

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

65
NO. 31
FOR RELEASE:
April 11, 1977

BRITISH DRAWINGS AT MODERN MUSEUM

A selection of 61 drawings by British artists, drawn from the Museum's Collection and ranging from the turn of the century through Pop and Conceptual art, is currently on view in the Sachs Galleries of The Museum of Modern Art. Selected and installed by Bernice Rose, Curator of Drawings, the exhibition, which has been made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, will remain at the Museum through May 31.

Included are works by, among others, Henry Moore, David Bomberg, Jacob Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, Augustus John, Gaudier-Brzeska, and Lucian Freud, as well as by more recent figures such as Richard Hamilton, David Hockney, Bridget Riley, Colin Self and Richard Long. Mrs. Rose notes: "This exhibit does not attempt a survey of contemporary British draftsmanship. It is a selection, from the Museum's Collection, of individual works (by individual masters) corresponding at times to significant moments in the development of British art."

Different attitudes toward drawing and its different uses are manifest throughout the exhibition. Walter Sickert's academic tonal study Pimlico (1909) is included as are the cut-out machine image collages done by sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi in the 1960s. Drawings by other sculptors such as Reg Butler and Lynn Chadwick are also on view. Jacob Epstein's two 1913 drawings for his sculpture Rock Drill combine primitive, archaic forms with abstract cubistic ones that allude to machine imagery.

Two Figures (1912) by Wyndham Lewis is representative of the efforts of the Vorticist avant-garde that flourished briefly and vociferously in London in the years immediately preceding World War I. For Two Figures, Lewis first drew, then cut away part of the drawing which displeased him, placed what he saved on a new piece of paper and then continued to draw. Other works by

(more)

Lewis are Standing Figure, Self-Portrait, a cover design for The Enemy No. 1, Roman Actors, A Hand of Bananas, and John S. Newberry. (Concurrent with BRITISH DRAWINGS, Murray Grigor's film Blast, an appraisal of the spirit and atmosphere of Vorticism and its participants, will be shown in the Museum Auditorium on April 18 and 19 at noon.)

One of the great eccentrics of English art, Stanley Spencer is represented in the exhibition by five drawings. Spencer's broad forms recall the early Italian Renaissance, while his loving attention to detail places him solidly in the tradition of British Pre-Raphaelitism. The subject of Spencer's art is ostensibly his native village of Cockham and his family, but these are in fact, as Mrs. Rose observes, "religious pictures, pictures of transcendence."

The 1930s in Britain witnessed great artistic ferment, and names now internationally known, such as Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland (Thorn Head) first appeared. Centered around St. Ives in Cornwall, their individual styles emerged--a blend of abstraction, surrealism and naturalism peculiarly English, along with a truly plastic sense of form. From the 1940s on, sculptor Henry Moore began to work on drawing as an independent form. In the process of making working studies for his sculptures, he found drawing a faster medium with which to work. Women Winding Wool (1949) is, observes Mrs. Rose, "among his most powerful plastic inventions, linear and taut, yet at the same time sculptural." Moore's drawings Seated Figures, II and Sculpture and Red Rocks are also on view.

Two drawings by William Scott--Still Life with Strainer and Linear Still Life--evidence the move from naturalism toward a more rigorous abstraction that characterized British art of the 1950s. In the late fifties and through the early and mid-sixties, there was another period of great activity in the British art world, the most visible new direction being Pop. Richard Hamilton (four studies for The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum), Eduardo Paolozzi (Parrot,

(more)

Tortured Life, Wittgenstein as Soldier, Sun City), and Peter Blake (Study of a Tattooed Lady) were in the vanguard of the movement, with R.B. Kitaj (represented by his drawing of a cover for the Times Literary Supplement), David Hockney (Cecil Hotel, Alexandria, Egypt and drawings of his designs for Mr. and Mrs. Ubu for the play Ubu Roi) and Allen Jones (represented by a study for the portfolio of lithographs A Fleet of Busses) also taking up the imagery of the mass media. The late 1960s and early 1970s brought Conceptual art with its challenge to traditional artistic forms and media. Richard Long's record of his walks in the landscape, Walking a Straight 10-Mile Line, Dartmoor, England, can be seen as both a challenge to the British landscape tradition, and an homage.

APRIL 1977

Additional information available from Bruce Wolmer, Assistant, or Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019. Tel. (212) 956-7295; 7501.
