

Large Print  
Exhibition Guide  
**Phantoms of  
Surrealism**

19 May– 12 December

2021



**Gallery 4**

## **Phantoms of Surrealism**

These artwork captions start with the interpretation panel outside Gallery 4, and then continue on the left as you enter the gallery and follow in a clockwise direction.

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## **Introduction**

Phantoms of Surrealism examines the pivotal role of women as artists and behind-the-scenes animators of the surrealist movement in Britain. While some British women surrealists are gaining overdue recognition, the contribution of many others remains under examined.

On 11 June 1936 Sheila Legge (1911–1949) stood in Trafalgar Square dressed in a white gown with her face entirely covered in red roses. Her appearance as a surrealist 'phantom' was an exceptionally early example of performance art. The event launched the International Surrealist Exhibition at London's New Burlington Galleries.

All of the women artists presented in Phantoms of Surrealism were crucial to the evolution of the movement in Britain; acting as exhibition organisers, committee secretaries, contributors of artworks and ideas or political campaigners.

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Ruth Adams (1893–1948), Elizabeth Andrews (1882–1977), Eileen Agar (1898–1991), Claude Cahun (1894–1954), Ithell Colquhoun (1906–1988), Diana Brinton Lee (1897–1982), Sheila Legge (1911–1949), Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971), Elizabeth Raikes (1907–1942), Edith Rimmington (1902–1986) and Stella Snead (1910–2006), participated either in the London International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936 or the anti-war Artists' International Association (AIA) exhibition held at Whitechapel Gallery in 1939, which included a surrealist section.

These two exhibitions are considered here in parallel, revealing artistic and political networks in the 1930s and the synergies and conflict between surrealist artists and the wider membership of the AIA. Both groups were positioned against the status quo; the surrealists challenging perceptions of reality and the AIA members often deploying direct means to promote socialist causes.

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Drawn from Whitechapel Gallery Archive and important private and national collections, including the National Galleries of Scotland, Edward James Archives and Jersey Heritage Trust, the artworks and archive materials presented here attest to women's contributions to these ground-breaking exhibitions.

Hear from Whitechapel Gallery artists, curators and more on our free digital guide, powered by Bloomberg Connects.

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## **ARCHIVE WALL – LEFT TO RIGHT**

International Surrealist Exhibition, London

1936

Reproduction black and white photographs

Courtesy Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive

Above Left: Installation view of gallery one, New Burlington Galleries

Above Right: Installation view of gallery two, New Burlington Galleries

Below Left: Back row: Rupert Lee, Ruthven Todd, Salvador Dalí, Paul Eluard, Roland Penrose, Herbert Read, E. L. T. Mesens, Georges Reavey, Hugh Sykes-Davies. Front row: Diana Brinton Lee, Nusch Eluard, Eileen Agar, Sheila Legge and unknown

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Below Right: Salvador Dalí in a diving suit and helmet  
with Paul Eluard, Nusch Eluard, E. L. T. Mesens, Diana  
Brinton Lee and Rupert Lee

Max Ernst

Poster for the International Surrealist Exhibition, London  
1936

Colour lithograph on paper

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

Claude Cahun

Sheila Legge in Trafalgar Square, London  
1936

Black and white photograph

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

Claude Cahun

Prends un Petit Baton Pointu  
1936

Black and white photograph

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

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Diana Brinton Lee

Self Portraits

c. 1932

Black and white photographs hand finished in ink

The Court Gallery, Somerset

Jesse Collins

Poster for Artists' International Association Exhibition,  
Whitechapel Gallery

1939

Reproduction panel poster

©TfL from the London Transport Museum collection

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## **LONG DISPLAY CASE – LEFT TO RIGHT**

Press cuttings relating to the International Surrealist Exhibition, London, 1936

Edward James Foundation, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

and Courtesy Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive

Page from a text titled 'Surrealism' by 'The Phantom', 1936

Courtesy Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive

Herbert Read (editor), International Surrealist Bulletin No.4, 1936, Journal published by the Surrealist Group in England

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

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André Breton, Roland Penrose, David Gascoyne,  
unknown and Claude Cahun outside Burlington Galleries,  
London, 1936. Reproduction black and white photograph  
Courtesy Jersey Heritage Collections

