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**'INTERVENTIONS: TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART  
COLLECTION SCHEMES AND THEIR IMPACT ON  
LOCAL AUTHORITY ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM  
COLLECTIONS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH  
ART IN BRITAIN**

**VOLUME I**

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**Ph.D. Thesis in Museum and Gallery Management  
Department of Cultural Policy and Management, City University, London,  
August 2007**

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**Title: Interventions: Twentieth-Century Art Collection Schemes and their Impact on Local Authority Art Gallery and Museum Collections of Twentieth-Century British Art in Britain**

### **ABSTRACT**

In the twentieth century, collecting became a core activity of local authority art galleries and museums in Britain. A key feature of these art collections was the representation of Twentieth-Century British Art. The aim of this study is to examine, for the first time, this development as a broad cultural phenomenon, through the distinctive roles played by central government-funded, and independent national and provincial art collection schemes. The central government-funded art collection schemes are the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, War Artists' Advisory Committee and the National Heritage Memorial Fund; and the national loan and exhibition schemes offered by the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council. Independent schemes are more numerous and varied. These were administered by the National Art Collections Fund (now the Art Fund), Contemporary Art Society, Scottish Modern Arts Association, Contemporary Art Society for Wales, Henry Moore Foundation and Gulbenkian Foundation. In addition, there were the independent national loan and exhibition schemes offered by the Museums Association, Peter Stuyvesant Foundation and Alistair McAlpine and provincial schemes based in Manchester (Charles Rutherston Loan Scheme), Cardiff (National Museum of Wales Loan Scheme), Liverpool ('John Moores' competition-exhibitions) and Bradford ('International Print Biennale' competition-exhibitions).

Given the geographical coverage, historical scope and focus of this study, a substantial body of published and unpublished literature was consulted. The wide-range of sources examined included institutional histories, biographies and studies of Twentieth-Century British Art; permanent collection and exhibition catalogues; newspaper, journal and magazine articles, curatorial records and correspondence; institutional records and correspondence; archival material and reports; and correspondence and interviews. This entailed the discovery of much new material and the collation of substantial random data held by the Contemporary Art Society and the Gulbenkian Foundation

This research seeks to show that local authority collecting of Twentieth-Century British Art was part of a nation-wide cultural pattern determined by certain ideas, theories and policies. Within this context, Section 1 identifies and discusses the nature and purpose of public art galleries, museums and their art collections from 1845-1945. This momentous period in the museum movement in Britain, it is argued, sustained and generated ideas, theories and policies which encompassed national institutional hierarchies and their models of collecting, high art aesthetic standards and scholarship-linked connoisseurship; the organic structure of museums; and multifaceted education. It concludes that during this formative period, an enduring cultural framework was established, from which emerged key collecting impetuses which are art history, patronage and heritage. Sections 2 and 3 examine the roles played by central government-funded and independent schemes, as a response to these issues, which also engendered and reinforced the collecting of specific types of Twentieth-Century British Art. Section 4 surveys the local authority collections, which participated in the schemes, and concludes that 1957-79 was a crucial period in post-war collecting, which was both facilitated by the emergence of a considerable and dynamic network of commercial art galleries, and enhanced by national and provincial measures to decentralize the arts.

A principal conclusion is that the future of modern (twentieth-century) and contemporary (twenty-first-century) British art collecting, by local authority art galleries and museums, lies in its perception as part of a collective cultural enterprise, in which the intervention of collection schemes will, as in the past, play a fundamental role. Finally, there is also a strong argument for provincial institutions to feed into a national debate as to what is selected to represent both modern and contemporary British art practice in public collections in general.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

During the 1990s the cultural interests of art curators, academics and policy makers converged upon an increasing interest in the nature and purpose of provincial art collections. When this study was embarked upon, it was with a very real sense that there was both a lack and need for a substantial study in this field. Previous academic studies of public art collecting had largely focused on individual institutional histories; pre-twentieth-century topics; the psychology and economics of collecting; collections management issues; and art galleries and museums as forms of social control and forms of knowledge; for example *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, by Tony Bennett, and *Art Museums*, by Susan Pearce, both published in 1995.

In the twentieth century, collecting became a core activity of local authority art galleries and museums in Britain. A central feature of this cultural development was the collecting of Twentieth-Century British Art. The twentieth century marked a major shift in emphasis from the temporary representation of our visual culture, through loans, short-term displays and exhibitions, to representation becoming synonymous with collecting and the formation of coherent art collections. Initial research revealed that individual institutional histories were, in fact, united by a common strand, collection schemes, and it was, therefore, decided to focus on these, so as to examine local authority collecting of Twentieth-Century British Art as a broad cultural phenomenon; this study is, therefore, neither an all encompassing history of local authority art collecting, nor an account of curatorial passions and interests.

Using original contemporary sources, Section 1 outlines the theoretical basis for this study. The principal ideas, theories and policies which defined the nature and purpose

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<sup>1</sup> Originally completed in 2001, the hiatus in this study's final submission was due to injuries incurred by the author, whilst working as the Curator of Paintings and Sculpture at the Royal Academy of Arts. Subsequent developments in the field of public art galleries and museums have confirmed the original findings in Vol. II, Chapter 15, 'Conclusion', pp.188-195.

of public art galleries, museums and their collections, from 1845-1945, are identified and discussed. This was a momentous time for the museum movement in Britain, when the majority of local authority art galleries and museums, which exhibited and collected Twentieth-Century British Art, were established; see Appendix A.1. It is argued that this period sustained and generated ideas, theories and policies which encompassed national institutional hierarchies and their models of collecting, high art aesthetic standards and scholarship-linked connoisseurship; the concept of art galleries and museums as organic structures; and multifaceted educational objectives. From this formative period emerged key postwar collecting impetuses which were collections as forms of art history and associated aesthetic experiences; collective art patronage; and the representation of art as a form of cultural heritage. These stimuli, it is maintained, were decisive factors in the creation and development of collection schemes and their application in the field of Twentieth-Century British Art collecting.

So as to clarify the contribution made by each collection scheme, and their aims and objectives, they are discussed under individual chapters in Sections 2 and 3. Section 2 examines the central government-funded schemes administered by the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, War Artists' Advisory Committee and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and the national loan and exhibition schemes offered by the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council. A discussion then follows, in Section 3, of the more varied and wide-ranging independent schemes which were established by membership organizations and charities, during the period 1903-77; these were administered by the National Art Collections Fund (now the Art Fund), Contemporary Art Society, Scottish Modern Arts Association, Contemporary Art Society for Wales, Henry Moore Foundation and Gulbenkian Foundation. In addition to the gift of art works and acquisitions grants, these organizations also engendered and reinforced the collecting of specific types of Twentieth-Century British Art, and this significant contribution is also examined. This is followed by a discussion of the pre- and postwar independent national loan and exhibition schemes offered by the Museums

Association, Peter Stuyvesant Foundation and Alistair McAlpine, and the provincial schemes based in Manchester (Charles Rutherston Loan Scheme), Cardiff (National Museum of Wales Loan Scheme), Liverpool ('John Moores' competition-exhibitions) and Bradford ('International Print Biennale' competition-exhibitions). These exhibitions promoted and reinforced collecting patterns and, in some instances, functioned as sources of acquisitions linked to collection schemes. Section 4 surveys the local authority collections which participated in the central government-funded and independent schemes during a dynamic period for art collecting, 1957-79, which coincided with measures for the decentralisation of the arts and the expansion of the commercial art gallery network in London.

