

Some recent purchases of

The
Contemporary Art
Society

Arts Council of Great Britain 1951

Foreword

For the third time the Arts Council must express its appreciation of the offer by the Contemporary Art Society to lend the paintings and drawings which make up this exhibition. The works contained in this year's collection are, as in 1948 and 1949, all recent acquisitions of the Society.

The Council also wishes to record its gratitude to Mr. Raymond Mortimer for his introduction, as well as to Mr. Denis Mathews, Secretary of the Contemporary Art Society, for his great assistance in assembling the exhibition.

Introduction

You dislike some of these pictures? So do I. How easy it is just to laugh or to get angry or to be shocked! Any child can do that. The interesting thing is to consider exactly *why* one is annoyed. Pictures, like persons, can be disliked for such different reasons.

Sometimes we are bored or disgusted by the subject of a picture—a woman who is very unattractive or a carcase or a profiteer. But, when such subjects are treated, as they often have been, by very great painters, we become interested and delighted. Other things being equal, I personally prefer pictures of subjects that are noble or charming. To-day, for some mysterious reason, such subjects make little appeal to the best painters. Often, indeed, they seem little interested in any subject: they leave the representation of appearances to the camera, and make compositions in form and colour that are closer to music than to literature.

Whether we look at old pictures or modern ones, our feelings depend less upon the subject than upon the treatment. Only very simple people prefer a pretty girl by Alma Tadema to an old harridan by Rembrandt. But it is much more difficult to judge treatment than to judge subject. Any fool can say 'I don't like Madonnas' or 'I do

like nudes'. Some training of the eye is needed to tell the difference between two pictures of a vase of flowers. To judge between two 'abstract' pictures is more difficult still.

The only way to understand painting is to look at it a great deal. People seldom give to looking at pictures a hundredth of the time they give to reading books or listening to music. Except in London there are indeed not many pictures to look at. Yet we cannot understand painting by the light of nature much better than we can understand geometry or cricket or French.

Many of the pictures in this exhibition are conspicuously difficult to understand. To-day all the arts—and all the sciences too—have unfortunately become very much specialised. Even in the past European painters have usually wanted to break new ground, to do something different from their fathers. Though this zest for experiment has perhaps now become too general and too violent, it is an important part of the European character: it is what has given us penicillin and the wireless. Useless therefore to say 'Why must they paint these puzzling pictures'. Only time will show which of them have lasting value. It is foolish to pretend to like something merely to show one's superiority to other people. Is it not even more foolish to laugh at something merely because it is difficult to understand?

The Contemporary Art Society is a private body of lovers of art who subscribe in order to present works by modern artists to museums all over the country. Every year the purchases are made by a different member of the committee. This committee consists chiefly of collectors who have backed their own taste by buying pictures for themselves, and partly of museum officials whose business

it is to know about pictures. We do not agree always with one another's taste. Often we dislike acutely some work selected by the buyer of the year. It is, however, a matter of principle to give the buyer a free hand. Since all the members of the committee are persons who care passionately about art, presumably some of us may turn out to have made our selections wisely.

The annual subscription is one guinea. Some people may feel that they would give a guinea gladly in order to discourage such painting as we are sending round the country in this exhibition. Others may be delighted, or at any rate openminded; and to these I appeal. The more subscribers we can find, the more pictures we can give to your local museum. Every year we show our latest purchases to the directors of public art galleries, and they say which they would most like to have. Of course, often several museums want the same picture, and everyone cannot be satisfied every year. We believe that the Contemporary Art Society is valuable both to museums and to painters. If in every city a group of enthusiasts would band together to find new subscribers, we could do far more than our present resources allow.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

Information about the Society may be obtained from the Secretary, C.A.S., Tate Gallery, Millbank, S.W.1.