Claude Cahun, Aveux Non Avenus [Disavowals],  
published by Éditions du Carrefour, Paris, 1930. Copy  
presented to David Gascoyne, 27 June 1936  
Private collection

David Gascoyne, Man's Life is this Meat, published by  
The Parton Press, London, 1935. Copy presented to  
Claude Cahun, 4 July 1936  
Private collection

French artist and photographer Claude Cahun visited  
London in the summer of 1936 to attend the  
International Surrealist Exhibition. Cahun photographed  
members of the surrealist group and recorded Sheila  
Legge's famous appearance in Trafalgar Square as the  
surrealist 'phantom'. Cahun presented this copy of her...

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...book *Aveux Non Avenus* [Disavowals] to exhibition co-organiser David Gascoyne, writing the following short poem on the title page. In return Gascoyne gifted a copy of his own recently published volume of surrealist poetry.

“Twice and once and once again all over  
the place that was never reached in time  
for something else that never came or was  
already through the shadow of the she-kitten  
met the he-man. In the herbaceous border  
fists clenched and somewhere the hands  
of a clock rose and joined.

Claude Cahun

London, June 27, 1936”

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An organising committee for the International Surrealist Exhibition met on eight occasions from 8 April 1936 until the opening of the exhibition. The committee was instigated by artist Roland Penrose (1900–1984) and critic Herbert Read (1893–1968) and comprised several leading artists that shared an interest in surrealism. Diana Brinton Lee acted as secretary, noting meeting minutes, which often concerned sponsorship arrangements and ambitious plans for attracting publicity.

Meeting minutes from the organising committee of the International Surrealist Exhibition, recorded by Diana Brinton Lee, 22 April 1936

Courtesy Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive

The Artists' International Association (AIA) held an exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery in 1939, which included a surrealist section. Like for the International Surrealist Exhibition held three years previously, there was an advanced press strategy.

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The AIA were keen to dissociate their exhibition from the glitzy world of West End art dealers. Instead of inviting an important dignitary, exhibition organiser Nan Youngman (1906–1995) asked a randomly selected passer-by from Whitechapel High Street to open the show.

Press cuttings relating to the Artists' International Association exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, 1939  
Whitechapel Gallery Archive

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## **MAIN ARTWORK WALL – LEFT TO RIGHT**

Edith Rimmington

Family Tree

1938

Collage

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

Edith Rimmington (1902–1986) was born in London and studied at the Brighton School of Art. She visited the International Surrealist Exhibition in 1936 and moved to London shortly afterwards. Rimmington also included two works in an exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery in 1939 organised by the Artists' International Association. While the whereabouts of these works is unknown, those displayed here are from the same period. To make the striking imaginary maritime landscape in Family Tree, Rimmington collaged together paper fragments and photographs, adding details in gouache paint. Later in her career, Rimmington increasingly pursued her interest in photography.

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Edith Rimmington

Fallen Chariot

1939

Pencil on paper

Collection Gerald William Dowden

Grace Pailthorpe

Sea Urchin / The Escaped Prisoner

7 May 1938

Watercolour on board

Collection James Birch

Dr Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971) started her artistic career in her fifties, having initially trained as a surgeon and later a criminal psychologist. She met poet and artist Reuben Mednikoff (1906–1972) at a party in 1935, and together they launched a collaboration exploring how art and writing could liberate the mind. Sea Urchin / The Escaped Prisoner dates from the height of Pailthorpe's engagement with the Surrealist movement. It is the

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largest from a group of paintings she called her Birth Trauma series, through which she attempted to explore her latent memories of birth and even life in the womb.

Ithell Colquhoun

Alchemical Figure: Secret Fire

1940

Watercolour on paper

Private collection

Stella Snead

Untitled

c. 1940

Oil on canvas

Collection of James Dillon, Visage Gallery

Grace Pailthorpe

Crustacean Caress

1935

Pen and ink on paper

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

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Eileen Agar

The Butterfly Bride

1938

Collage

Private collection

Eileen Agar (1899–1991) was a leading participant in the International Surrealist Exhibition, showing eight works, some of which are currently on display in the exhibition *Eileen Agar: Angel of Anarchy* in galleries 1, 8 and 9.