It is hoped that this first substantial examination of local authority collecting of Twentieth-Century British Art will prove to be both a useful source of reference, for those concerned with policy-making and the formulation of future collection schemes, and an invaluable guide to those undertaking research into the history of public collecting and the representation of Twentieth-Century British Art.

### **The focus of this study**

Local authority art galleries and museums were chosen because they constitute the major body of non-national art galleries and museums in the U.K., which exist within a particular administrative framework; university and trustee-status collections are therefore excluded. The Ulster Museum (formerly Belfast Art Gallery), Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool) and Sheffield City Art Galleries are, however, included over those years that these institutions were under local authority administration. Municipal institutions, of course, collected in other areas, such as the Applied and Decorative Arts, as well as pre-twentieth century and modern foreign art, and in the course of which, developed specialisms within collections, such as the German Twentieth-Century Art collection at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. These developments were, in some instances, assisted by grants from bodies and organizations discussed in

this thesis, but a comparable discussion of this impact lies beyond the scope of this study.

### **Previous literature on the subject**

In addition to the innumerable official histories on individual institutions there are a range of published directories, reports and surveys which offer factual information and data on collections, debates and policy-making. The Museum Association's directories, for example, were not evaluative publications, but offered factual records which listed the name of institutions and their date of foundation; their geographical location; the administrative governing body; sources of funding and income; exhibition space; the name of the Director; some indication as to the main feature, or local character of the collections; and occasionally key artists who were represented in a collection. The joint-editors of these invaluable publications, from 1901-09, were the curators Elijah Howarth (1853-1927) and Henry Platnauer, both of whom were founder members of the Museums Association. Howarth, who was Secretary, from 1891-1909, and President of the Museums Association, from 1912-13, was the long-standing curator of the original Weston Park Museum at Sheffield, from 1876-1927. Although he had a scientific background, Howarth wrote and lectured about art subjects, and was both an honorary life-member of the Sheffield Art-Crafts Guild and a member of the Executive Committee of the Contemporary Arts Federation. Platnauer was the curator of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society Museum.

The first attempt at a comprehensive survey of public collections of 'modern British art' was conducted by a private membership organization, the Imperial Arts League, which published its findings in 1919; see Appendix A.2. This recorded valuable information, in a comparative format, which stated the average expenditure on art purchases and the maintenance costs of institutions for the period 1911-13. It showed that large sums were then being spent by major institutions; the exception to this was Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, an institution which then enjoyed unparalleled

financial support from 'wealthy and public-spirited citizens' who provided donations.<sup>2</sup> The state of provincial collections, in general, was addressed by non-governmental reports, sponsored by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees. These were *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than the National Museums)* by Henry Miers (1858-1942) and Sydney Frank Markham (1897-1975), published in 1928, and a decade later, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than the National Museums)* by Markham, published in 1938. These reports recorded the opening date of institutions, their governing body, reference to a Fine Art collection and sources of funding. Although the government-appointed Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries (1927-30) had touched upon the needs of local authority art galleries and museums, in relation to contemporary British art, in its *Final Report*, published in 1929, it was only post-1945 that official reports specifically on provincial art galleries and museums were conducted and published.<sup>3</sup>

The first major central government-funded report was begun in 1959, and conducted under the auspices of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries (subsequently the Museums and Galleries Commission) and the chairmanship of Lord Rosse; this was the *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries*, published in 1963. Successive reports issued by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries addressed local authority collection development and funding, the most comprehensive of which was the *Local Authorities and Museums: Report by a Working Party*, 1991. In 1973, the first government-appointed and run inquiry, since the Royal Commission of 1927-30, was undertaken by the Department of Education and Science. This generated the report *Provincial Museums and Galleries* (Wright Report), published in 1973. Its remit covered public provincial collections in general, but this was not the

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<sup>2</sup> See Scrutator, 'Modern British Art', *Imperial Arts League Journal*, April 1919, p.157.

<sup>3</sup> See *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929.

main focus. Its chief contribution to cultural debate was the recommendation that key collections should become 'centres of excellence'.<sup>4</sup> An idea subsequently echoed in the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries's report, *Framework for a System for Museums: Report by a Working Party* (Drew Report) 1978, but published in 1979.

In 1960, the Museums Association published its own nation-wide survey of 23 provincial art galleries and museums entitled *Recent Acquisitions Survey: Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings of the 20th Century Acquired by British Galleries Between October 1959 and September 1960*.<sup>5</sup> The importance of this survey was that it publicly highlighted the widespread reliance of non-national institutions on central government-funded and independent bodies, for either funding acquisitions or presenting works as gifts. In assessing both the needs and its own subsequent contribution in responding to these, the charitable body, the Gulbenkian Foundation, sponsored three substantial reports which were the *Arts and Entertainment: Help for the Arts: The Gulbenkian Report* 1959, *Support for the Arts in England and Wales* 1976, edited by Lord Redcliffe-Maud, and *Twenty-One Years: An Anniversary Account of Policies and Activities 1956-77*, published in 1977. Internal unpublished surveys and audits were also conducted by the Contemporary Art Society, amongst their institutional members, during the period 1989-92, which identified the strengths and weakness of individual collections, as well as discrepancies concerning the gift and whereabouts of art works; a subsequent survey, undertaken by the Visual Arts and Galleries Association (V.A.G.A.), in 1994, proved inconclusive due to the paucity of responses.

Since 2000, there have been several high-profile reports and policy changes which have impacted on the funding, access and function of local authority collections. In

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<sup>4</sup> See 'Summary of Recommendations', pp.48-49 & p.63.

<sup>5</sup> See *Museums Journal*, Vol.lx, December 1960, pp.234-237.

2001, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (M.L.A.), under the chairmanship of Matthew Evans, published the report of the Regional Museums Task Force. Entitled *Renaissance in the Regions: A New Vision for England's Museums* it led to the creation of nine regional museum hubs in England (London was included as a region) by Re:source in December 2002. Nine Regional Agencies in England for museums, archives and libraries were also created by the M.L.A., as a regional infrastructure which works together with the museum hubs to achieve common goals and strategies. Under this Renaissance policy, central government has, for the first time, introduced new substantial investment funding for England's art galleries and museums. A key element of this policy is the concept of inter-cooperation, within the regions and between national and non-national art galleries and museums, where expertise and knowledge is shared; as part of this programme, national Subject Specialist Networks (S.S.N.) have been created.

In June 2005, the Museums Association published its report, *Collections for the Future*, as a result of its one-year enquiry into the access and staffing of collections. One of its key findings was to stress the essential activity of a re-defined form of collecting which would involve the sharing, transfer and disposal of art works; as a result, in 2006, the Museums Association launched a programme to encourage long loans between art galleries and museums, and an archival disposal policy; the *New Museums Association Disposal Guidelines 2007* are forthcoming. In 2006, the relaunched Art Fund (formerly the National Art Collections Fund) published its report, *The Collecting Challenge*; this was a result of a nation-wide survey into funding and acquisition areas. In response to these findings, the Art Fund has launched its new collecting scheme called Enriching Regions, under which art galleries and museums, initially in the East and West Midlands and the East of England receive funding for acquisitions, in conjunction with funds generated from local and regional businesses. In December 2006, the Heritage Lottery Fund launched its Museums and Galleries Collections Development Initiative, following the circulation of a consultation



document. Under this scheme, from autumn 2007 funds will be available to assist collection development in specialist areas by dispensing with the case-by-case application process, as required by the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, and to encourage the joint acquisition of objects and works by several art galleries and museums.

