in Paris in the 1920s where she was taught by Ferdinand Leger. She was a friend of Ezra Pound, Pablo Picasso, Modigliani, Jean Cocteau, Augustus John and Dylan Thomas and was an important part of the Parisian art scene. Hamnett was also the subject of paintings and sculptures by many other artists including Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Walter Sickert and Roger Fry.

On display is a highly accomplished and influential wood engraving 'Stonehenge' by Gertrude Hermes. Hermes became a London Group member in 1935. A sculptor, best known for her expertise as a wood engraver, Hermes became an important figurehead in the early twentieth century's wood engraving revival. She taught at Camberwell, St Martin's, Central and the RA Schools of Art. The first wood engraver to be elected an associate RA in 1963, she was influential in getting the Royal Academy to allow women to their annual banquet in 1967.

'Little Shadow' is one of five important works by Mary Potter owned by Southampton and dates from 1978. In 1979 Mary Potter was made an OBE, and in 1980 the Tate Gallery held an exhibition of her work. In May 1981 the Arts Council of Great Britain organized a full-scale retrospective of her work at the Serpentine Gallery in London. The show received outstanding critical acclaim and was attended by 25,000 people before it went on tour.

Sculpture

The London Group also refocused the public's exposure to sculpture in the early twentieth century, exhibiting Jacob Epstein's 'Rock Drill' to great critical uproar and supporting the young Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. In the show is Gaudier-Brzeska's bronze portrait of Major Smythies. This work was well received by its patron who failed to spot the gentle mockery in the proudly tilted head and military bearing. Accompanying this is a later work by Epstein, his portrait of composer Vaughan Williams from 1950, which uses the rougher modelling style of his early career. In contrast to Gaudier's bust, it depicts a sensitive intelligence.

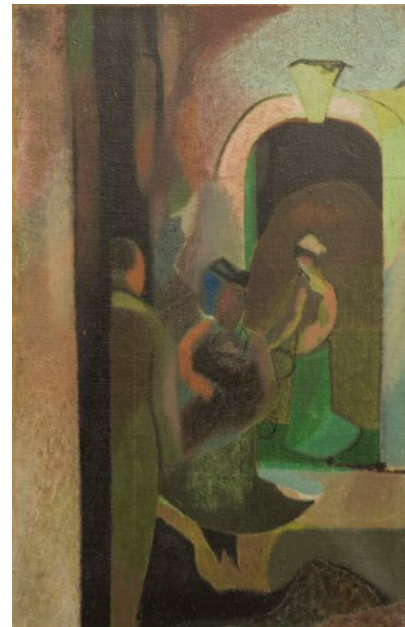
Nina Hamnett: portrait of Horace Brodzky



Mary Potter: Little Shadow



De Karłowska, Stanisława Polish interior 1909



John Dodgson 1950s Gardai II

The workings of an artists' group

By bringing so many works by The London Group together from both its early period and today, visitors have a rare opportunity to see how artists work together. The exhibition reveals how British artists over the past century have influenced and inspired one another in their work and how their personal lives have been woven together. This cross-fertilisation of art extends across countries and periods in time and is a particular feature of The London Group. For example, Robert Bevan and Stanisława de Karłowska were married and painted together. She was born near Lowicz in the Russian territory of Poland. They made regular visits to Poland where the landscape and culture had a profound effect on the work of both painters. The dreamy atmosphere, and flat perspective in de Karłowska's 'Polish Interior' are drawn from her Polish heritage and folk art, yet its bright colours also relate to the style of Camden Town painters such as her husband. However in common with other women artists, she was not allowed to become a member of the Camden Town Group but instead with Bevan became a founder member of the London Group in 1913.

About Southampton City Art Gallery

Southampton City Art Gallery is internationally renowned for its permanent collection, which spans eight centuries and tells the story of western art from the Renaissance to the present day. The core of the collection is twentieth century and contemporary British art. Strong clusters within this element include Post-Impressionism (notably the Camden Town Group and The London Group), Surrealism, St Ives and progressive contemporary art from the mid-1970s. Opened in April 1939 within Southampton's Civic Centre, the art gallery offers high quality exhibitions ranging from painting, sculpture and drawing, to photography and film, as well as displays that change regularly to ensure new experiences with each visit.

About the Curators

The historical part of the exhibition is curated by two current members of The London Group, Victoria Rance and David Redfern.

Victoria Rance is a graduate of Newcastle Upon Tyne University (BA Fine Art 1983) and Kingston University (MA Art and Space 2009) and the recipient of the Mark Tanner Sculpture Award (2003/4). Solo and two person exhibitions include I Wish, Deptford X (2013), The Sleep of Reason, BBK Osnabruck Germany (2013), Medusa Stories, Chalabi Gallery, Istanbul (2012), Invisible, Lucy Bell Gallery (2010), Standpoint Gallery, London (2004) and Spire, The Economist Plaza, London (2000). Receiving an Arts Council grant she curated 'Dead Happy' St John's Waterloo with a catalogue by Sacha Cradock (2001), and co-curated 'Invaluable' at APT Gallery Deptford (2012).

