

Large Print Guide

Sussex Modernism

Curated by

Dr Hope Wolf, University
of Sussex

Galleries 2&3

23 May to 28 September

2025

[Enter Gallery 2 and move to the text panel directly in front of you as you enter the room]

ROOM ONE (1)

Sussex Modernism

‘LONDON IS NOT A PROVINCIAL TOWN’ declared the Vorticists in their fuchsia-coloured magazine, *Blast* (1914). Vorticism was a radical modernist movement that formed in London just before the First World War.

Modernists often used ‘provincial’ as an insult and saw capital cities as centres of cultural dynamism. The poet Ezra Pound wrote of London as a ‘vortex, drawing strength from the peripheries.’ Yet potent experiments in art and life also happened outside of the metropolis. The focus here is on Sussex: was it a vortex too?

Spanning from the late nineteenth century to now, this show compares how artists influenced by different modernist movements harnessed the capacities of their Sussex locations to respond to the crises of their day.

All believed that art needed to transform to register how modern life felt different to what had come before.

Sussex was not immune to modernity's changes. However, not all artists in the region embraced the 'new' as readily as the most avant-garde groups. The Vorticists blasted a kind of art that privileged nature and the past and blessed industrial cities and machines. Had the movement survived beyond the war, it is unlikely that it would have applauded the visions of country cottages, churches and old mills found here.

But Sussex also had its iconoclasts, who share a space with those who compromised between experiment and tradition. This show of jostling perspectives brings together art made in rural retreats and late flourishings of surrealism and dada in urban countercultures. Coastal refuge and woodland magic are encountered along the way. Where some modernists were ambivalent about Sussex, others dreamed of a 'new regionalism'.

[Centre of room, in pink plinth]

Wyndham Lewis (ed.) (1882-1957)

Blast, volume one, 1914

Book; ink on paper

The manifesto of the London-based Vorticism movement denounced politeness, effeminacy, mildness, sentimentality, nostalgia, nature-love and the Victorians. Networks and artists with connections to Sussex are blasted: members of the Bloomsbury Group ('Clan Strachey'), the Meynell family, and Ditchling-based Frank Brangwyn.

The British Museum

[Clockwise: left to right from entrance door]

L. S. Lowry (1887–1976)

Old Windmill, Bexhill, East Sussex

(Hoad's Mill), 1960

Oil on canvas

On loan from Bexhill Museum

Peggy Angus (1904–1993)

Asham Cement Works, 1934

Oil on canvas

Towner Eastbourne

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Sussex Bypass, 1937

Tempera on canvas

Edward Wadsworth lived in Maresfield from 1929 and was a former Vorticist.

On loan from Prifysgol Bangor / Bangor University

Eric Ravilious (1903–1942)

The Long Man of Wilmington, 1939

Watercolour on paper

Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

Alfriston (design for lorry bill for Shell), 1930

Oil on paper

Vanessa Bell lived in Charleston near Firle. This is a design for a poster that would be used to advertise motorised tourism for Shell.

On loan from the Collection of Sigrid Rausing

John Piper (1903-1992)

**Set design for Benjamin Britten's Albert Herring (1947) –
Marquee at the Vicarage, Act II, sc. 1, 1947**

Ink, watercolour and pastel on paper

John Piper designed the set of *Albert Herring* (1947), an opera composed by Benjamin Britten. It was first performed at Glyndebourne. In the opera, Albert becomes 'King of the May' when the young women in his provincial town are not found sufficiently virtuous to be appointed 'Queen'. After his crowning, Albert has a night of debauchery, a 'wild

explosion'. The performance did not go down well with the owner of the opera house, John Christie.

Britten Pears Arts

Christine Binnie (b.1955)

Romantic Stocks for a Bungalow, 2014

Glazed earthenware with decal

Christine Binnie, who grew up in Wannock, is a contemporary artist and one of the founding members of the Neo Naturists.

Courtesy of the artist

Margaret Benecke (1876-1962)

Glacier Forms, 1936

Oil on canvas

Margaret Benecke lived with a group of women artists and writers on Enys Road in Eastbourne. In the mid-century they

supported attempts by Towner's curators to introduce modernist art to the town. Glacier Forms combines cool abstraction with forms reminiscent of petals and leaves.

Towner Eastbourne

Gluck (1895–1978)

Sulky Spring, Southease, 1937

Oil on board

Gluck, who lived in Steyning from 1944, designed a frame that receded into the white wall on which it was displayed; it softened any hard border. The tension between the modern frame and the rural Southease landscape parallels Gluck's self-description as a 'dyed in the soul traditionalist' who was 'always in the future'. In this painting, as with other landscapes by the artist, the sky is given more space than the ground below.

On loan from a Private Collection

Bill Brandt (1904–1983)

River Cuckmere, 1964

Photograph

Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Purchase 1975

Nancy Odufona (b.1992)

Interior Puzzling, 2022

Cut out on mount board

Courtesy of the artist

[TOP]

John Stezaker (b.1949)

Untitled, 1949 - present 2023

Collage

Courtesy of the artist and The Approach

[BOTTOM]

Eric Ravilious (1903–1942)

Interior at Furlongs, 1939

Watercolour on paper

Towner Eastbourne

Cold Comfort

Eric Ravilious's 1939 rendition of Peggy Angus's cottage, Furlongs, near Firle, is full of light and air. A country cottage starts looking a little like the modernist architectural designs of his day. A Ravilious-inspired collage by contemporary artist John Stezaker, who is based in St Leonards and London, also avoids nostalgia and sentimentality. Ravilious's paring away of fusty detail resonates too with an austere photograph of Cuckmere Haven by Bill Brandt, who was a pupil of Man Ray's studio, and with a recent reduction of interior space created by Nancy Odufona in St Leonards.

John Stezaker (b.1949)

Mask (Film Portrait Collage) CCXVI, 2015

Collage

Courtesy of the artist and The Approach

Common Ground

Sussex was a retreat for some artists. However, it was also a place of work. Peggy Angus's painting of cement works near Lewes was likely influenced by the Communist art she encountered in Russia. For her interest in labour, she shares common ground with L.S. Lowry, an artist usually associated with the industrial North, but who painted a dilapidated windmill in Bexhill. Where some critics have accused him of being a 'provincial' artist, others have wanted to do away with the idea of a cultural 'centre'.