Since the 1920s, art curators and key writers on the visual arts have specifically addressed the nature and purpose of provincial art gallery and museum collections, in relation to the representation of Twentieth-Century British Art. The value of these articles is that they provide valuable accounts as to the state of certain collections, and a record of issues and curatorial practices. From 1925-26, for example, Solomon Kaines Smith (?-1958), then the Fine Art Curator, appointed in 1924, and subsequently the Director, from 1926-27, at Leeds City Art Gallery, published a series of articles entitled 'Yorkshire Art Galleries' for the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. The influential popularizers of art, the critics and theorists, Herbert Read (1893-1968) and Eric Newton (1893-1965), both examined the nature and function of the 'provincial art gallery'. In 1932, Read published a two-part article entitled 'The Problem of the Provincial Picture Gallery' in *The Listener*, and this was followed, in 1938, by Eric Newton's series of articles on provincial art collections for *The Sunday Times*, entitled 'Some Provincial Galleries'; an examination which included the major institutions at Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. This was followed, in 1959, by Quentin Bell's (1910-96) more comprehensive series of articles, 'Forgotten Galleries', for *The Listener*, which covered England, Scotland and Wales. Quentin Bell was the son of Clive Bell and Vanessa Bell, the painter, and had trained both as a painter and later as a potter, before becoming an academic; in 1959 he had just joined the Department of Fine Arts at Leeds University, as a Lecturer. In sharp contrast, Mervyn Levy's (1915-66) biting series of articles entitled 'Museums or Mausoleums' for *The Studio*, published from 1960-61, questioned the contemporary relevance of municipal

collections as visual resources which, he maintained, should both support and educate artists.

There have also been publications which have taken the form of art gazetteers, for both broad and more specialist publics, one of the earliest of which was *The Nation's Pictures*, published in 1950. It was compiled by the eminent art historians Anthony Blunt (1907-83) and Margaret Whinney (1897-1975) from entries provided by curators at selected individual institutions; Blunt was then Surveyor of the King's Pictures and Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art. This study aimed to give a postwar over-view of key institutions and their collecting strengths. A more comprehensive, but purely factual publication was *The Fine and Decorative Art Collections of Britain and Ireland*, sponsored by the National Art Collections Fund and published in 1985; research for which, the author contributed. The most extensive publication, in terms of the number of institutions consulted, evaluative essays and detailed catalogue entries, remains the *Art Treasures of England: The Regional Collections of England*, 1998, edited by Giles Waterfield; to which the author contributed. This catalogue together with the major exhibition, organized by the Royal Academy, significantly raised the agenda surrounding the financial plight of provincial collections in terms of their cultural value, documented past collecting achievements and successes, and current financial problems. The most recent, but selective compendium is Mark Fisher's *Britain's Best Museums and Galleries*, published in 2004.

### **How was the research carried out for this study?**

Anyone who has either worked as a curator, or attempted to consult archival and operational documents, which relate to local authority art galleries and museums, or are covered by the Public Record Acts, will be aware of the daunting task that faces

researchers in this field.<sup>6</sup> In addition, few local authority art galleries and museums retain formal archives, such as at Southampton City Art Gallery, and records that do exist have survived more by accident than design. Preliminary research was, therefore, undertaken in London, by studying published material available, archival records and institutional documentation. This was followed by considerable correspondence with provincial art galleries and museums, and organizations, so as to assess historical material available for consultation and to, where possible, verify factual information. British Academy Travel Grants made possible research visits to 15 provincial art galleries and museums, and the relevant local record offices. Several interviews with retired curators and collectors were also conducted. The Contemporary Art Society and Gulbenkian Foundation were particularly helpful in granting access to their private records. Among the discovery of material for this study was the tracing of the Scottish Modern Arts Association records, now deposited with Edinburgh City Council. A full list of sources consulted is provided at the end of this study, in Volume III. The majority of newspaper and magazine articles, cited in this study, were in fact discovered through time-consuming searches at the British Library, rather than through local authority sources. Moreover, the detailed appendices represent, for the first time, substantial abstracted and collated data which would not otherwise be available; for example see Appendix 1 and Appendix 9.

### **Terminology and Style Note**

Local authority art gallery and museum institutions are defined here as those funded and administered by local government: university, trustee and national institutions are therefore not covered by this thesis, with the exception of the Ulster Museum, Walker Art Gallery and Sheffield City Art Galleries whose status changed during the twentieth century. When discussing Twentieth-Century British Art, the terms "modern art" and

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<sup>6</sup> Angela Summerfield, 'Accessing Public Archives' in *Papers from Research Seminars held in February and June 1996*, City University, London, 1997.

"contemporary art" are often used interchangeably by curators and writers on art, although "contemporary" tends to infer more recent work and modern is often equated with modernity. Unless otherwise specified, "art" refers to Fine Art only. Although the term "foreign art" is still a current curatorial term, it is generally understood that this refers to mainland European art. The designation "Twentieth-Century British Art" is used in its broadest sense to cover all artists living and working in Britain during 1900-99, but where appropriate to the discussion attention is drawn to an artist's nationality. Dates of art works and the materials involved are only included where relevant to the discussion, or to avoid confusion in terms of identification. Local authority art galleries and museums have often operated under several variant names and to avoid confusion, the usual or current name of an institution is used; an institution's regional location, if unclear, is given for its first mention in the main text, and in some further instances where it is pertinent to the discussion. Where possible, dates have been given for curators, writers and key collectors to aid identification. Many of the individuals mentioned in the text enjoyed enhanced social status later in life, with titles such as "Sir" and "Lord", but these are only referred to here where it aids the identification of the person concerned; for example, the distinguished curator and art historian, Kenneth Clark, is referred to thus, and not as Lord Clark.

## **SECTION 1**

### **THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF PUBLIC ART GALLERIES, MUSEUMS AND THEIR ART COLLECTIONS**

#### **CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE OF PUBLIC ART GALLERIES, MUSEUMS AND THEIR ART COLLECTIONS**

##### **2.1. National Institutions: Models of Collecting**

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, influential art bodies, societies and national art galleries and museums were established in London. These developments created a metropolitan cultural bias. London, as the governing capital and Europe's leading financial centre, became defined as the principal place in Great Britain for the exhibition, sale, practice and discussion of art. This was despite the existence of training academies for artists in Wales (Royal Cambrian Academy), Ireland (Royal Hibernian Academy) and Scotland (Royal Scottish Academy). Of these, Scotland had produced several exhibiting societies to rival those in London, such as the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Watercolours and the Society of Scottish Artists, and the promotional body, the Royal Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. During the nineteenth century, academies were also established outside London in principal cities; the Liverpool Academy of Arts and the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts were two notable examples. In symbolic terms, however, London represented a hierarchy of cultural values, whereby cultural activity elsewhere in mainland Britain was defined as secondary or, in its pejorative sense, as provincial. Within the world of art galleries and museums, the national institutions established in London were defined as pre-eminent examples of collecting and display which served as models for local authority institutions. London's national art galleries and museums which collected Fine Art were the South Kensington Museum (from 1899, the V. & A. Museum), the British Museum, National Gallery and the National Gallery of British Art, Millbank (from 1932, officially known as the Tate Gallery). Distinct national models of Fine Art collections, as an expression of British history to emulate and

follow, were offered by the establishment of the National Portrait Gallery, in 1856, and the Imperial War Museum, in 1917. The funding of national art galleries and museums, by central government, secured their permanence and ensured that they embodied tangible and symbolic ideas of national prestige and economic success.