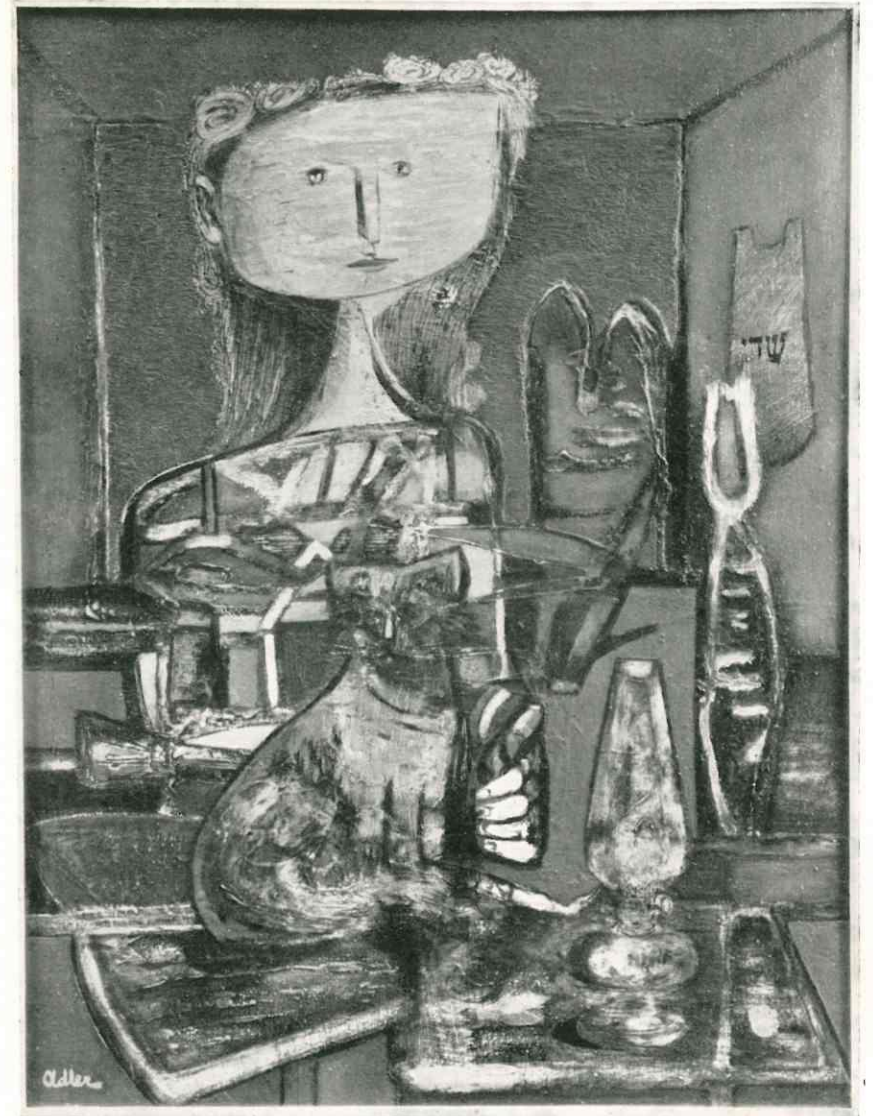


Plate I. JANKEL ADLER. *Girl with Cat* (1)

Plate II. JOHN MINTON. *Cornish Landscape* (37)

