

# Understanding British Portraits

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## Twentieth century British Portraits seminar

**Wednesday 7 March 2012, 10.10—16.00 Leeds Art Gallery**

### Programme

10.10—10.45

#### Registration and refreshments

10.45—11.00

Welcome from chairperson **Sandy Nairne**, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

11.00—11.25

**Ulrike Smalley**, Senior Curator (Art), Imperial War Museum  
*People's War: Portraits from the Second World War*

During the Second World War, the government-funded War Artists' Advisory Committee commissioned and acquired a significant and wide-ranging art collection recording the nation's war effort. Portraits played a central role in this collection, paying tribute to and celebrating people's contributions and sacrifices; those of leaders and medal-winners as well as 'ordinary' citizens. The IWM holds a significant number of these portraits and is planning an exhibition drawn from this highly unusual collection in 2012. This presentation examines those works chosen for the exhibition, and will explore the specific research and interpretation challenges presented by these portraits.

11.25—11.50

**Paul Moorhouse**, Twentieth Century Curator, National Portrait Gallery

#### *The Queen - Art and Image*

Queen Elizabeth II is the most portrayed individual in history. Curator of the current touring exhibition *The Queen – Art and Image*, Paul Moorhouse explores the development of images of the Queen during her sixty-year reign and probes the way these reveal a world of changing values.

11.50—12.15

#### **Allen Jones RA**

The leading painter, sculptor and printmaker Allen Jones RA will reflect on the role of portraiture in his artistic practice from his *Grey Self-portrait* (1959) to *Darcey Bussell* (1994), dwelling on the inherent challenges of a commission for the national collection, the collaborative nature of the genre, and the limitations of working from photographic material. Reference will also be made to three masters of twentieth century portraiture, Picasso, Bacon and Freud.

12.15—12.40

**Nigel Walsh**, Curator (Contemporary Art), Leeds Art Gallery

#### *Buried Life: twentieth century portraits in a regional gallery collection*

Avowed Metropolitan Frank Rutter came to be curator of the Leeds City Art Gallery in 1912, drawn to city because he

interpreted the Gallery's acquisition of Orpen's portrait *The Red Scarf* as a sign of a bold, modern approach to collecting. He subsequently regretted his move, but for Leeds his arrival represented a turning point in the history of the collection. Using this as a starting point, this presentation looks at a selection of key twentieth century portraits now in the Leeds collection, in the light of not so much the result of a 'collecting strategy' as a series of fortunate events and as an under-researched resource that have yet to yield their true worth as players in what is thought to be one of the best regional collections of 20th century British art in the country.

12.40-14.00 **Lunch** provided for all delegates, and time to visit the galleries

14.00—14.25

**Dr Tricia Allerston**, Head of Education at the National Galleries of Scotland

#### *'Representing "Modernity" at the refurbished Scottish National Portrait Gallery*

An introduction to the new displays devoted to twentieth-century portraiture at this recently reopened Gallery, showing how they fit into the overall interpretive scheme. This contribution will also discuss some of the benefits and challenges posed by presenting the modern collection in a thematic way and highlight the Galleries' learning team's approaches to the modern new displays.

14.25—14.50

**Professor Paul Edwards**, Bath Spa University

#### *Wyndham Lewis and Iris Barry*

'Praxitella' – Wyndham Lewis's 1920-1 painting of a seated, blue-faced insect-like female figure in a steely dress – has long fascinated visitors to Leeds City Art Gallery. This presentation will explore the possibilities for making it the focus of a display including self-portraits by Lewis and his other portraits of the sitter, Iris Barry, with whom he had a turbulent relationship.

14.50—15.15

**Adrian Glew**, Archivist, Tate Archive

#### *Portrait Resources in the Tate Archive*

Tate Archive is a crucial resource for research into twentieth-century British portraiture. This presentation will introduce the Archive's collecting remit, vast range of materials held, including over 750 distinct collections of artists' papers and institutional records, and how to consult the Archive in the course of your own research.

15.15—16.00

**Panel discussion** chaired by **Sandy Nairne**.