By the close of the nineteenth century, education had been identified as the main public role of national collecting institutions, and this concept was interpreted and implemented in several ways. In 1887, for example, the National Gallery introduced a hang by school. A chronological hang had already been instituted at a number of mainland European art galleries of which curators at both Britain's national art galleries and museums, and major local authority art galleries and museums, such as Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, would have been aware; there were also historic precedents, dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such as the Habsburg Collection in the Belvedere (Vienna) and the Musée Napoléon (the post-revolutionary Louvre). In addition to independent visits made by curators abroad, the Museums Association, founded in 1889, proved a vital point of contact and exchange of information through its conferences and launch of its official publication, the *Museums Journal*, in 1901. The *Museums Journal* was an important forum of debate and dissemination of ideas which, by 1902, was covering art galleries and museums throughout the U.K., as well as institutions abroad. The influential Dr. A. B. Meyer, Director of the Dresden Museums, joined the Museums Association in 1891, and his survey of curatorial practices in Britain and the United States was published in the *Museums Journal* in 1903. In addition, the Verband der Museums der Museumsdirektoren, established in 1897, included a number of British Museum directors as members and held its annual meetings in London and Copenhagen.

At the National Gallery a model of collecting was adopted which was directed by a canon or standard of aesthetics combined with scholarly research; the term "aesthetics" is used throughout this study to refer to a way of seeing which involves both a

response to formal physical characteristics of a work and the application of received knowledge. The vestiges of eighteenth-century connoisseurship were, therefore, linked to scholarship in a form of survey-like collecting, but one focused solely on the acquisition and display of costly masterpieces. This process was distinct from the survey-like collecting increasingly pursued at the South Kensington Museum (now the V. & A. Museum), whereby taxonomic or typological collecting, for practical educational purposes, was incorporated into the concept of an "Art Museum" where collections were 'installed on aesthetic principles'.<sup>7</sup> Both the South Kensington Museum and the British Museum also incorporated print rooms and print collections, each of which, despite duplication, claimed a distinct rationale. The South Kensington Museum promoted ideas of comparative study and art as a source of creative reference material, and its print collections, therefore, included both historical and contemporary examples as primarily illustrations of technique; in 1909, these collections became part of the newly created Department of Prints and Drawings. Conversely, the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum was defined as a historical collection which, like the National Gallery, embodied ideas of high art aesthetic standards and scholarship-linked connoisseurship, and its prints, therefore, were to be admired and consulted essentially as art objects.

Following initial restrictions placed on the configuration of its displays, the National Gallery of British Art, Millbank (hereafter referred to as the Tate Gallery), under its Director, from 1917-30 (formerly the Keeper, from 1911-16), Charles Aitken (1869-1936), also sought to introduce a coherent structure to its presentations of art; Aitken, as the Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, from 1900-11, had organized pioneering exhibitions of contemporary art which were conceived as educational

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the changing role of the South Kensington Museum and the nature of its collections see Michael Conforti, 'The Idealist Enterprise and the Applied Arts' in *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (ed.) Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, V. & A. Publications, London, 1997, pp.23-47.

experiences directed at the more humble sections of society in London's East End. Following the wartime closure of the Tate Gallery, it was re-opened with paintings transferred from the National Gallery, at Trafalgar Square, as part of a new chronological display of British art 'in which the development of the British schools from the time of Hogarth to the present day may be seen and studied'.<sup>8</sup> The continual presence of the Ministry of Pensions, however, meant that contemporary British art was not included as part of this arrangement until June 1921, when its display was widely publicized; many of the oil paintings and watercolours on display were in fact private loans.

The opening of the Tate Gallery, in 1897, as the first national institution devoted exclusively to collecting British art, reinforced the role of the public art gallery as an educational resource. It was established as an administrative sub-division of the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, and both institutions offered student study-days for the copying of art works. This practice was an established part of art training offered by the leading educational institutions which were the Royal Academy, Slade School of Art and the Royal College of Art. The Principal of the Royal College of Art, William Rothenstein, as an unofficial art adviser to Charles Aitken, even went so far as to advocate the creation of a museum of casts within the Tate Gallery, modelled on the Trocadero in Paris.<sup>9</sup> The study of plaster casts, after famous examples of Greek, Roman and Renaissance examples, dated from the eighteenth century and remained part of the students' curriculum until the post-1945 period; its importance was epitomized by the Royal Academy Schools.

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<sup>8</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Re-opening of the Tate Gallery', *The Times*, 18th July, 1920.

<sup>9</sup> William Rothenstein, 'Oral Evidence, 1st. November 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, pp.30-35.



The private teaching and exhibiting body, the Royal Academy, played both an independent and interlinked role in the development of national and municipal art gallery and museum collections. In 1768 the Academy's founding aim had been to promote, vigorously, the prestige and thereby patronage of contemporary British art. By the late nineteenth century, the Royal Academy represented a prototype public art gallery. It housed a study collection of casts and art works, and held temporary exhibitions in the summer, and subsequently in the autumn and winter. These were part of the social calendar and attracted a new breed of private collectors, as well as local authority art committees. The Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions remained a distinctive feature in that they functioned as a sales venue for contemporary British Fine Art, which provided the Academy with substantial revenue from catalogue sales, artists' submission fees and commission on the sale of works. By 1900, many local authority art galleries and museums had established annual Spring and Autumn sale exhibitions modelled on the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy. Although at least one Summer Exhibition was organized by Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, in 1913, these local authority sales exhibitions were not established in competition with London, but as supplementary shows which sometimes featured works previously shown at the Royal Academy. In common with the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions, they attracted a national submission and often featured artists who exhibited at the Royal Academy. The Autumn Exhibition, first held at the Walker Art Gallery in 1877 was one of the earliest examples.<sup>10</sup> Up until 1933, the Walker Art Gallery's Autumn Exhibition was the main source of contemporary British art purchases for the Walker Art Gallery's own collection; for example, during the period 1871-88, it is recorded that the Walker Art Gallery purchased 66 pictures for £23,968-

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<sup>10</sup> A Summer Exhibition was even held at Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, from 1913. Spring Exhibitions were organized, for example, at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, in Bradford, Manchester City Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Oldham Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, in Preston, Atkinson Art Gallery, in Southport, and Sheffield City Art Galleries. In addition to the Walker Art Gallery, Autumn Exhibitions were also held at the Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, in Hull, and Huddersfield Art Gallery.

10s.<sup>11</sup> Established in emulation of the Royal Academy, the Autumn Exhibition also provided the Walker Art Gallery with considerable purchase funds from both ticket sales and the commission on art works sold; during the period 1871-1914, for example, the Walker Art Gallery received £141,179.1s.7d. from these sources.<sup>12</sup>

The Royal Academy's own Summer Exhibition functioned as a vetted source of contemporary British art, where standards of artistic quality and taste were apparently assured; although the New English Art Club had been established in 1886, in London, in opposition to the Royal Academy, the Academy had shown a remarkable capacity for the absorption of these artists and their works. The Irish art critic, essayist and novelist, and advocate of French Impressionism, George Moore (1852-1933), noted the pervasive influence of the Royal Academy, wryly observing that the 'art in the provinces is little more than a reflection of the Academy'.<sup>13</sup> A situation which caused the exasperated Slade-trained painter, Augustus John, to exclaim that 'I come now shattered from a visit to the Walker Art Gallery. It contains the Oxo Bovril of the R.A. shambles';<sup>14</sup> John was briefly, from 1901-02, an art instructor at the art school affiliated to University College, Liverpool, and together with Philip Wilson Steer was widely regarded as Britain's leading francophile contemporary artist at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Tate Gallery's own nascent collection of contemporary British art tended to reinforce the cultural value of the Royal Academy. This part of the collection was dominated by pastoral or historical narratives which had come from mainly Henry Tate's gifts, the on-going Chantrey Bequest collection (since 1877, effectively under

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*, Simpkin, Marshall & Company, London, 1888, p.165.