Here you can find out more about the artist, whose style encompassed experiments with Cubism and Surrealism and spanned painting, collage, photography, sculpture and even fashion. *Butterfly Bride* (1938) exemplifies Agar's unique approach to collage, incorporating printed and painted elements with materials found in nature.

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Stella Snead

Octopus

c. 1937

Watercolour on paper

Kathy Fehl & Ian Teal

Stella Snead (1910–2006) began painting in the 1920s. In the mid 1930s, she met and became lifelong friends with artist Leonora Carrington. It was through her relationship with Carrington that she was introduced to the Surrealist circle. Her early canvases are populated by strange bird creatures and dramatic landscapes. Octopus is a watercolour, representative of the natural themes she was drawn to. She presented another work titled Water Hand in the Artists' International Association exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery in 1939. With the outbreak of the Second World War later that year, Snead moved to the United States, where she lived for the rest of her life.

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Ithell Colquhoun

Water-Flower

1938

Oil on canvas

Plymouth College of Art

Ithell Colquhoun's (1906–1988) diverse work transcends art, literature and occultism. She spent much of her life in the Lamorna valley, near Penzance, Cornwall. Water-Flower was initially commissioned for the women's ward of a hospital in Gloucester but never actually displayed there, instead remaining in the artist's possession. The 1930s was a decade of rapid stylistic change for Colquhoun. Initially, she concentrated on large scale paintings of traditional biblical or mythological subjects. Later, she began to paint exotic blooms and foliage painted in a detailed, naturalistic manner, often viewed from an unusual vantage point. Water-Flower is one of the last to be painted in this style as she had become increasingly influenced by Surrealism.

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Read a longer description of this work by scholar Richard Shillitoe in the Foyle Reading Room and at the end of this printed guide.

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## PLINTHS

Elizabeth Andrews

Swan

1930s

Lead

On loan from Towner Eastbourne

This sculpture by Elizabeth Andrews (1882–1977) was shown in the Surrealist section of the 1939 Artists' International Association Exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery. Andrews worked across both painting and sculpture. While her still lifes and portrait paintings were often in a more naturalistic style, her sculptures made in the 1930s such as *Swan* were more experimental.

Andrews lived in Eastbourne with fellow artists Margaret Benecke (1876–1962), Innes Hart (1889–1970) and her sister Wilby (1881–unknown). It seems likely that Innes Hart visited the exhibition and purchased both this sculpture and *Woman* by Elizabeth Raikes, as she later donated them to the Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne.

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Elizabeth Raikes

Woman

1934

Alabaster

This work by Elizabeth Raikes (1907–1942) was shown in the Surrealist section of the 1939 Artists' International Association Exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery. Woman is not simply representational but also explores the material and formal qualities of smooth polished alabaster. Raikes' life was sadly cut short during the Second World War but not before she established a career as a sculptor and art teacher. Raikes studied with sculptor Henry Moore (1898–1986) at the Royal College of Art, later remaining friends with the artist. As well as working with stone, she made elongated figurative sculptures out of walnut wood, exhibiting them at the Royal Institute Galleries in Piccadilly in 1936.

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Ruth Adams

The Eagles

1937

Body colour, pencil and watercolour on paper

Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle

Ruth Adams (1893–1948) was born in York to a family involved in both domestic ceramics manufacturing and art pottery. In the early part of her career, she became interested in watercolour, exhibiting in a series of exhibitions at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle throughout the 1930s. This double-sided watercolour dates from around the time of Adams' brief involvement with the Surrealist group in Britain. As well as exhibiting in the Surrealist section of the 1939 Artists' International Association exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, she attended organising meetings of the group. In 1939, she moved to west Cornwall, becoming part of a community that also included fellow artists Ithell Colquhoun (1906–1988) and Marlow Moss (1889–1958), with whom she exhibited.