ROOM TWO (2)

[Purple Wall, straight ahead]

Luke Fildes (1843-1927)

Portrait of Annie Winifred Ellerman (Bryher), 1915

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

New Regionalism

Modernist movements were internationalist and sought to defy borderlines. However, there were some modernists who developed strong regional affiliations.

The first portrait on this wall is of Bryher (formerly Annie Winifred Ellerman), who was schooled in Eastbourne. Bryher was later photographed by Man Ray, co-produced and acted in the experimental film *Borderline* (1930) alongside Paul Robeson and modernist poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, Bryher's partner), and wrote a novel about the Battle of Hastings. Bryher's chosen name referred to one of the Isles of Scilly.

Identifying with an island on the nation's peripheries expressed ambivalence towards a heteronormative, patriarchal state.

Also on this wall is a portrait of sisters Frances Byng-Stamper and Caroline Lucas, who founded Miller's, a modern art gallery in Lewes. Bloomsbury critic Clive Bell opened the gallery in 1941. He declared his hope that Miller's might bring forth 'a new regionalism'. This would counter the clustering of power and art in London-based institutions. Both he and Bryher also used the idea of the region to oppose nationalist cultural flattening.

[Left to right, looking at the wall]

Cedric Morris (1889-1982)

Two Sisters, 1935

Oil on canvas

Cedric Morris was schooled in Eastbourne. This is a portrait of Frances Byng-Stamper and Caroline Lucas, the founders of Miller's Gallery in Lewes. In a catalogue for an exhibition

of his work in 1979, Morris called the painting *The English Upper Classes*.

Lent by Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales

Mary Elizabeth Stormont (1871-1962)

“Ye Days of Cunning Sticherie”, c. 1922 [Top]

The Little Blue Blind, c. 1920s [Bottom]

Watercolour on paper

Mary Stormont’s paintings show her enthusiasm for the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement.

She was a founding member of Rye Art Club. After her death her home became Rye Art Gallery. Stormont does not appear in many histories of British Art, likely because her power was more local and regional than national.

On loan from the Rye Art Gallery

Lady Anne Blunt (1837-1917)

Wilfred Scawen Blunt on Horseback, c. 1881

Oil on canvas

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, painted by his wife Lady Anne Blunt, was an aristocrat and activist who opposed British imperialist policy. He also wrote odes to Sussex and versified Arabic poetry. He and Lady Anne bred Arabian horses in Sussex. In 1914 he was visited by six modernist poets, including Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats, at his West Sussex home. They presented him with their poems and also a marble coffer by the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (also displayed in this exhibition).

Private Collection

Duncan Grant (1885-1978)

Julian Dressed as a Roman Soldier, 1920

Oil on canvas

Duncan Grant's pacifism in the First World War brought him to Charleston to work on the land. His portrait of Julian Bell, son of Vanessa Bell, refuses the machismo of wartime

propaganda and presents a challenge to imperialist posturing.

JWM Collection by kind permission of the Master and Fellows, St Peter's College, University of Oxford

Courage to Bloom

Modernists with affiliations with the industrial North of England often associated the South with aestheticism: with the pursuit of sensory pleasure, the retreat from modernity and the refusal to make socially useful art. The flower paintings on this wall might support this perspective. However, they also suggest a quiet politics.

Vanessa Bell's decision to paint lilies, symbols of aestheticism, soon after the First World War ended, may speak of her pacifist position. As if communicating a secret message, Gluck painted myrtle, a flower symbolising love and beauty, together with a scallop shell, which may signify the goddess Aphrodite. Edward Burra presented mallows, a weed that grows on wastelands; as with so much of his art, here he embraced what prim society wanted to repress.

Rebelliousness was not exclusively practiced by modernists. In the 1890s Mary Stormont, like Burra based in Rye, married without her parents' permission. Her arrangements of flowers are neither stuffy nor stilted and may be indicative of her independent spirit. The flower genre continues to be reimagined, as is shown in a recent work by Sussex-based Poppy Jones.

[Left to Right]

Mary Elizabeth Stormont (1871-1962)

Roses and Canterbury Bells, c.1940

Oil on board

On loan from the Rye Art Gallery

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

Lillies and Iris, c.1919

Oil on canvas

The Courtauld, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

Gluck (1895–1978)

Still Life with a Scallop Shell and Myrtle Blossom, 1972

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

Poppy Jones (b.1985)

White Tulips (Tuesday), 2024

Oil and watercolour on suede; soldered aluminium frame

On loan from a private collection, London.

Courtesy Herald St

Edward Burra (1905–1976)

Mallows, 1955-57

Watercolour on paper

Private Collection c/o Lefevre Fine Art Ltd

ROOM THREE (3)

[Straight ahead, standing in centre of room]

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Maternity, 1910

Hoptonwood stone

Scholars have suggested that this sculpture is likely to have been intended for a scheme imagined by Jacob Epstein and Eric Gill to build a modern-day 'Stonehenge' on the South Downs comprising 'colossal figures' carved in stone. It has also been proposed that the sculptors were imagining a sun temple, and that Maternity is perhaps wearing an ornament that can be seen on Hindu sculptures. Gill wrote of Epstein making a 'large figure in stone' at Ditchling, and it is possible he was referencing Maternity. The theme of birth was furthered in Epstein's Pett Level works, also in this room: in a culture perceived to be decadent and dying, Epstein was trying to 'birth' a new form of art.

Leeds Museums & Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery). Bought with the aid of grants from The Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and private benefactors, 1983

[Clockwise, left to right]

Charles Sims, RA (1873–1928)

Clio and the Children, 1913-15

Oil on canvas

In this painting, by Fittleworth-based Charles Sims, Clio, the goddess of history gives a lesson to children. In 1915, after losing his son in the First World War, Sims stained Clio's scroll red. He soon left for London where he experimented with a more modernist style. In 1917 a critic noted that the artist 'seems conscious that this is no time for romantic adventures in the Land of Fancy.'

Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

Desmond Chute (1895-1962)

Madonna and Child, 1920-21

Hoptonwood Stone

The First World War interrupted Desmond Chute's studies at the Slade, London. He moved to Ditchling and was a member of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic. The pared back aesthetic of this carving was very different from what was taught in art schools at the time. The Guild's formal austerity aligned with its interest in simpler ways of living that 'cooled down' the aggrandising ambitions of industrialists. Some members of the Guild, including David Jones, whose work is displayed in another room, were war veterans who had seen the harm industrial warfare had done.