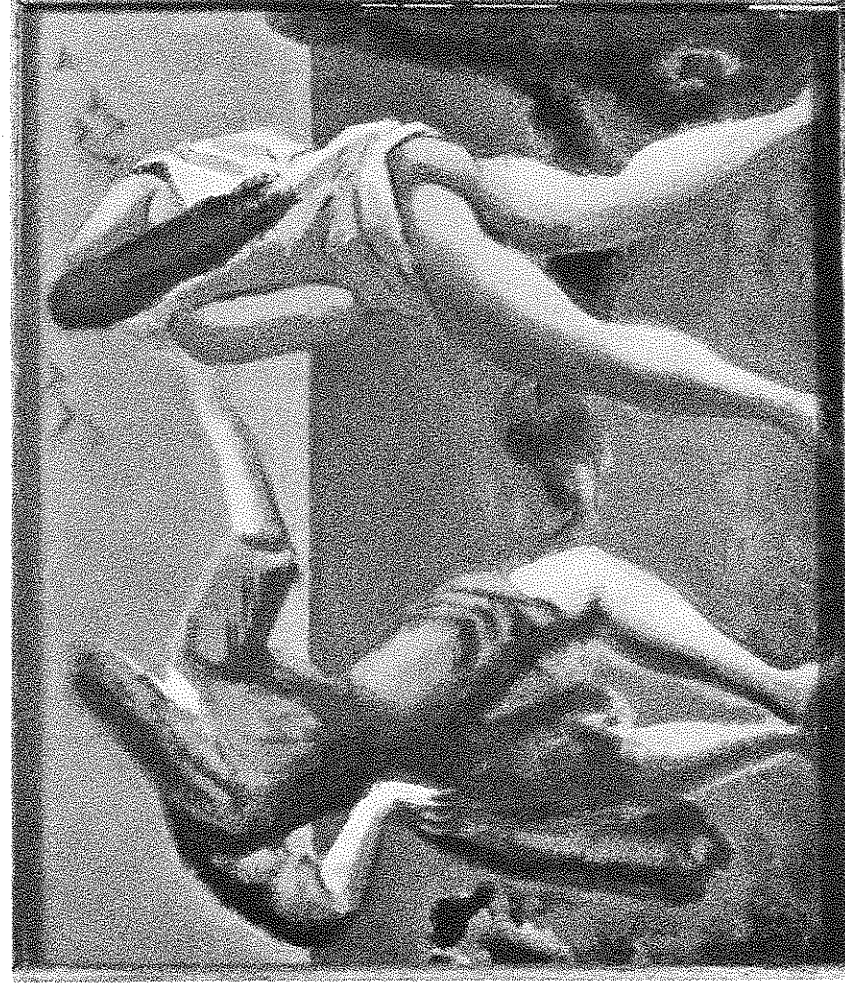
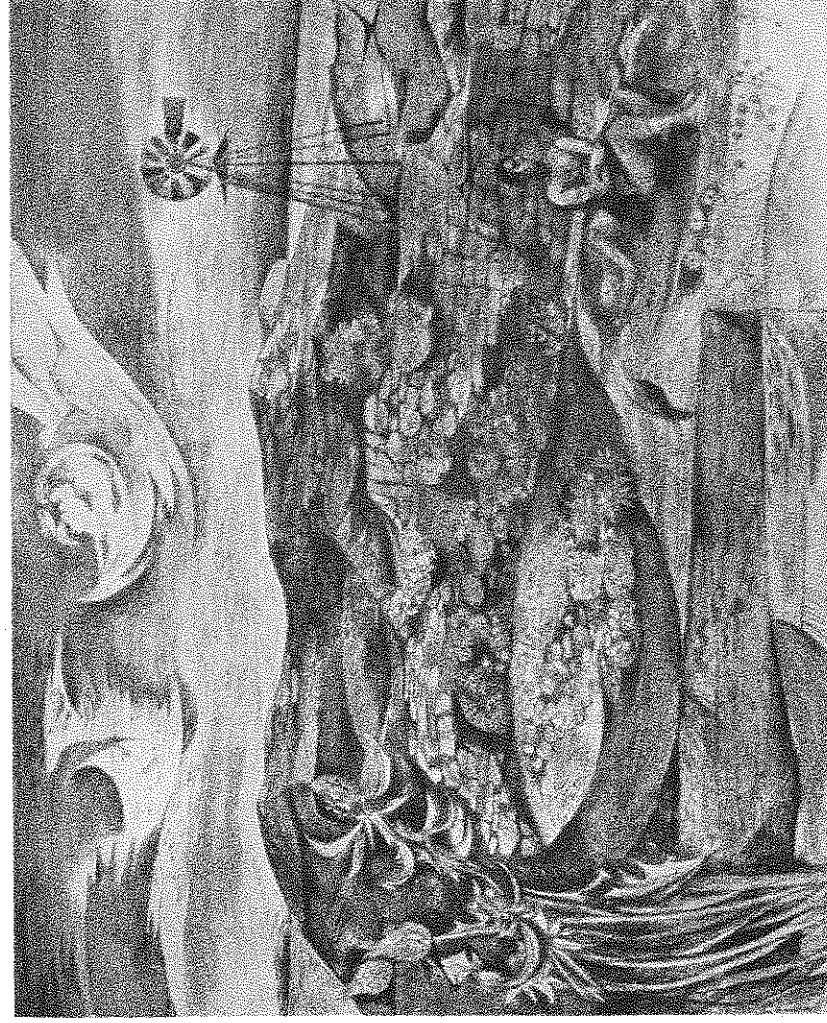


Plate III. BERNARD MENINSKY. *The Sea Shore* (34)