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## **DISPLAY CASE 1**

his display case contains exhibition catalogues, flyers, publications and other materials showing the involvement of artists Ithell Colquhoun, Edith Rimmington, Grace Pailthorpe and Stella Snead in surrealist exhibitions and activities in the 1930s and '40s.

1. Ithell Colquhoun, Surrealism, Newlyn Orion Gallery, 1976, exhibition catalogue (facsimile)

Courtesy Newlyn Archive

2. Edith Rimmington, postcard to E. L. T. Mesens with pencil drawing, 1940s

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

3. John Banting, Edith Rimmington, Peter Rose Pulham, exhibition pamphlet published by London Gallery, 1948

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

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The London Bulletin, published between April 1938 and June 1940, was key among the publications that the surrealist group in Britain used to disseminate ideas about art and politics and to post exhibition announcements. Eileen Agar recycled an old issue in her artwork, cutting out pages of text and coloured paper shapes to use in her collages.

4. Ithell Colquhoun, list of works from Mayor Gallery exhibition, in The London Bulletin, Issue 17, 15 June, 1939

Private collection

5. The London Bulletin, Issue 17, 15 June, 1939 with paper shapes cut out by Eileen Agar

Collection Gerald William Dowden

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Stella Snead (1910–2006) wrote this short handwritten autobiography in 1995, charting her early years as an artist in London and move to New York in 1939. She mentions attending the art academy in London run by French painter Amédée Ozenfant (1886–1966), where she became friends with fellow student and surrealist Leonora Carrington (1917–2011). While at the academy, Snead completed her oil painting *Woman with Cats* (1936), which was enthusiastically praised by her tutor. Snead relocated to the United States in 1939 with the onset of World War II. This portrait photograph was taken soon after she arrived in New York.

6. Recent work by Stella Snead, exhibition pamphlet published by London Gallery Ltd., 1950  
The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

7. Stella Snead, handwritten autobiography, 1995  
Kathy Fehl & Ian Teal

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8. Stella Snead, *Woman with Cats*, 1936, black and white photograph of original oil painting

Kathy Fehl & Ian Teal

9. *Students outside the Ozenfant Academy of Fine Arts, London*, c. 1936, black and white photograph

Kathy Fehl & Ian Teal

10. *Portrait of Stella Snead*, 1939, black and white photograph

Kathy Fehl & Ian Teal

Before becoming an artist Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971) was a surgeon in the First World War and later trained as a criminal psychologist. Within this field, she published these two books which broadly advocated behavioural therapies against systems of incarceration. She became involved with the surrealist group in the 1930s, through her collaboration with poet and artist Reuben Mednikoff (1906–1972). Pailthorpe published her article 'The Scientific Aspect of Surrealism' in 1939...

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...In it, she set out her interest in the scientific and therapeutic potential of surrealist ideas. The article is illustrated with paintings and automatic drawings by Pailthorpe and Mednikoff.

11. Flyer for exhibition by Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff at Guggenheim Jeune, London, 1939  
The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

12. Grace Pailthorpe, *Studies in the Psychology of Delinquency*, published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1932 and *What we put in Prison*, published by Williams and Norgate, London, 1932  
The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

13. Grace Pailthorpe, 'The Scientific Aspect of Surrealism', article published in *The London Bulletin*, Issue 7 December 1938–January 1939  
Private collection

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## **DISPLAY CASE 2**

This display case contains materials relating to the International Surrealist Exhibition held at the New Burlington Galleries in London in 1936. Among the more than 400 exhibits were works by thirteen women artists from the UK, Europe and the USA. Artist and writer Diana Brinton Lee was instrumental in the administration of the exhibition, acting as secretary for the organisation committee, corresponding with many of the participating artists and overseeing the sale of works. The exhibition ran for just over three weeks from 11 June to 4 July 1936 but was immensely popular, attended by around a thousand people each day. A programme of lectures ran at regular intervals during the exhibition.