Brighton & Hove Museums

Sacred Stones

Jacob Epstein carved his enormous *Maternity* sculpture in 1910. In that year he was collaborating with Ditchling-based sculptor and letter-cutter Eric Gill on an idea to make a '*twentieth century Stonehenge*' comprising '*colossal figures*' carved in stone. It was intended for the grounds of what would be Virginia Woolf's first house in Sussex, close to where Peggy Angus painted her cement works.

The never-realised scheme was part an effort to create a 'new religion', inspired by Indian sacred art photographed by Ananda Coomaraswamy. Epstein's *Sun Goddess Crouching* (c. 1910) suggests that he might have been imagining a sun temple. A critic at the time thought his head of an 'Eternal Child' (*Rom*, 1910) looked like a Japanese god. Its inscription references Romilly John, son of Augustus John, but may also refer to the Romany tradition and classical Rome.

From 1913-15 Epstein resided in Pett Level, where he carved a baby being born onto a dark stone. His relief is compared with a coffer made by Henri Gaudier-Brzeska in 1914. It was gifted by poet Ezra Pound to the West Sussex aristocrat Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who associated the design

with ancient Egypt. Pound was also known to Desmond Chute, who in 1920-1 created a relief for the chapel of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic in Ditchling.

The pre-First World War sculptures are examples of modernism at its most iconoclastic. The sculptors' sentiments regarding female fertility and uses of art made outside the West are challenged by other artworks in this show.

[Top]

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Study for Man and Woman, 1913

Graphite and orange wash, on orange-brown paper

This drawing, likely made by Epstein when he was at Pett Level, is based on a Madagascan grave marker.

The British Museum

[Bottom]

John Lake (1903–1975)

Untitled: Figures in a Landscape - Cuckmere, Undated

Pastel on paper

John Lake was the curator at Towner from 1947 to 1958. He was succeeded by the artist William Gear.

Towner Eastbourne

[Right]

Keith Vaughan (1912-1977)

Standing Figure, 1962

Oil on canvas

Towner Eastbourne

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Rom, 1910

Limestone

Jacob Epstein told a critic that this work was to be part of a 'great temple', which would feature 'a group apotheosising Man and Woman, around a central shrine'. The workbook of Joseph Cribb, the apprentice of sculptor and letter-cutter Eric Gill, shows that Rom was at least partly made at Ditchling.

Lent by Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales

Ethel Mairet (1872-1952)

Hand-woven wall hanging or room divider with stripes in natural linen, clear cellophane and black cotton, plain weave, warp and weft strips, 1940s

Linen, cellophane and cotton

Through her travels and global networks Ditchling-based Ethel Mairet gathered textile samples and created a travelling textile library for colleges and schools, believing that art should not only be based in London museums.

She experimented with abstract design and with bringing old and new materials together.

On loan from the Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts

Ivon Hitchens (1893-1979)

Day's Rest, Day's Work, 1960

Wax and oil on four canvas panels

This large painting was gifted to the University of Sussex in the 1960s following a visit in which the artist admired how the campus, designed by Basil Spence, was situated in the surrounding countryside. On the first two panels are images of a mother, baby, child and father; a youth seems to be diving out of the frame. The last two panels feature woodcutters. Abstraction combines with traditional themes, 'Sussex' with 'Modernism', and the title prioritises rest over work, a family life over relentless labour.

University of Sussex Special Collections

Hilary Bourne and Barbara Allen

(Bourne: 1909-2004. Allen: 1903-1972)

Royal Festival Hall Curtain sample (large white: with red, yellow and blue stripes), 1951

Woven naturally dyed wool

Hilary Bourne spent much of her childhood in Ditchling and founded Ditchling Museum with her sister Joanna. With Barbara Allen, she designed a hanging for the Festival of Britain, bringing colour to the concrete Royal Festival Hall.

By kind permission of Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft

Margaret Scott

Omulolo //5, 2019

Felted and stitched textile

Contemporary textile artist Margaret Scott is based in St Leonards. As with many other artists in this show Scott's concerns exceed regional and national boundaries. Her wall hanging is inspired by the Ntshak raffia designs from former Zaire and is part of the 'Omulolo' series of textiles produced

in France and in her Hastings studio to raise money for a charity that supports orphans in Uganda.

On loan from the artist

William Gear (1915-1997)

Vertical Feature September 1961, 1961

Oil on canvas

William Gear was curator of Towner from 1958-64. When he sought to end the gallery's 'Pictures of Sussex' collection policy, the former curator, Arthur Reeve-Fowkes, called Towner a 'temple of anarchistic art', and associated abstraction with the political left. Gear remarked that opposition to abstract painting was a 'condition of life in provincial towns.' Gear's Vertical Feature is less attached to a particular location than the large Ivon Hitchens work in this room. Gear attributed the 'tight tough construction' of his paintings to his upbringing in Scotland.

Towner Eastbourne

Harold Mockford (1932-2023)

Belle Tout, 1966

Oil on hardboard

Harold Mockford, who was based in Eastbourne, called himself a 'provincial artist' when comparing himself to 'avant-garde' abstract painter and Towner curator William Gear. After two world wars, 'provincial' took on positive connotations, signifying difference from a metropolitan elite, and refusal of aggressive ambition.

Towner Eastbourne

Modernist Mediators

This room offers several representations of figures in landscapes. The largest work is by Ivon Hitchens, who was based in Lavington Common, near Petworth. He gifted his painting *Day's Rest, Day's Work* (1960) to the recently built University of Sussex.

Hitchens's painting combines abstraction with colours reminiscent of regional landscapes, as well as

representations of family life and forestry. It can be contrasted with the more radical abstraction of William Gear, who tended not to represent particular locations. Unlike Hitchens, and also Keith Vaughan (whose work is displayed in this show too), Gear seldom included human forms in his abstract paintings. He considered both of these artists 'Romantic' and attributed the 'tight tough construction' of his own work to his upbringing in Scotland.

Gear was curator of Towner from 1958-64. When he sought to end the gallery's 'Pictures of Sussex' collecting policy, the former curator, Arthur Reeve-Fowkes, called Towner a 'temple of anarchistic art'. He also associated abstraction with Communism. Gear remarked that opposition to abstract painting was a '*condition of life in provincial towns*'.

Modernism required its mediators, and Ditchling weaver Ethel Mairet was one: she favoured abstract patterns and combined old and new fabrics (linen with cellophane). Like other textile artists in this room, she drew on materials and techniques gathered from different parts of the world.