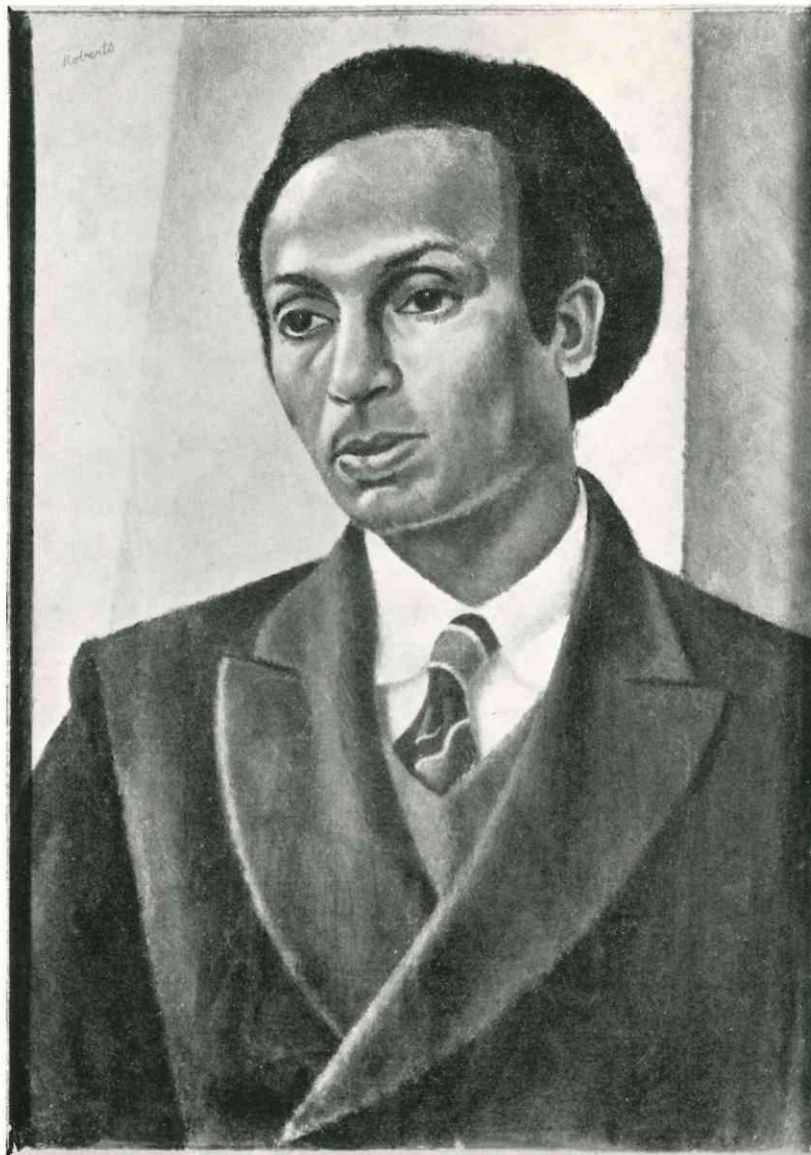


Plate IV. WILLIAM ROBERTS. *Dr. P. de Zoyga* (46)

Catalogue

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|----------------------------|---|
| Jankel ADLER
1895–1949 | 1 <i>Girl with Cat</i> (Plate I)
Oil, 43 × 33 in. |
| | 2 <i>Poet</i>
Oil, 43 × 33 in. |
| Michael AYRTON
b. 1910 | 3 <i>Roman Window</i>
Oil, 49 × 29½ in. |
| John BARROW | 4 <i>The Cliff Path</i>
Watercolour, 10 × 14 in. |
| Keith BAYNES
b. 1887 | 5 <i>South of France</i>
Oil, 24 × 19½ in. |
| Stephen BONE
b. 1904 | 6 <i>Westminster</i> (1950)
Oil, 24 × 35 in. |
| B. A. R. CARTER
b. 1909 | 7 <i>Welsh Chapel</i> (1949)
Oil, 20 × 18 in. |
| John CRAXTON
b. 1922 | 8 <i>Standing Figure</i>
Drawing, 25 × 19 in. |
| | 9 <i>Girl in White Scarf</i> (1949)
Oil, 22 × 17 in. |
| | 10 <i>Waterpot in a Window</i> (1949)
Gouache, 23 × 18 in. |
| Robin DARWIN
b. 1910 | 11 <i>Empress Hall Icedrome</i> (1950)
Oil, 28 × 35 in. |
| Frank DOBSON
b. 1888 | 12 <i>Antelope</i>
Drawing, 10 × 14 in. |