<sup>12</sup> Walker Art Gallery, *Annual Report*, City of Liverpool, 1930-31, p.15.

<sup>13</sup> George Moore, 'The Alderman in Art' in *Modern Painting*, Walter Scott Ltd., London, 1893, p.164.

<sup>14</sup> Letter: Augustus John to William Rothenstein, 1901 quoted in Michael Holroyd, *Augustus John: The Years of Innocence*, Vol. i, Heineman, London, 1974, p.127.

the administrative control of the Royal Academy) and gifts from the high-profile Royal Academician, George Frederick Watts. Henry Tate had largely purchased his collection either from the Summer Exhibitions, or as independent purchases from Royal Academicians. By 1900, the Tate Gallery, as a national collecting model, therefore, appeared to endorse the continual expenditure of considerable sums, by private individuals and both minor and major local authority art galleries and museums, on art from the Summer Exhibitions and the studios of Royal Academicians and Associate Royal Academicians. Such was the influence of the Royal Academy, still in 1913, that the local authority of Kettering agreed to the establishment of the Alfred East Gallery to house this Royal Academician's bequest to the locality. This state of affairs remained until the late 1920s, when the Contemporary Art Society began to expand its profile and influence; until this period, artists virtually excluded from local authority collections were those associated with such progressive developments as the Camden Town Group, Vorticism and the Bloomsbury Group. Only hybrid forms, as a British reaction to progressive developments in contemporary European art, were to be found at the Royal Academy during the interwar period.<sup>15</sup> Local authority collecting of early Twentieth-Century British Art was, therefore, encouraged to be an expression of "popular taste". It was this imbalance that caused Frank Rutter (1876-1937), the former Director of Leeds City Art Gallery, from 1912-17, art critic and supporter of Roger Fry (1866-1934), to write that with the exception of the art galleries at Aberdeen, Birmingham, Dublin and Glasgow:

the municipal art galleries of Great Britain are deplorable. They are a disgrace to the elected persons responsible for their maintenance; a laughing-stock to art loving visitors from abroad, and an offence as well as a burden to the average ratepayer.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For a wider discussion of the Royal Academy during the interwar period see Chapter 6, 'Other Voices: the Contest of Representation' in David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art, 1914-30*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1997, pp.192-217.

<sup>16</sup> Frank Rutter, *Since I was 25*, Constable, London, 1927, p.201.

The Royal Academy, as a public exhibition forum also encouraged the notion of popular crowd-pulling contemporary art in the form of often large-scale, technically impressive and subject-based paintings. Interior sculpture, as opposed to public monuments, was seen as having a more limited audience appeal, confined as it was largely to portraiture and mythological subjects; this was despite the gleaming surfaces of polychromy and the technical virtuosity associated with the New Sculpture and its followers. Its limited and, at times, haphazard display at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions only seemed to confirm sculpture's second-rate status in relation to painting. A consequence of this was that municipal art galleries and museums were encouraged to form what were at the time called 'picture gallery rooms' rather than sculpture arcades, alcoves or halls. Examples of these rooms can be seen at Leeds City Art Gallery, the Walker Art Gallery, and Manchester City Art Gallery, and they were designed as exhibition halls with an emphasis on long, high-ceilinged spaces, and ostentatious decoration, in direct emulation of the Royal Academy's galleries. A further hindrance to the municipal collecting of contemporary British sculpture, was that when it was exhibited in its plaster state at the Royal Academy, its aesthetic qualities involved the potential purchaser in flights of the imagination as to the surface effects of the finished work. The casting of sculpture in bronze and its associated insurance and transport costs also made its acquisition costly in relation to painting. Moreover, prior to 1945, few provincial art galleries and museums had appropriate spaces for the display of life-size or monumental sculpture. Purpose-built sculpture halls, however, had been created at Belfast Art Gallery, Williamson Art Gallery, in Birkenhead, Laing Art Gallery, in Newcastle, and the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, in Swansea, while at the Castle Museum, in Nottingham, a sculpture court had been incorporated. Purpose-built sculpture galleries were also included as part of the original Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, in Bradford, and Mappin Art Gallery, in Sheffield, while the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, in Glasgow, was unusual in having the

Grand Hall as a vast display area.<sup>17</sup> Occasionally, sculpture rooms were also designated at art galleries and museums, such as at Blackburn Art Gallery. Small-scale sculpture, referred to as statuettes, that was acquired, generally found its way into architectural niches, on small pedestals or crowded vitrines. By 1931, this type of sculpture and its display could be found at local authority art galleries in Bury, Cheltenham, Glasgow, Leicester, Preston, Salford, Sunderland, Warrington and York.

## **2.2. Growth, Progress and Survival**

In 1870, the distinguished zoologist, curator and museologist, Sir William Flower (1831-1899), noted that 'a museum is like a living organism: it requires continual and tender care; it must grow, or it will perish',<sup>18</sup> Flower later became the Director of the Natural History Museum, from 1884-98, and President of the Museums Association in 1893. This conception of art galleries and museums as an organic natural structure, whose survival depended on the sustenance of acquisitions, was part of a more general cultural ethos of expansion and progression associated with the Victorian age and the public debate, to which Flower contributed, concerning evolutionary theories.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, major local authority art galleries and museums began to be established outside London. In response, central government introduced legislation immediately, in order to distinguish, at the outset, the financial responsibilities of local and central government. In 1845 the passing of the Museums Act enabled municipalities with a population of more than 10,000 to spend up to a one half-penny per rate payer on the maintenance of local museums. These measures were followed by the more general Public Libraries Act 1850 (and its subsequent amendments) and the Libraries and Museums Act 1855; Scotland was covered by the Public Libraries (Ireland and Scotland) Act 1853 and the Public Libraries (Scotland)

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<sup>17</sup> From 2006 the Mappin Art Gallery was relaunched as the new Weston Park Museum.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted under the entry 'Museum' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. xix, 11th edn., Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, London and New York, 1911, p.60.

Act 1854. Despite these measures, well into the 1880s most local government lawyers considered that the existing museums legislation did not permit the establishment or running of a local authority art gallery; as a result, special local Acts of Parliament were promoted, specific to an institution, so that such developments could be authorized. Despite the introduction of further legislation, by 1900, there was still no mandatory requirement for local authorities to provide art galleries and museums with annual purchase funds, in order to establish, or enlarge art collections; it is a situation which remains unchanged today.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, central government's financial support of municipal collection development was deliberately restricted to the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, which originally excluded Fine Art.

By the Finance Act 1894, county council and municipal corporation local authority art galleries and museums were theoretically eligible to receive art works from private collections, in remission of estate duty tax; this arrangement subsequently became part of the Acceptance-in-Lieu Scheme administered by the Museums and Galleries Commission. This power, however, was seldom utilized under this and successive Acts until the Finance Act 1972. Central government's insistence on defining the existence of municipal art galleries and museums as "a local matter", while restricting through legislation the expenditure of the rates on acquisitions, aimed to curb the growth of these institutions. The Museums and Gymnasiums Act 1891, for example, limited local authority expenditure in England and Wales to a half-penny rate; London was excluded from the Act. In Scotland, the Public Libraries (Scotland) Act 1920 limited rate expenditure to three pennies in the pound. These measures were part of a wider increasing tendency by central government to restrict local government autonomy by controlling its expenditure.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For a wider discussion of art gallery and museum legislation in general see Geoffrey Lewis, 'Enabling Legislation for Museums', in *Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice*, (ed.) John M.A. Tompson, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1992, pp. 70-80.