Pagan Passions

Ditchling-based Frank Brangwyn created enormous panels for Christ's Hospital School, Horsham. One, completed around 1920, shows Saint Wilfrid teaching the pagan South Saxons at Selsey how to fish. Modernist painter Keith Vaughan was schooled at Christ's Hospital. In 1973, after enjoying a Kurt Schwitters exhibition, he remarked 'Had I seen these instead of Brangwyn, what sort of an artist should I be?'

Just before the Second World War, Vaughan spent several 'pagan, sensual days' at Pagham beach. The photographs he took record his escape from a heteronormative and militant culture. His photograph (later painting) of men throwing at a wave contrasts with Brangwyn's image of rocks being thrown at the martyr St Stephen.

[Orange wall, Left to Right]

Keith Vaughan (1912–1977)

[Top]

Photograph, used as a book illustration, of a male figure covered by a wet cloth, 1966

Half tone lithograph in black on white paper

[Bottom, right]

Photograph, used as a book illustration, of three male figures/bathers, 1966

Half tone lithograph in black on white paper

[Bottom, left]

Lotus Eater, 1939

Silver print on Agfa Brovira gloss paper

School of Art, Museum and Galleries, Aberystwyth University

Keith Vaughan (1912–1977)

Figure Throwing at a Wave, 1950

Gouache on paper

The Ingram Collection of Modern British Art

Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956)

The Martyrdom of St Stephen, 'Lay not this sin to their charge', 1913

Conté crayon and pencil on tinted paper

On loan from Christ's Hospital

Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956)

St Wilfrid, First Bishop of Selsey Teaching the South Saxons, 1915

Conté crayon and pencil on tinted paper

On loan from Christ's Hospital

[Stone sculptures in centre of room. Left to right from front view]

Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915)

Coffer, 1914

Marble

This sculpture was gifted by Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats, and four other poets to Victorian West Sussex aristocrat and activist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who called it an 'absurd Futurist relief'.

Private Collection

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Sun Goddess Crouching, c. 1910

Limestone

This sculpture was made around the time when Jacob Epstein and Eric Gill were imagining a sun temple for a plot near Lewes.

Victoria & Albert Museum, London. On loan from Nottingham City Museums and Galleries

Wilby Hart (1881-1967)

Sprouting Seed, c.1948

Carved pyrophyllite

Wilby Hart was one of a group of artistic women who lived on Enys Road, Eastbourne, and who defended modernism in the town.

Towner Eastbourne

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Flenite Relief, 1913

Serpentine

This sculpture was made when Jacob Epstein was at Pett Level.

Leeds Museums & Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery). Bought with the aid of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Art Collection Fund, the MLA, The Art Fund, the National Heritage Memorial Fund and private benefactors, 1983

ROOM FOUR (4)

[White room, clockwise left to right]

North and South

Edward Wadsworth has been claimed both for Sussex and Yorkshire. His father ran a worsted spinning mill near Bradford, and he wanted his son to take up the family business. Wadsworth refused. He signed the Vorticist manifesto in 1914 and depicted industrial cities. He moved to Maresfield, East Sussex, in 1929. The paintings he made there might be viewed as both a remembrance and rejection of the life that he had left behind. Instead of running a mill, he chose to make objects that defied the imperative to be useful. Tools and machines become objects to be looked at, although they often seem to have an unnerving, uncanny life of their own.

[Top]

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Drydocked for scaling and painting, 1918

Woodcut on Japan paper

The British Museum. Bequeathed by Campbell Dodgson

[Bottom]

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Blast Furnaces, 1919

Woodcut on Japan paper

The British Museum. Presented by the Contemporary Art Society

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Light Sections, 1940

Tempera on panel

Brighton & Hove Museums

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Offing, 1935

Tempera on panel

This painting is similar to a panel Edward Wadsworth made for the Queen Mary liner in 1935. Duncan Grant also submitted work for the project, but his paintings were refused.

Bristol Museums

[Top]

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Lord Mayor's Show, 1936

Poster, ink on paper

Edward Wadsworth was commissioned to design a poster for the Lord Mayor's Show. Copies of the poster were withdrawn following an outcry that they were promoting militarism.

Similar decorative ribbons to the ones in the poster appear in his mural design for the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill.

London Transport Museum

[Bottom]

Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949)

Study for the Bexhill Mural, 1935

Watercolour and pencil on paper

Courtesy of the De La Warr Pavilion Charitable Trust, Bexhill-on-Sea. This study was generously purchased by the Pavilion Trust in 1998.

Reasonably Sheltered Position

In the late 1920s and early 1930s David Jones painted a series of paintings from a rented beach house near Portslade that together read like a kind of diary. Here he also started writing his modernist prose-poem *In Parenthesis* (1937), which was based on his First World War experiences.

Jones used watery metaphors to describe memories he was not quite in control of: 'the memory lets escape what is over and above as spilled bitterness'. Looking at to France, the location of his war memories, the sea sometimes seems perilously close to spilling into his room.

Jones wanted to look 'out on to the world from a reasonably sheltered position'. His wish for shelter connects with novelist Virginia Woolf's idea that a writer needed a 'room of one's own'. For Woolf, retreat was not opposed to activism but was rather a precursor to it, allowing one to think.

The theme of dissident retreat continues to resonate today. Hastings-based Becky Beasley creates protective enclosures in her sculptural installations. Her work challenges normative ways of seeing while resisting the desensitising bombardments of modern life.

David Jones (1895-1974)

Terrace Overlooking the Sea (Terrace, Portslade, View from No.5), 1927

Watercolour and pencil on paper

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (On loan from a Private Collection, 2023)

David Jones (1895-1974)

Evening by the Sea, 1927

Pencil and watercolour on paper

The Principal and Fellows of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford

David Jones (1895-1974)

The Terrace, 1929

Graphite and watercolour on paper

Tate: Presented by the Contemporary Art Society, 1940

David Jones (1895-1974)

Evening Sea, Portslade, (View from No.5), 1929

Gouache and pencil on paper

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (On loan from a Private Collection, 2023)

David Jones (1895-1974)

Seascape from a Terrace, 1929

Watercolour on paper

Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

David Jones (1895-1974)

Sea View, 1930

Oil on board

Towner Eastbourne

David Jones (1895-1974)

Rough Sea, 1931

Oil on wood panel

The Principal and Fellows of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford

Laetitia Yhap (b. 1941)

Shattered Windowpane and Feather, 1974

Watercolour on paper

Laetitia Yhap painted her shattered window in 1974, at a time when she was sharing a studio in Hastings with Jeffery Camp. It may suggest frustrations with her working environment, but also a wish to break out of the way in which she was making art at the time. Soon after, she would start her best-known body of work which focuses on the fishing community in Hastings.