- Barnett FREEDMAN 13 *Illustration to Goethe's Faust*
b. 1901 Drawing, 16 × 11 in.
- 14 *Grandfather and Granddaughter*
Watercolour, 15 × 9 in.
- 15 *Marionette*
Watercolour, 19 × 11 in.
- Lucian FREUD 16 *Still-life with Sea Urchin* (1950)
b. 1922 Oil, 12 × 9 in.
- 17 *Narcissus* (1950)
Drawing, 9 × 6 in.
- William GEAR 18 *Composition Printanière* (1951)
b. 1915 Oil, 41 × 35 in.
- Mark GERTLER 19 *Nude* (1918)
1892–1939 Oil, 27½ × 17 in.
- Alberto GIACOMETTI 20 *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*
b. 1901 Gouache, 28½ × 14½ in.
- Charles GINNER 21 *Bridge, Hyde Park*
b. 1878 Watercolour, 11 × 15 in.
- Sylvia GOSSE 22 *Breton Woman*
b. 1881 Oil, 24 × 15 in.
- Anthony GROSS 23 *Pujol*
b. 1903 Watercolour, 12½ × 19 in.
- Barbara HEPWORTH 24 *Figures on a Pink Ground*
b. 1903 Drawing, 16 × 22 in.
- Edgar HUBERT 25 *Abstract Composition* (1950)
b. 1906 Oil, 26 × 21 in.
- David JONES 26 *Flower-piece with Yellow Bird*
b. 1895 Watercolour, 31 × 26½ in.

- Margaret KAYE 27 *Lion in the Forest* (1949)
b. 1912 Embroidery, 16 × 12 in.
- Nigel LAMBOURNE 28 *Waitress, Trudi Fallada* (1950)
b. 1919 Drawing, 13 × 9½ in.
- Raymond LEGUELT 29 *Bocage*
b. 1898 Oil, 25 × 36 in.
- Charles MCCALL 30 *Maquillage* (1950)
b. 1907 Oil, 21 × 18 in.
- Frances MACDONALD 31 *The Lake*
b. 1914 Watercolour, 15 × 22 in.
- André MASSON 32 *Les Terres Rouges et Mont Ste. Victoire*
b. 1896 Oil, 38 × 29 in.
- Bernard MENINSKY 33 *The Purple Dress*
1891–1950 Oil sketch, 19½ × 15½ in.
- 34 *The Sea Shore* (Plate III)
Oil sketch, 11½ × 14 in.
- 35 *Madonna and Child*
Oil sketch, 14 × 9½ in.
- 36 *Figures in a Landscape*
Watercolour, 15½ × 22½ in.
- John MINTON 37 *Cornish Landscape* (Plate II)
b. 1917 Watercolour, 19 × 25 in.
- Winifred NICHOLSON 38 *Primula Stellata*
b. 1881 Oil, 19½ × 21½ in.
- Victor PASMORE 39 *Café*
b. 1908 Oil, 18 × 24 in.
- 40 *Green Landscape with Gate*
Oil, 29 × 24½ in.
- 41 *Triangular Motive in Pink and Yellow* (1949)
Oil, 24 × 20 in.

- Edouard PIGNON 42 *Le Mineur*
b. 1905 Oil, 36 × 28 in.
- John PIPER 43 *Portland Bill*
b. 1903 Oil, 17 × 21 in.
- Ceri RICHARDS 44 *Pianist and Dancer* (1950)
b. 1903 Oil, 8 × 10 in.
- Brian ROBB 45 *Odalisque*
b. 1913 Oil, 22 × 16 in.
- William ROBERTS 46 *Dr. P. de Zoyga* (Plate IV)
b. 1895 Oil, 22 × 15½ in.
- 47 *Sketch 'Music'*
Drawing, 10 × 12 in.
- Ronald SEARLE 48 *Martinique Dancing Girls*
b. 1920 Drawing, 10 × 7 in.
- Graham SUTHERLAND 49 *Tree Forms in Estuary*
b. 1903 Gouache, 11½ × 8½ in.
- 50 *Cornfields and Rocks* (1943)
Gouache, 15 × 11½ in.

LUND HUMPHRIES

ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN

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