<sup>20</sup> See 'The Role of the State: Central Government and Local Government', in *British*

A consequence of this legal framework was that local authority art galleries and museums had to rely upon a combination of public funds from the rates and private local sources of money and art works. Private local sources included individual owners, collectors, artists and their estates, or less frequently, general public subscription. Art works were acquired as endowment or "founding" collections, group or single gifts, and bequests. Sustained but fluctuating purchase funding also came from endowment funds created by private individuals; these funds allowed the use of interest and occasionally the capital. Early twentieth-century examples were the substantial Ferens Art Gallery Trust, at Hull, and the Chipperfield and F.W. Smith Funds at Southampton City Art Gallery, which made a major contribution towards the Gallery's development of a postwar collection. Public subscriptions could also raise substantial sums, but tended to be directed towards the purchase of a particular single art work. The motivation for private support was a labyrinth of divergent interests and objectives: civic pride; altruism; the patronage of indigenous artists; in memoriam dedications; the raising of the professional status or market value of an artist; the wish to create moral and educational experiences and resources; or simply the lack of domestic space in which to display a private collection, or a single large-scale work.

Inevitably this private support created undirected assemblages of art, which varied in quality, and this hindered a more systematic or focused approach to both collecting and display. The results of this pattern of growth, progress and survival were at best miscellaneous displays, or at worse crowded and ill-assorted hangs. Within a developing professional frame of reference, municipal institutions were, therefore, encouraged to reassess and evaluate the nature and structure of their collections. As early as 1928, the Museums Association, as part of its official submission to the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, stated that, 'It is now sufficiently well established that Museum collections consist of two, if not three, definite divisions:

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*Society, 1914-45*, John Stevenson, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp.306-312.

(1) Exhibition, (2) Reserve or Research, (3) Redundant.<sup>21</sup> With these divisions came the concept of the "permanent collection", a term which until comparatively recently was still widely used by the museum profession. Fine Art, which had a useful role within the art gallery or museum, was categorized as permanent and this further reinforced the indivisibility of collecting from the longevity of an institution; during the 1950s and early 1960s, however, several local authority art galleries and museums acquired local acts of Parliament which permitted sales from these collections. In some instances, the terms "study" and "reserve" became synonymous with "storage", as a means by which to remove poor quality works from display, or to solve the demands on finite display space; for example, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery had, by 1958, divided its collection of paintings into 'reserve' and 'display' collections.<sup>22</sup> These divisions of collections into display and study categories was an early attempt at collections management.

The administration and acquisition processes for municipal art galleries and museums were other factors which determined the expansion and nature of art collections. By 1900, it had become an accepted principle for local authorities to delegate their purchasing powers to art gallery, museum and library sub-committees; responsibility for the appointment of staff and the maintenance of buildings remained with the local council. These sub-committees could be unwieldy in size, ranging from six to as many as twenty-eight members, and were dominated by local councillors whose appointment depended often on the following criteria: 'generally, if a man was newly elected to the Council he was put on the Museum Committee, because he was not looked upon as being a sufficiently good man to deal with drains and things of importance!'<sup>23</sup> Co-

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<sup>21</sup> Museums Association, 'Memorandum, 15th March 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Interim Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1928, p.137.

<sup>22</sup> Leicester City Museum and Art Gallery, *Collection of Paintings*, Department of Art, Leicester Museums and Art Gallery, 1958.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Bailey's spoken contribution to the 'Discussion' following Lawrence Haward's lecture 'The Problem of Provincial Galleries and Art Museums with Special



opted members, who occasionally included academics and private collectors, were in the minority, and a curator's selection of proposed acquisitions was, therefore, often subject to local politics and an otherwise uninformed vetting process. Equally, however, elected local councillors had a civic duty to actively monitor local government expenditure and under the Local Government Act 1933, for example, sub-committees for the administration of museums and art galleries had to consist of two-thirds of councillors or aldermen from the appropriate local authority. As early as 1928, Frank Rutter suggested a radical restructuring of the administration of municipal art galleries and museums by the creation of provincial Boards of Trustees, under the Board of Education, which would include local and national figures, and a 'body of local collectors'.<sup>24</sup> The support of local wealthy collectors and benefactors had indeed been instrumental in the controlled development of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's collections as its Director, from 1927, Solomon Kaines Smith, publicly acknowledged when he stated 'that is the only way the Keeper of an art gallery can be entirely independent of uninstructed criticism'.<sup>25</sup> From 1900, the institution received two private sources for Fine Art purchases; these were the Art Gallery Purchase Fund, an endowment source, and, from private subscriptions, the Public Picture Gallery Fund. The need for independence was also recognized by Philip Hendy (1900-80), then the newly appointed Director of Leeds City Art Gallery, who in 1935 attempted to promote the idea that local authority art galleries and museums should be removed

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Reference to Manchester', [Haward was the senior curator at Manchester City Art Gallery] delivered at the Royal Society of Arts, London on 31st May, 1922. Joseph Bailey (1860-?) was Editor of the *Museums Journal*, from 1921-26, former Secretary and Keeper of the V. & A. Museum's Circulation Department and a semi-professional artist who had trained at the Royal College of Art. The lecture was subsequently printed together with the discussion which followed, chaired by Charles Holmes [Director of the National Gallery, 1916-28], in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. xxii, July 1922, pp.631-638.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Oral Evidence, 2nd. November, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.48.

<sup>25</sup> Solomon. Kaines-Smith, 'Shock Tactics at Art Galleries: Director's Conference [Museums Association]: Ratepayers and Modern Art', *The Guardian*, 9th July, 1931.

from local government control and that legislation against the 'dumping' of mediocre works should be introduced.<sup>26</sup>

The growth of a collection created even greater demands on display and storage facilities. There was no legal obligation for municipal authorities to fund extensions to art galleries and museums, and few cities were able to draw on substantial private benefaction, such as at Leeds and Liverpool. In 1928, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than National Museums)*, written by Henry Miers and Sydney Frank Markham, recommended that municipal collections should follow a 'definite restricted policy'.<sup>27</sup> Miers, a mineralogist and university administrator, devoted his later life to museum matters and was President of the Museums Association, from 1929-33; he was also a member of the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries 1929-30. Markham was a long-standing Member of Parliament, who was successively Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, from 1931-32, and the Lord President of the Council, from 1936-37, and was President of the Museums Association, from 1939-42. Frank Rutter, as part of his evidence to the Royal Commission, also stressed the practical need for some collection specialization and the introduction of collecting policies in municipal institutions.<sup>28</sup> Rutter's idea of a guiding collecting policy and his concern that quality art works should be collected were reiterated in the Museums Association's postwar document, *The Development of Collections*, written by Trenchard Cox (1905-95) and published just after the Second World War. Cox, the newly appointed Director of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, from 1944-55, was a formidable scholar, who had previously work as a curator at the National Gallery, British Museum and the Wallace

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<sup>26</sup> Philip Hendy, 'Galleries as Art "Dumps"', *Daily Mirror*, 21st. May, 1935.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Miers and Sydney Frank Markham, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than National Museums)*, Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and T. & A. Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1928, p.46.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Oral Evidence, 2nd. November, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.50.