Collection of the artist

[Centre of room]

Becky Beasley (b. 1975)

Je dors, je travaille (Fictional Characters), 2021

Ceramic, book, glass-effect plexi-glass box, vintage stool

Courtesy of the artist and Plan B Cluj, Berlin

Becky Beasley (b. 1975)

Je dors, je travaille (Encyclopedia of Photography), 2021

Ceramic, book, glass-effect plexi-glass box, vintage stool

Courtesy of the artist and Plan B Cluj, Berlin

[back wall and continue clockwise, left to right]

Diving and Dreaming

Surrealist Edith Rimmington trained at Brighton School of Art and resided in Bexhill at the end of her life. For her, the sea was a 'vast water brain' and the coast a place for dreaming. Her blurring of distinctions between humans and other species connects with paintings by Jean Cooke and Gluck. Cooke, who worked at Birling Gap, drew synergies between the female body and a sea cave. Gluck's comment on her painting of a fish head makes it seem a self-portrait. 'I am living daily with death and decay'. Her wish to transcend death through art made more pressing her campaign against corroding commercial paints.

Gluck (1895–1978)

Credo: Rage, rage against the dying of the light...,

1970-73

Oil on canvas

Private collection courtesy of the Fine Art Society

Jean Cooke (1927-2008)

Cave Painting II, c.1970

Oil on canvas

Piano Nobile, London

Edith Rimmington (1902-1986)

Prophylactic Seamouth, 1947

Crayon on paper

Southampton City Art Gallery

Edith Rimmington (1902-1986)

Window, c.1960

Photograph

Surrealist Edith Rimmington took many photographs of objects found on the Bexhill seashore in the 1960s. This photograph shows the inside of her home.

Private Collection

Marion Milner (1900–1998)

A Thought Too Big for its Concept, 1990

Paint on canvas

On loan from the British Psychoanalytical Society Archive

[Above]

‘Thunder over the Sea’, from On Not Being Able To Paint (1950), Routledge.

Illustration by Marion Milner, reproduced by Tom Ormond, 2025

Paint on wall

Marion Milner was a psychoanalyst and artist, who began to write her book *On Not Being Able to Paint in Sussex* in 1939. She reflected on why, when she tried to draw Thorney Island near Chichester, the beautiful scene became 'a huge shadowy Indian drum', a 'thunder bird of New Mexican Indians', and a 'snake rising up out of the sea.' This, and other drawings, became a means of reckoning with her internal monsters. Each mark could be read for multiple meanings, a point that resonates with the title of her painting *A Thought Too Big for its Concept*.

Courtesy of the estate of Marion Milner

Still Point

For many modernists in Sussex stillness was important for creativity and self-reflection. In quiet spaces, Marion Milner sought out the causes of her anger. Virginia Woolf (whose writing Ane Thon Knutsen's recent work responds to) balanced defiant action with thoughtful reverie.

Contemporary artist A T Kabe Wilson, in an essay called 'On Being Still' (2020), an allusion to Woolf's 1926 essay 'On Being Ill', explores the politics of stillness alongside a critique of Bloomsbury art. He describes a series of paintings he made amidst the Covid pandemic, news of migrant boats and the Black Lives Matter protests. He dialogues with Vanessa Bell's response to Brighton's Victorian West Pier. Reflecting on Woolf's writing and Bell's *Newhaven Lighthouse* (c. 1938), he considers the implications of representing a still Channel in the context of global turbulence.

[Top left]

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

Newhaven Lighthouse, 1938

Oil on board

Charleston

[Bottom left]

A T Kabe Wilson (b. 1985)

Newhaven Lighthouse, 2020

Acrylic on canvas board

Collection of the artist

[Middle]

A T Kabe Wilson (b. 1985)

The Waves from Palace Pier, 2020

Acrylic on canvas board

Collection of the artist

[Top right]

A T Kabe Wilson (b. 1985)

Lamp Post, 2020

Acrylic on canvas board

Collection of the artist

[Bottom right]

A T Kabe Wilson (b. 1985)

West Pier, 2020

Acrylic on canvas board

Collection of the artist

[Right]

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

West Pier, 1936

Oil on canvas

Charleston

Ane Thon Knutsen (b. 1984)

The Mark on The Wall//Punctum, 2018

Letterpress print on paper

In Virginia Woolf 's short story 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917), a daydreamer ponders what a mark they see on a wall might be; their reverie is broken by another person, who plans to buy a wartime newspaper. With one typographical glyph, contemporary artist Ane Thon Knutsen captures Woolf 's interest in finding a place for silent pause. It is part of a series of ten different full stops that responds to Woolf 's process of typesetting and printing her story.

Courtesy of the artist

ROOM FIVE (5)

[Red walls]

Horticultural Einstein

Edward James, who had an estate in West Dean, is best known as a collector of surrealist art, however he was also a poet, novelist and keen gardener.

James horrified The Society of Sussex Downsmen in the 1940s by planting Monkey Puzzle trees on the Downs. He grew English roses in the Mexican jungle. In his 1937 novel *The Gardener who Saw God*, he explored the possibility of hybridising plants from different countries. In another of his writings, a character based on the author is described as the 'world's budding horticultural Einstein'. James hated an over-pruned garden, identified with his wild orchids, and lamented the stifling societal seedbed in which he was forced to grow.

Surrealist artists who came to visit James, including Russian Pavel Tchelitchew and California-born Carlyle Brown, delighted in the wildness of the estate.

The interest in hybridisation that can be seen in James's writing is also apparent in their work: they fuse human and plant forms.

[straight ahead, in floor-plinth]

Dunstan Pruden (1907-1974)

Untitled: Brass and Copper Mask, undated

Brass and copper

This handcrafted object combines a medieval with a modern aesthetic. Its uses are unclear, but Dunstan Pruden was known to have made metal masks for mimes written by Hilary Pepler, a fellow member of the Catholic Guild in Ditchling.