1. Flyer for International Surrealist Exhibition, London, 1936

The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA

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2. Invitation to opening of International Surrealist Exhibition, London, 1936

Private collection

3. Floorplan for New Burlington Galleries, 1936.

Facsimile

Courtesy Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive

4. International Surrealist Bulletin, No.4, 1936, Journal published by the surrealist group in England

Whitechapel Gallery Archive

5. Edward James, introduction and annotated translation of Salvador Dalí's lecture at the International Surrealist Exhibition, London, July 1936

Edward James Foundation, West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

6. Flyer for poetry reading by Paul Éluard, 1936

Private collection

**Continues on next page.**

7. Lecture List for International Surrealist Exhibition,  
London, 1936  
The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA
  
8. Catalogue for International Surrealist Exhibition,  
London, 1936  
The Murray Family Collection, UK & USA
  
9. Installation views of International Surrealist  
Exhibition, London 1936. Black and white contact print.  
Facsimile  
Courtesy Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive
  
10. Receipt book for International Surrealist Exhibition,  
London, 1936, completed by Diana Brinton Lee  
The Court Gallery, Somerset
  
11. Contemporary Poetry and Prose, No. 2, Surrealist  
Double Number, June 1936  
Private collection

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Artist Sheila Legge (1911–1949) only had a brief association within the surrealist group, during which time she published this short story in the publication Contemporary Poetry and Prose. More information about Legge's appearance at the exhibition opening as the 'phantom of surrealism' is displayed on the adjacent wall of this room.

12. Sheila Legge, 'I Have Done My Best for You', short story published in Contemporary Poetry and Prose, No. 8 December 1936, p. 165

Private collection

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## **DISPLAY CASE 3**

This display case contains materials relating to the Artists' International Association (AIA). The AIA was founded in 1933 and organised exhibitions, publications, and protest actions in support of leftist and anti-fascist causes. Its membership grew throughout the 1930s with the surrealist group joining in 1936. While many surrealist artists enthusiastically advocated the causes advanced by the AIA, their presence within the group was not always welcomed. A cartoon in *Left Review* made fun of the smartly dressed attendees of the International Surrealist Exhibition and the grand statements of one of its organisers, Herbert Read.

1. James Boswell, cartoon in *Left Review*, Vol. 2, No. 10, July 1936

Private collection

**Continues on next page.**

2. Herbert Read, 'Surrealism: The Dialectic of Art' in  
Left Review, Vol. 2, No. 10, July 1936

Private collection

3. Letter from Roland Penrose to Edward James about  
the exhibition 'Unity of Artists for Peace, Democracy, and  
Cultural Development', 41 Grosvenor Square, 1937

Edward James Foundation, West Dean College of Arts  
and Conservation

4. Anti-fascist advert by National Council of Labour on  
the back cover of Contemporary Poetry and Prose, No. 4  
& 5 August–September 1936

Private collection

5. Artists' International Association: The First Five  
Years, newssheet, 1938

The Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex  
Special Collections

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The Artists' International Association (AIA) held an exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery in February and March 1939 titled 'Unity of Artists for Peace, Democracy and Cultural Development'. It attracted around 40,000 visitors and included more than 300 works in a diverse range of styles and media. The surrealist section of the exhibition had a fairly even balance of men and women artists.

6. Invitations to Artists' International Association exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, 1939

Whitechapel Gallery Archive

7. Sending in form for Artists' International Association exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, 1939

Whitechapel Gallery Archive

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Mass Observation was founded in 1937 and aimed to create an 'anthropology of ourselves' by studying the everyday lives of ordinary people in Britain. As part of this project, volunteers came to Whitechapel Gallery and recorded the reactions of other visitors to the works displayed in the AIA exhibition.

8. Catalogues for Artists' International Association exhibition, Whitechapel Gallery, 1939 with annotations recording which artworks received attention from visitors  
The Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex  
Special Collections

9. Handwritten and typed notes on overheard conversations about works in Artists' International Association exhibition, Whitechapel Gallery, 1939  
The Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex  
Special Collections

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Diana Brinton Lee helped organise the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London and later participated in Mass Observation. She completed this questionnaire about her motivations for joining the project.

10. Diana Brinton Lee, answers to questions on Mass Observation, 1937

The Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex  
Special Collections

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## **ADDITIONAL TEXTS**

### **Interview Transcription**

David Gascoyne discusses the International Surrealist Exhibition and performance by Sheila Legge in Trafalgar Square on 11 June 1936.