Collection, and was aware of pre-war developments in mainland European art galleries and museums. In this document, Cox advocated the adoption of 'a carefully considered policy' which should be responsive to the vicissitudes of the art-market, so that 'the strategy should be stable, but the tactics must be flexible; otherwise some unique opportunity may be lost for ever, merely for the sake of keeping to a programme'.<sup>29</sup> While acknowledging the miscellaneous nature of municipal collections, in terms of aesthetic quality, Cox argued that 'it is rare to find a gallery whose permanent collection does not contain some nucleus of special interest which merits further expansion and which can serve as a guiding line to future policy'.<sup>30</sup> In recommending specialization to curators of non-national institutions, Cox also advocated that this should be in direct relation to the pre-existing nature of a collection, rather than the specialist interests of a curator, or new areas of collecting, as 'it is far better to have a good collection of the work of a few artists, or of certain types of objects, than a thin and indifferent over-all spread'.<sup>31</sup> By avoiding attempts at survey-like collecting, the curator would be guided by the principle of 'fine quality' whereby acquisitions would accord with the aesthetic standards established by national institutions.<sup>32</sup>

The early development of both national and local authority collections was inextricably linked to a varied system of loans and temporary exhibitions which functioned as surrogate collections and gap-fillers. In 1929, for example, the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries discussed the Museums Association's idea of a national touring exhibition scheme which would provide art of a 'decorative, aesthetic and historical value'.<sup>33</sup> Under the National Gallery (Loan) Act 1883, the Tate Gallery

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<sup>29</sup> Trenchard Cox, *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, p.5.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Oral Evidence, 2nd. November, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.47.

was able to lend art works to local authority art galleries and museums in the U.K. only after these works had been in the collection for 15 years, if purchased, and 25 years if acquired as a gift or a bequest. In practice, however, the Tate Gallery started to lend works from the Chantrey Bequest collection, despite the testator's stipulations, shortly after the Gallery opened to the public. Up until 1945, these loans largely involved the retrogressive off-loading of Chantrey Bequest acquisitions; for example, from 1926-27, no fewer than 199 works from the Bequest were lent to 28 institutions.<sup>34</sup> The Tate Gallery did, however, also lend works, of more certain aesthetic value, in support of local authority exhibitions, such as the 'John Singer Sargent Memorial Exhibition' held at the Walker Art Gallery, in 1925, and to the Ferens Art Gallery's inaugural exhibition, in 1927. The Tate Gallery even permitted the then sensational acquisition of Augustus John's portrait, 'Madame Suggia', to be lent to the Spring Exhibition of 1928 at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery.

The idea of loans, from national institutions to municipal art galleries and museums was in response to the widely-held view that even the collections of major local authority northern art galleries were inferior and their curators lacked the superior judgement skills of national curators. In 1915, for example, the *Curzon Report*, conducted by the Trustees of the National Gallery, had recommended the extension of loans from national collecting institutions 'in order to encourage provincial and colonial galleries and to raise the standard of art education among the people'.<sup>35</sup> It was a point of view which persisted throughout the interwar period, despite the progressive exhibitions and acquisitions made by municipal institutions.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See 'Royal Commission on Museums and Galleries 1927-30' in 'Written evidence in response to questionnaires: Loans to the Provinces and Elsewhere: 1923-27', file: Treasury Records T105/6, P.R.O.

<sup>35</sup> [Curzon Report] National Gallery Committee of Trustees. *Report of the Committee of Trustees of the National Gallery appointed by the Trustees to Enquire into the Retention of Important Pictures in this Country and Other Matters Connected with the National Art Collections with Appendices*, H.M.S.O., London, 1915, p.39.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of this, see Angela Summerfield, 'Regional Collections of 20th-

These pioneering exhibitions included a notable series staged at Brighton Art Gallery, following the appointment of Henry Roberts (1870-1951), a former librarian with no formal art training or study, in 1906, as Director; he was the local representative of the National Art Collections Fund (but was too independently-minded to join the Contemporary Art Society) and later became Vice-President of the Museums Association, from 1912-13. He curated shows in addition to making the Gallery available for ground-breaking exhibitions on contemporary British and mainland European art. In 1907, the 'Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture by Modern British and Foreign Artists', was selected by the London art dealer, William S. Marchant (1868-1925), Director of the Goupil Gallery, which in 1914, held the first London show of the London Group; the latter was an attempt to bring together diverse progressive aspects of twentieth-century art practice. The London Group's very first collective showing, however, preceded its official exhibition of 1914, and was held at Brighton Art Gallery. The artists, Spencer Gore, and Douglas Fox-Pitt (1864-1922), both founder members of the London Group, organized and participated in this show at the Gallery, in 1913, under the heading 'An Exhibition of Works of English Post-Impressionists and Cubists, arranged by the Camden Town'; the Gallery purchased Robert Bevan's 'The Cab-Yard, Night', from this exhibition. Fox-Pitt was an early member of the Contemporary Art Society, from c.1912-16, and lived in Brighton, from 1911-18, where he was a member of the Brighton Art Gallery Sub-Committee. A contemporaneous exhibition programme was also taking place at Leeds City Art Gallery, under the directorship of Frank Rutter, from 1912-17, and with the support of Leeds University's Vice-Chancellor, from 1911-23, Michael Sadler (1861-1943). Sadler, was an educationalist and a leading pioneering private collector of both Old Masters, and British and foreign modern art, whose ideas on the social benefits of

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Century British Art' in *Art Treasures of England: The Regional Collections*, (ed.) Giles Waterfield, Royal Academy of Arts and Merrell Holberton, London, 1998, pp.74-77.

art and education were heavily influenced by John Ruskin (1819-1900).<sup>37</sup> In 1913, for example, the Gallery staged the 'Loan Exhibition of Post-Impressionists Pictures and Drawings', which included the Camden Town Group-associated artists, and this was followed, in 1914, by the 'Cubist and Futurist Exhibition'. The Leeds Art Collections Fund, a friends group, had to be established, however, in order to secure purchases from these exhibitions for the Gallery. This progressive cultural phenomenon persisted into the 1930s, when both the Walker Art Gallery and Platt Hall (a branch gallery of Manchester City Art Gallery given over to Twentieth-Century British Art) showed the extraordinary 'Unit 1' exhibition, in 1934.

During the interwar period, the Tate Gallery, under Charles Aitken, was in fact involved in a reciprocal loan arrangement with municipal institutions. Local authority loans of contemporary British art to the Tate Gallery were welcomed by Aitken as 'filling gaps' in the Gallery's national presentation of Twentieth-Century British Art.<sup>38</sup> In turn, the Tate Gallery lent a considerable number of works to local authority art galleries and museums as part of a deliberate general policy to resolve the 'congestion' found in national institutions; a solution recommended by the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries in 1928.<sup>39</sup> During the years 1923-27, for example, the Tate Gallery lent around 500 paintings to the art galleries and museums in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Norwich and Nottingham.

This policy of loans to municipal institutions had its supporters and detractors. The Museums Association thought that a pool of 'non-essential' art works from national institutions should be available for loan under a Central National Circulation

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<sup>37</sup> When Sadler attended Oxford University, in 1880, Ruskin was still the Slade Professor. For a discussion of John Ruskin's views on art and museums see p.42-43.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Aitken, 'Minutes of Evidence, 14th December, 1927', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Interim Report*, H.M.S.O, London, 1928, pp.114-115.

<sup>39</sup> See *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Interim Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1928, p.4.