By kind permission of Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft

[from text panel, anticlockwise]

Pavel Tchelitchew (1898-1957)

Illustration for The Gardener Who Saw God, 1937

Pen and ink

On loan from West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

Pavel Tchelitchew (1898-1957)

Study for Hide and Seek, 1939

Pen and black ink and wash

On loan from West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

Pavel Tchelitchew (1898-1957)

Hide and Seek, 1934

Oil on canvas

On loan from West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

Carlyle Brown (1920-1963)

View of the Park at West Dean, 1948

Oil on canvas

Carlyle Brown remembered that at West Dean he slept in the room in which Salvador Dalí once stayed and he also claimed to have used his paints. He got into an argument with Edward James when he said that it was the magical landscape at West Dean that inspired his work and not the influence of his host. Brown's face is at the forefront of View of the Park at West Dean, and the shape of his hand echoes the form of a tree. The face of his wife Margery is on the right. A small figure of James is set at a distance.

On loan from West Dean College of Arts and Conservation

[Turn to wall behind. Clockwise, left to right]

Alexi Marshall (b. 1995)

Bloodsucker Head, 2024

Ink on Kozuke paper

Alexi Marshall is based in Hastings. This work references the 'the green man', a mythical figure who is remembered in folk festivals and artworks made in Sussex and beyond.

'Bloodsucker' is a kind of green man in which foliage emerges from all orifices.

Courtesy the artist

Magically Situated

Artworks in this section offer a contrast to the austere modernist sculptures and abstract paintings that are found elsewhere in this exhibition.

The wall of goddesses includes a tapestry designed by Edward Burne-Jones who had a home in Rottingdean and was part of the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. It was made by Morris & Co, founded by William Morris. In 1914 modernist critic Clive Bell said Morris was 'provincial' because 'his mind could rarely escape from the place and age in which it was formed'.

Also on display is a Spring goddess by Ditchling-based painter, embroiderer and writer of Sussex plays Amy Sawyer. She had interests in regional folklore and is much less known than her modernist neighbours. Her works are compared with contemporary witches, goddesses and powerful mythical figures by Jennifer Binnie, Delaine Le Bas, Alexi Marshall and Geraldine Swayne.

Although different from the modernisms explored in other parts of this show, there are resonances between the works presented here and forms of surrealism that embraced botany and magic, and which explored relationships between humans, plants and animals. This display includes a 1980s body print signed by a neo-naturist and a surrealist.

[Top left]

Amy Sawyer (1863-1945)

In the Twilight, undated

Watercolour on paper

Amy Sawyer wrote an article for the Sussex County Magazine about witches and was herself described as a

witch. She wrote Sussex plays featuring women who got the better of oppressive men.

With kind permission of Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

[Bottom left]

Amy Sawyer (1863-1945)

Blossom Trees patchwork collage, undated

Embroidered collage

When the chemical paints Amy Sawyer used damaged her hands she turned to embroidery.

By kind permission of Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft

[Top middle]

Pierre Roy (1880-1950)

Fairy Pipe, 1925–28

Oil on canvas

Charleston

[Bottom middle]

Geraldine Swayne (b. 1965)

Witchy Winchelsea, 2023

Glass paint on glass

Geraldine Swayne is a contemporary artist based in St Leonards.

On loan from the collection of Mr & Mrs Lempp

[Top right]

John Stezaker (b.1949)

Spell, 2024

Collage

Courtesy of the artist and The Approach

[Bottom right]

Samira Abbassy (b.1965)

Infatuation with Exotic Fruit, 1989

Mixed media painting on paper

Samira Abbassy, who is currently based in New York, made this work while in Hastings.

Towner Eastbourne

[Top]

Christine Binnie (b.1955)

Ancient Sussex Slag, 2025

Earthenware with gold lustre

Courtesy of the artist

[Bottom]

Christine Binnie (b.1955)

Provincial Roots for Hope, 2025

Earthenware with gold lustre

Courtesy of the artist

Delaine Le Bas (b. 1965)

Medusa After Caravaggio, 2018

Embroidery and embellishment on fabric

Delaine Le Bas lives in Worthing, where she was also born. Her art often engages with her Romani heritage. The mythical Medusa, a symbol of female rage and resistance, often appears in her work, and is here powerfully rendered in embroidery.

Courtesy of the artist and Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix, London

Amy Sawyer (1863-1945)

Gentle Spring Brings her Garden Stuff to Market, 1896

Oil on canvas

On loan from the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum,
Bournemouth

Jennifer Binnie (b. 1958)

Red Woman, 2023

Oil on canvas with carved and burned wooden frame

Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery London, Rome, New York

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)

Pomona, 1886

Cotton, wool, and silk, slit and double interlocking tapestry
weave

The Rector and Scholars of Exeter College in the University
of Oxford

Alexi Marshall (b. 1995)

Soul Vessel, 2024

Ink on Kozuke paper

Courtesy of the artist

[Top]

Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971)

Untitled (8 December), 1968

Watercolour on paper

Grace Pailthorpe came to Sussex in her final years with fellow artist Reuben Mednikoff (who changed his name to Richard Pailthorpe in 1948). She previously exhibited with the surrealists, and her creative practice was informed by psychoanalysis. She would paint and draw automatically, and then analyse what the result revealed about her psyche. In Sussex, these interests intertwined with her reading of occult philosophies.

Private Collection

[Bottom]

Unknown (Kibbo Kift)

Pitdown Man Skull, Kibbo Kift, 1925

Plaster

The Kibbo Kift Foundation

Body-print made by Jennifer Binnie (b. 1958)

transferring to paper the markings painted on her naked body by the surrealist artist Conroy Maddox, also with the assistance of Christine Binnie, as part of a Neo Naturist event at the James Birch Gallery, London on 30 July 1986

A Beautiful Woman, 1986

Water-based body-paint on paper

This print documents a meeting between the Neo Naturists and a surrealist. The founding members of the Neo Naturists, who painted their bodies and performed rituals in public places, were Jennifer Binnie, Christine Binnie and Wilma Johnson. Christine was working as an artists' model in London when she met Johnson. The Binnies grew up in Wannock, and some of their performances drew on festivities and cultures they grew up with.

Courtesy England & Co. London

Jennifer Binnie (b. 1958)

Crying Girl, 2023

Oil on canvas with carved wooden frame

Jennifer Binnie is based in Jevington. She is one of the founding members of the Neo Naturists and her art often explores relationships between humans, animals and the environment.

Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery London, Rome, New York

Jennifer Binnie (b.1958)

Forest Film, c.1982

Film

This film, in which the artist appears dressed in a suit, was made in the woods near Folkington. Grayson Perry did the filming. The soundtrack is 'A Forest' (1980) by The Cure, a band that formed in Crawley.