From an interview with Mel Gooding, 1991.

Artists' Lives © The British Library

Mel Gooding: Can we go back then to the period '35/'36, and to the period of the exhibition, which you had instigated?

David Gascoyne: It got more exciting when opening day of the exhibition came along, and I began to plan various things, including this idea of a surrealist phantom. Now Shiela Legge had written me a fan letter when 'A Short Survey of Surrealism' came out in 1935. And I answered her and we made a rendezvous, and I think she was...

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...living in a bedsit in Earls Court, you know. And she had nothing to do with the film maker of the same name, one had an e and the other didn't. Anyway, she was an attractive woman, and we got on very well. There was a time when she went to Paris for a time, hoping to become a model of Man Ray, but I don't think she was quite his type and she was rather disappointed about that. At any rate I had this idea of making this surrealist phantom; I pinched the idea of the head made of roses you know, a rose bush growing out of a dress from Dali. But I got Motley's the theatrical designers who did all the costumes for the Old Vic at that time in St. Martin's Lane, to do a sort of wedding dress, which they did very cheaply really. And then I got a Mayfair florist to make mask of roses, real roses, and we took her out to Trafalgar Square and had a photograph. My original idea had been that she should have a thighbone as a kind of sceptre, but couldn't find one anywhere, and I went around orthopaedic shops and finally came up with a leg, and as her name was Legge that was what she carried around with her!

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Gooding: So that was your idea?

Gascoyne: Yes, that was my idea.

Gooding: This was in the nature of a stunt.

Gascoyne: Yes.

Gooding: And of course the exhibition was sort of...

Gascoyne: Well Breton came to open it, but Eluard wouldn't come until Breton had gone back. That showed the rift between them had already become quite serious. There's a famous photograph isn't there taken at the Burlington Galleries, in which Eluard and Nusch I think is in the photograph and Sheila Legge and Eileen Agar, Ruthven Todd. Ruthven Todd was taking my place because I had gone out on some errand.

Gooding: Is that why?

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(INAUDIBLE - BOTH TALKING)

Gooding: I've always wondered why you weren't in that photograph.

Gascoyne: Yes, that's right.

Gooding: Dali's in it.

Gascoyne: Well, when Dali gave his lecture in a diver's suit: that was an idea of Edward James, with whom he was staying at the time, and those were... Edward James' Afghan wolf hounds were led in on a leash. And it was when he began to stifle because of his helmet you know, he couldn't breathe any more, and it was I who went out to find a spanner to undo... (LAUGHS) And to find a spanner in Bond Street is not very easy! Anyway we got him out in the end and he went on. A most ludicrous occasion, because it had a man with...what do you say, magic lantern... no, there must be another term, but slides, but they were always upside...

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...down, which I suppose was a surrealist approach in a way. During the period I was there almost every day, most days all in all, and often sleeping in the flat of my mother's friend 'Tiny' Wright, whom I've been talking about, who by that time had had to live in Kennington, behind Waterloo somewhere.

Gooding: Dylan Thomas was also around at this time wasn't he?

Gascoyne: Yes, he was. But he came, and did some stunt, but they didn't really... He was a surrealist, his kind of poetry was surrealist without him knowing anything about it, and...he didn't care for any kind of isms very much really.

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**Ithell Colquhoun, Water-flower, 1938. Oil on canvas, 104.1 x 76.2 cm. Plymouth College of Art. © The Noise Abatement Society, The Samaritans and Spire Healthcare.**

In 1935 the hospital at Moreton in the Marsh, Gloucestershire, a small town about 20 miles from Colquhoun's parental home in Cheltenham, was refurbished. As a local artist with a growing reputation, Colquhoun was asked to paint three large paintings for the renovated building. In the event, only one (now lost) was ever hung. Another is known only from studies and may not have been completed. Water-flower (1938) was the third, intended for the women's ward. As the date of completion suggests, it was considerably delayed. In fact, it was never delivered to the hospital and remained in the artist's possession until it was sold at an exhibition of her work in Penzance, Cornwall, in 1973. It remained in the same private collection until it was acquired by Plymouth College of Art in early 2018.

