

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## MODERN BRITISH DRAWINGS: SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION

June 23 - September 13, 1994

The first survey of the Museum's collection of British drawings since 1978 highlights major movements in modern British art, including Post Impressionism of the first decade, Vorticism, Constructivism and Surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s, and, more recently, Pop and Process Art. Organized by Robert Evrén, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings, **MODERN BRITISH DRAWINGS: SELECTIONS FROM THE COLLECTION** features approximately seventy-five works arranged in roughly chronological order.

The exhibition begins with two Post-Impressionist works from 1910, Walter Sickert's *Pimlico* and Spencer Frederick Gore's study for the painting *Inez and Taki*. By depicting two popular music-hall entertainers performing on stage, Gore, like other artists during this time, challenged what was thought to be acceptable by a public that valued society painters and academicians.

Introduced in an exhibition in 1914, Vorticism -- the first radically modern movement in England -- was also the most short-lived, ending in 1915. Vorticists thought of themselves as detached observers of modern society. David Bomberg's chalk study for *In The Hold* (1913), for example, demonstrates how artists, taking Cubism and Futurism as a point of departure, developed abstracted, dynamic machine-like forms rendered with mechanical precision.

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In 1931 a group of young artists formed Unit 1. Inspired by Constructivism and Surrealism, Unit 1 represented a rare moment of collective awareness of influence to subsequent generations of British art. Henry Moore's *Figure with Red Rocks* (1942), which invests surrealist forms with classicism, is a masterpiece of this period. Also included is Edward Burra's monumental watercolor *Bal des Pendues* (1937), a macabre "hangman's ball," populated by mysterious figures and disturbing scenes.

The postwar years have been rich for works on paper, as well as the variety of artistic movements. Among the drawings by so-called "School of London" artists is Lucian Freud's *Dead Monkey* (1950), in which the artist delineates his gently unsettling subject in pastel with a miniaturist's scale and clarity of focus. In addition to drawings by such sculptors as Lynn Chadwick and Kenneth Armitage, whose forms were inspired by Picasso's and Gonzalez's sculpture, drawings by British Pop artists are also on view.

The final section of the exhibition includes drawings made since 1970. In addition to recently acquired works by artists Richard Deacon and Anish Kapoor, there is *To Be With Art Is All We Ask* (1970), a monumental, twenty-one-foot-long "paper sculpture" by Gilbert & George (Gilbert Proesch and George Passmore), who redefined the role of the artist as "living sculpture."

Surveying eighty-four years of British drawing, **MODERN BRITISH DRAWINGS** highlights both the relationship of British artists to their European colleagues, and the unique qualities that for centuries have distinguished British art.

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