David Redfern was born in 1947 in Staffordshire and studied at Reading University and the Slade School of Fine Art. From 1971 to 1983 he was Head Gallery Assistant at the Serpentine Gallery and then managed and taught art and design courses at Croydon College from 1984 to 2011. He was elected to The London Group in 2000 and in 2003 was invited to take on the role of Group Archivist. As a practising artist David Redfern has a studio in Deptford, South East London and has shown at the Hayward Gallery, Whitechapel Art Gallery, Serpentine Gallery and many national open submission exhibitions. David Redfern's work is represented in Southampton City Art Gallery's permanent collection. A History of The London Group 1913 - 2013, written by David Redfern, was published in 2013 to coincide with The Group's centenary.

The contemporary works are curated by London Group members, Sam Jarman and Bryan Bengel.

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27 June – 18 October 2014

Southampton City Art Gallery, Civic Centre Rd,
Southampton SO14 7LP

Tel: 023 8083 2277

Open: Monday - Friday 10am-3pm and Saturday 10am-5pm
(Closed Sundays)

Admission: Free

Website: <http://www.southampton.gov.uk/art>

Email: art.gallery@southampton.gov.uk

Train: Southampton Central Station (five minute walk)

FB/SouthamptonCityArtGallery

Images

Images are available to download from this

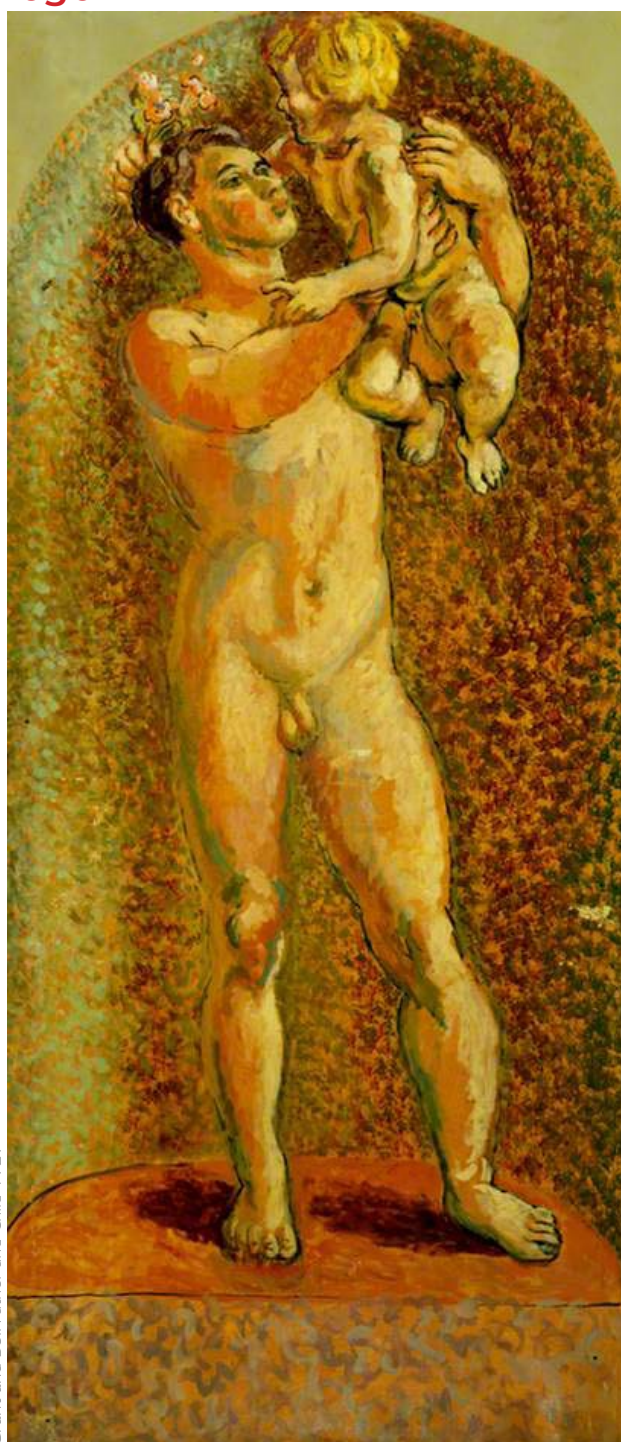
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Press Contact

Jessica Wood, Artsinform,
01273 488996, 07939 226988

jessica@artsinform.co.uk

www.thelondongroup.com



Grant and Bell Father and Child 1929