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The 1930s was a decade of rapid stylistic change for Colquhoun. Initially, her preferred subject matter was exotic blooms and foliage painted in a detailed, naturalistic manner, often viewed from an unusual vantage point. *Water-flower* is one of the last to be painted in this style as she had become increasingly influenced by surrealism. She had already begun to paint the unsettling images that characterise her work of the late 1930s. *Water-flower*, therefore, was painted at a pivotal moment in her development.

*Water-flower* provides a subtle instance of Colquhoun's life-long interest in boundaries. Her occult and surrealist preoccupations led her to explore ways of overcoming the barriers between opposing and apparently irreconcilable states. These could include the rational and the irrational, consciousness and the unconscious, dreaming and wakefulness, the worldly and the spiritual. In this painting the opposition takes physical form, between air and water. The aquatic plant with its flower above and roots below successfully straddles the...

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...boundary of the water surface, but the fish cannot. This is only the second of Colquhoun's flower paintings to enter a public or institutional collection. The other is Canna (c.1935) bought by Cheltenham Art Gallery in 1936. Of the two, the College's painting is the more significant, as well as being the larger.

Richard Shillitoe

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## **Modelling the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition**

### **It all started with a diving helmet key ring...**

It all started with a diving helmet key ring which I found in the gift shop of an art gallery in Basel. The object reminded me of the famous story of Salvador Dali at the 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition. He had realised, almost too late, that on the hottest day of the year performing a lecture in a full diving suit with said helmet was probably a little rash. The need to breathe became paramount when the helmet got stuck and only the quick thinking of the young David Gascoyne, and a spanner from a local garage, saved his life.

I began to wonder what it would be like to recreate that first surrealist exhibition in England. Thinking of the participants Agar, Picasso, Picabia, Oppenheim, Ernst, Tanguy, to name but a few and the ubiquitous Penrose, instrumental in arranging the exhibition...

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...I could only imagine the vibrancy of the colours! The reports at the time spoke of shocking images, unfit to be seen by the public. So why then did so many people attend this exhibition? It set me on a quest...

We had a copy of the exhibition catalogue which has been useful for identifying the works, together with the invaluable wall plans and photographs Antony Penrose kindly sent us. Roland, his father, had made hand drawn diagrams of each wall, linking the works to the catalogue. We also visited the National Gallery of Scotland, where the Penrose archive is now housed, to see his photographs of the exhibition.

I naively thought it would be easy to find the images of the 392 paintings, sculptures and objects but soon discovered that some have been buried for almost a hundred years and are reluctant to show themselves. Some may have been destroyed in the war. They would, after all, have been classed as Entartete Kunst (degenerate art) by the Nazi regime...

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...Others have disappeared into private collections never to be seen again. This made me realise the value of public collections, available for all to see. To all the private collectors out there I would say, make your works known, so that when galleries are putting together exhibitions they can have a wealth of items from which to borrow. There's nothing more exciting than seeing a painting that you've only seen as a black and white grainy image come to life in front of you.

So, I set to work trawling through art books and the Internet to locate images and, if I was lucky, discover the dimensions for each work. Picasso tried to trip me up by changing many of the titles of his works and Penrose must have thought one Tanguy looked like another, as the majority were mismatched. At the end of the day the most reliable resource were the photographs and matching each picture by eye. There are still a few to find (they are the ones that remain in black and white), so if any of you would like a challenge, I would be happy to receive colour images of the...

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...remaining works. I enjoyed making and finding objects to recreate the sculptures: driftwood, cocktail sticks, glass beads. When the fake fur didn't produce the desired result for Meret Oppenheim's Fur Cup I even resorted to using my own hair. Where exact dimensions were unavailable I had to use the laws of ratio to compare the sizes of adjacent paintings. Also, in most cases, I had to make an educated guess about the colour of the picture frames, matching them to the images and the photographs but with the assistance of my trusty mitre saw all were eventually completed.

It was only when I started to hang the exhibition that I realised what a fantastic job they had done. With so many images in a relatively small space it could easily have looked like an art jumble sale. But there is a brilliance in the flow of the works that can only be seen now that the exhibition has been recreated.

Corella Hughes

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