Courtesy Richard Saltoun Gallery London, Rome, New York

Tony Penrose (b.1947)

Strange Behaviour, 1980

Film

Antony Penrose is the son of Lee Miller and Roland Penrose who were based in Chiddingly. This film, Strange Behaviour, furthers his father's surrealist interests in the countryside as an antidote to the drudgery of modern work in the city.

Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex

[in floor-plinth]

Angus McBean (1904-1990)

Kibbo Kift photograph album, c. 1930

Photographic album

Unknown (Kibbo Kift)

Pitdown Man Totem, c. 1924

Photographic print

The Kibbo Kift, formed in 1920 by John Hargrave, was an all-age, mixed gender, alternative to the Scouts - an organisation for young boys that Hargrave deemed to be militaristic, imperialistic and nationalistic. The Kibbo Kift opposed industrial modernity and idealised openair activity, camping and craft. Their designs combined modernist abstract patterns with mythological iconography. Sussex sites, including the Long Man of Wilmington, were important to their rituals. They carried a plaster cast of the skull of the Piltdown Man, a supposedly ancient ancestor found in Sussex, as a totem.

Collection of Annebella Pollen

ROOM SIX (6)

[Blue wall, Arnold Daghani. Left to right]

[Top left]

Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)

Hospital Sketch / 'Head of a Clown' (28/4/1982), 1982

Pen on paper

University of Sussex Special Collections / Sussex
Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

[Bottom left]

Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)

**Hospital Sketch / 'Where Angels Fear to Tread' (12/5/82),
1982**

Pen on paper

University of Sussex Special Collections / Sussex
Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

[Bottom right]

Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)

**Hospital Sketch / 'Former Occupier of the Bed' (13/5/82),
1982**

Pen on paper

University of Sussex Special Collections / Sussex
Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

[Middle]

Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)

Homage to artist Duncan Grant '93 this year', 1979

Paint on paper

Arnold Daghani created a series of 'homages' to artists, writers and musicians he admired, including Duncan Grant and Edward Burra.

University of Sussex Special Collections / Sussex

Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

[in wall-case]

Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)

Matters of Ethics, page dated 11 September 1980

Book; with pen and crayon

Arnold Daghani was born in Romania in 1909. In 1942 he and his wife were imprisoned in a Nazi labour camp in Ukraine; they escaped in 1943. His final home, where he spent the last years of his life, was in Hove.

He wanted his flat in Palmeira Square to become a museum to his enormous archive. The collection was eventually taken up by the University of Sussex. This included paintings, drawings, sculptures and many handmade books. The pages shown here present a self-portrait and a statement of the artist's beliefs.

University of Sussex Special Collections / Sussex
Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

[Right]

Arnold Daghani (1909-1985)

The Gallery Owner, 1967

Collage on paper University of Sussex Special Collections /
Sussex Weidenfeld Institute of Jewish Studies

[To the right, clockwise left to right]

Lee Miller (1907-1977)

**Yen and Philippe Hiquily, Farleys Garden, East Sussex,
England, 1963**

Photograph, C-type print

Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex

[Top]

Lee Miller (1907-1977)

**Model (Celia Thellusson nee Walsh) and Grandpa White,
Farley Farm, East Sussex, 1953**

Photograph, C-type print

Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex

[Bottom]

Lee Miller (1907-1977)

Saul Steinburg, Wilmington, East Sussex, 1952

Photograph, C-type print

Lee Miller Archives, East Sussex

Sussex Satirists

Lee Miller moved to Farley Farm in Chiddingfold with surrealist artist and collector Roland Penrose in 1949. Her photographs playfully mock reverential attitudes (held by many modernists) to supposedly ancient landscapes: she captured Saul Steinberg pretending to draw the Long Man of Wilmington. A snap of a model beaming at a man who worked on the farm pokes fun at the association of country life with erotic renewal. Miller's pastiche of Paul Gauguin's paintings of Tahiti challenges both patriarchal and imperialist structures of thinking.

Edward Burra also enjoyed satirising Sussex, and he ridiculed curators who put on shows of Sussex art. He was interested in other parts of the world: London, Paris, Harlem, Mexico. He frequently denounced twee or traditional parts of the South-East: its cosy teashops, antiques and cobbled streets. However, there were parts of the region that strongly drew him. He enjoyed the pubs and bawdy entertainments of Hastings. Like others in this room (Jeff Keen and Arnold Daghani), he deviated from presenting healthful visions of seaside towns.

Edward Burra (1905–1976)

Hastings Pub, 1971

Pencil and watercolour on paper

Courtesy of Julian Barnes

Edward Burra (1905–1976)

Drag Queen, 1972

Etching; ink on paper

On loan from the Rye Art Gallery

Edward Burra (1905–1976)

At the Cambridge Arms, 1972

Etching; ink on paper

On loan from the Rye Art Gallery

Jeff Keen (1923-2012)

LAFF, 1966

Enamel on hardboard panel

On loan from Philip and Charlotte Colbert

Jeff Keen (1923-2012)

Dr Gaz Against the Art of Cinema! Early 1970s

Collage, ink and gouache on paper

On loan from Stella Keen, The Jeff Keen Archive

Jeff Keen (1923-2012)

**Gazlandscape [photographed at Whitehawk rubbish tip,
Sheepcote Valley, Brighton], 1976**

Photocollage and ink on paper

On loan from Stella Keen, The Jeff Keen Archive

Jeff Keen (1923-2012)

Silverhead Lives! Promotional photograph for White Dust [photographed at Whitehawk rubbish tip, Sheepcote Valley, Brighton], 1972

Photograph

On loan from Stella Keen, The Jeff Keen Archive

Out of the Ruins

The most famous artists in Sussex orientated towards rural and coastal retreats. However, the surrealism and dada-inspired countercultural art of the 1960s-80s was often made in urban areas.

Brighton-based Jeff Keen is best known as a film-maker, but he also made paintings, sculptural assemblages and collages. He merged Brighton's seedy entertainments with American pop culture. He also made art at Whitehawk rubbish tip. In one of his '*GAZLandscapes*' the vista looks bare, almost bomb-blasted.

Keen's surreal collages (one includes a cutting that reads 'Frankenstein in Sussex') might be compared with Arnold Daghani's experiments, including his composite portrait of a gallery owner. Daghani derided the commercial art market, and applauded artists who avoided what he called 'the whoring art world'. In 1982 he made a set of surreal sketches, showing imprints on pillows and empty beds, from Brighton Hospital.

Keen and Daghani often made use of found objects. So did the late Damian Le Bas, who had a home in Worthing with artist Delaine Le Bas. Referencing Romani and Traveller cultures, he worked in a style that he called 'gypsy dada'. The imagery he inscribed on his reimagined globes over spills national and regional borders.

Jeff Keen (1923-2012)

Spectacles Case, 1962

Found box, found spectacles, black paint

On loan from Stella Keen, The Jeff Keen Archive

Art Workers Co-operative: Michael Jones, Christopher Robinson and Simon Barber

**A Better Life for All. 2/14 panels from 'Union and Peace'.
'The Spirit of Liberty' (panel 7) and 'Recognition and
Achievement' (panel 8). Eastbourne International
Workers Mural, 1976**

Paint on panels

This 14-panel painting was once displayed in the Transport and General Workers' Union Convalescence Centre in Eastbourne, built between 1974 and 1976 (now The View Hotel). The Centre was designed to offer holidays and recuperation for workers and their families. The mural was collectively made in the 1970s by the Art Workers Co-operative. It told the story of trade unionism in Britain, beginning with rural workers in the fields and including the Jarrow Crusade and the Spanish Civil War.

On loan from Unite the Union

[Centre of room, floor-plinths]

Damian Le Bas (1963-2017)

Frontier du Lux, 2016

Acrylic pen on found globe, plastic base

Courtesy of the estate of Damian Le Bas and Yamamoto
Keiko Rochaix, London

Damian Le Bas (1963-2017)

Gypsyland Roma DaDa, 2014

Acrylic pen on found globe

Courtesy of the estate of Damian Le Bas and Yamamoto
Keiko Rochaix, London

Damian Le Bas (1963-2017)

Romani Embassy, 2017

Acrylic pen on found globe, electric cord with plug

Courtesy of the estate of Damian Le Bas and Yamamoto
Keiko Rochaix, London

[Pink wall, left to right]

Anything Will Happen

'A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL' appears over white cliffs and a sparkling sea. Around 1976, this hopeful painted message enlivened a new Convalescence Centre for the Transport and General Workers' Union in Eastbourne.

There are many examples in Sussex of architectural projects designed to bring the benefits afforded by the few to a wider number of people. The 1935 De La Warr Pavilion offered its visitors the benefits of ample space and light. Basil Spence was commissioned to design the 1960s University of Sussex campus as part of an effort to expand the numbers of students admitted into higher education. His plan incorporated references to the ruins of Western civilisation, suggesting an intention to remember and build a better world. The campus appears in a painting by Julian Bell, grandson of Vanessa Bell, and son of Quentin Bell, who taught art history there.

In the 1990s St Mary in the Castle, in Hastings, was transformed into an arts venue.

The inscription at the bottom of one of Gus Cummins's paintings of its interior gestures towards future possibility and change: 'Anything will happen'.

Julian Bell (b. 1952)

Campus, 1995

Oil on canvas

Although the painting features buildings that resemble those at the University of Sussex, it was not intended as a comment on the history of that place. The artist has described how it reflects, more abstractly, on knowledge itself. The bridge-like structure over his campus, stretching out towards the hills, raises questions of where truth is to be found.

Courtesy of Brian Hinton

Gus Cummins (b. 1943)

The Cupola of St Mary in the Castle, 1992

Watercolour

On loan from a private collection

László Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946)

Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea: the foyer looking towards the south staircase, 1936

Photograph

Bexhill's De La Warr Pavilion (1935) was designed by German-Jewish émigré Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff. Its bright and airy qualities were to give the worker some respite from the noise and stresses of life in the city. A photograph of the building by Bauhaus artist László Moholy-Nagy captures the surrounding older houses reflected in the modern glass.

Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Collections

[White wall. Anticlockwise, right to left]

Larry Achiampong (b. 1984)

Reliquary 2, 2020

Single channel 4K video with stereo sound

Courtesy of the artist

Palimpsest

Larry Achiamong's film, *Reliquary 2* (2020), was made in response to the Covid pandemic. Brighton's ruined West Pier provides an evocative backdrop for a spaceman's reflections on the inequalities of contemporary life. This solitary figure has something in common with the modernist who looked at dominant cultures from a critical position. At the same time, the film orientates towards the future and departs from the art of the past.

David Bowie appears dressed as a spaceman, and also as a Pierrot on Pett Level beach, in his video for *Ashes to Ashes* (1980). He suggested that the song communicated 'nostalgia for a future'. Bowie might be described as a 'popular modernist', bringing experimental form to a wide audience. Pett Level was also where Jacob Epstein was first 'fired' to make his iconic sculpture *The Rock Drill* (c. 1913-5). It was more recently visited by Sophie Barber, whose playful postmodernism offers a contrast to Epstein's heroics and Bowie's melancholy clown.

Placing these works together reiterates an idea, presented throughout this exhibition, that places are multi-storied and

constantly changing palimpsests. Sussex, always and ever in flux, continues to be reimagined through the eyes of different artists.

David Bowie (1947-2016)

Ashes to Ashes, 1980

Music video

In this video, co-directed by David Mallet, David Bowie appears on the beach at Pett Level with Steve Strange, Darla Jane Gilroy and Judith Frankland.

Parlophone Records. © Jones/Tintoretto Entertainment Company, LLC.

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Study for The Rock Drill, c.1913

Charcoal on paper

Tate: Purchased 1960

Sophie Barber (b. 1996)

Franz at Pett Level, 2020

Oil on canvas

Franz West is an Austrian sculptor, known for his large abstract constructions. Barber's small-scale paintings often incorporate art historical figures into her immediate surroundings.

Courtesy Alison Jacques

Sophie Barber (b. 1996)

Kendrick on his way back from Camber Sands, 2021

Oil on canvas

Sophie Barber, who was born in Hastings and now works there, imagines musician Kendrick Lamar leaving Camber Sands. This postmodern play on popular culture and celebrity photography offers an engaging contrast to the heritage industry that focuses on properties artists once lived in. Barber imagines artists coming to places they never visited.

Courtesy of the Roden Family

[Credit panel]

Sussex Modernism

This exhibition has been curated by Dr Hope Wolf, University of Sussex. It draws on her book *Sussex Modernism* (Yale University Press, 2025).

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