Department, 'as it cannot be imagined that museums, either national or provincial, can continue to accumulate material indefinitely within their walls'.<sup>40</sup> This standpoint reinforced the hierarchical division between national and local authority collections, although the Museums Association did acknowledge the existence of 'several centres of excellence'.<sup>41</sup> The National Art Collections Fund also responded enthusiastically to the idea of national loans, but saw this as part of a policy of decentralization by which works of high aesthetic quality would be lent to form, in effect, national branch art galleries outside London. Conversely, Paul G. Konody (1873-1933), the cosmopolitan art critic of *The Observer* and *The Daily Mail*, and prodigious writer on art, observed that 'the loans made by the Tate Gallery, for the main part, are anything but representative of Britain's place in Art', and that 'it is difficult to understand why the Galleries in provincial cities should be regarded as temporary storehouses for unwanted examples of this or that artist's work';<sup>42</sup> Konody was then the Honorary Secretary to the British Pavilion of the Venice International Exhibition.

At the most basic level, loans functioned as surrogate permanent collections, such as at the Laing Art Gallery, which opened to the public, in 1904, with an entirely loaned survey collection of Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century British Art.<sup>43</sup> The acquisition of contemporary British art was, in terms of financial and cultural value, often a speculative venture. Art loans from public and private lenders to municipal institutions helped to stabilize this transaction by providing reinforcing definitions of Twentieth-Century British Art. Far from being detrimental to the long-term character of a

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<sup>40</sup> Museums Association, 'Memorandum, 15th March, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Interim Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1928, pp.137-138.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Paul G. Konody, 'Memorandum, 21st. May, 1929', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, pp.135-136.

<sup>43</sup> Laing Art Gallery, *Special Inaugural Loan Exhibition of Works by Artists of the British School from Hogarth to Leighton*, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, 1904.

collection, these loans were encouraged by the museum profession as having a positive benefit. In the face of local opposition, art loans were used to counteract 'deep-seated prejudice against spending public money on the more controversial modern works'.<sup>44</sup> They could also function as gap-fillers which in time could become gifts and bequests, or be replaced by similar permanent acquisitions. In addition, restricted or limited purchase funds made the loan of art works an economic necessity. In 1938, Henry Kennedy (1877-1965), the Keeper then responsible for the Local Museum Fund, administered by the V. & A. Museum, published the Museums Association's policy document entitled *Local Museums: Notes on their Building and Conduct*. This reiterated the nineteenth-century perception of non-nationals, promoted by the V. & A. Museum, that these should be defined as general museums (rather than as art galleries), whose educational purpose would be achieved through temporary exhibitions, 'as works of art require considerable funds and space for their acquisition and display'.<sup>45</sup>

The destruction, partial damage and official occupation of provincial art galleries and museums, during the Second World War, restricted the growth of collections.<sup>46</sup> In postwar austerity Britain, a 'policy of loans and exhibitions' was advocated by the Museums Association, whereby 'the deficiencies in the permanent collection, which are manifest in most provincial galleries, can to some extent be remedied by a system of borrowing, sometimes on a long-term basis'.<sup>47</sup> Originally a pre-war policy, it was once

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<sup>44</sup> Trenchard Cox, *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, p.9.

<sup>45</sup> Henry A. Kennedy, *Local Museums: Notes on their Building and Conduct*, Museums Association and Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1938, p.5.

<sup>46</sup> See Sydney Frank Markham, *Directory of Museums and Art Galleries in the British Isles*, Museums Association, London, 1948. The local authority art galleries and museums in Birmingham, Sheffield, Southampton, Sunderland and Swansea were partially destroyed. In addition, Bristol Art Gallery received extensive damage, and the art gallery at Portsmouth was completely destroyed.

<sup>47</sup> Trenchard Cox, *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, pp.8-9.



again advocated in the wake of the launch of the central government-funded Arts Council of Great Britain and its touring exhibition programme. In 1950s Britain, a plethora of loans and key exhibitions, from other public and private sources, also provided examples of Twentieth-Century British Art. Within the context of an existing local authority collection, these displays had several functions as surrogate gap-fillers, comparative examples, and authoritative forms of knowledge which suggested a basis for future collection growth and development. In 1963, the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries noted that municipal collections had benefited from past loan exhibitions, as they gave 'variety and breadth of interest', 'meaning to the galleries' own possessions' and temporarily filled 'their deficiencies'.<sup>48</sup>

On a regional and local level, the establishment of friends groups had several benefits for local authority institutions, as they channelled private money and gifts, bequests and long-term loans of art. By uniting the artistic interests of local collectors and art enthusiasts and curators, a solution was often found to counter the blocking powers of hostile local councils; this was particularly important in the area of contemporary British art. Early examples of friends groups were often modelled on two inter-related national examples, the National Art Collections Fund and the Contemporary Art Society.<sup>49</sup> The Leeds Art Collections Fund, established in 1912, by Frank Rutter and Michael Sadler, for example, was 'the means, not only of stimulating interest in the [Leeds City Art] gallery but also of attracting a number of very important gifts'.<sup>50</sup> In 1937, the Sheffield Art Collections Fund (later renamed The Sheffield Society for the Encouragement of Art) was also established to ensure the purchase of more progressive contemporary British art for Sheffield's art galleries as:

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<sup>48</sup> Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries*, H.M.S.O., London, 1963, p.11.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapters 7 and 8, respectively.

<sup>50</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Oral Evidence, 2nd. November, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.48.

however desirable in themselves, gifts from individuals are likely to be haphazard, and cannot contribute, except by accident, to any planned programme of expansion. To be of the highest value, an art collection, like a library, must be made according to a definite plan. Only by the City itself purchasing pictures can our collection be made in any sense complete.<sup>51</sup>

The role of friends groups could also provide a solution to the dilemmas as to what to represent in the field of contemporary British art. Works were usually acquired by friends groups under a purchase-loan arrangement and were then lent to a local authority art gallery or museum, as a "permanent loan"; a legal oxymoron which allowed curators time to evaluate the cultural and sometimes financial value of a particular art work, or artist.

### **2.3. Central Government Policy**

In the first part of the twentieth-century, the idea of a Ministry of Fine Art, or a least the creation of 'some central authority', was promoted with the intention that administrative responsibility of cultural amenities would be removed from local to central government.<sup>52</sup> Public art galleries and museums were identified as an intrinsic part of cultural life in an increasingly democratic Britain. Central government, however, vigorously maintained a financial distance from municipal collections by insisting that its support should come principally through national institutions in the form of 'advice, collaboration and loans of objects for exhibition'.<sup>53</sup> These 'instances of goodwill, and of friendly and effective co-operation' encouraged an informal and

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<sup>51</sup> Circular Letter: Sheffield Art Collections Fund, unpublished, 1937: Graves Art Gallery Records, Sheffield.

<sup>52</sup> For demands for a Ministry of Fine Art(s) see for example, Wynford Dewhurst, *Wanted: A Ministry of Fine Arts*, Hugh Rees Ltd., London, 1913. The Imperial Arts League also held a conference entitled 'A Minister of Art' at Leighton House, Holland Park on 18th June, 1914. For 'some central authority' see, for example, Frank Rutter, 'Oral Evidence, 2nd. November, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.48.

<sup>53</sup> Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, *2nd Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1938, p.19.

advisory relationship to develop between national and municipal institutions and their curators.<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that central government's creation and funding of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, in 1927, deliberately established a body with 'limited powers, which are purely advisory and not executive'.<sup>55</sup>

As has been noted earlier, the restricted financial support from local authority rates created a paradoxical situation, whereby public institutions were largely reliant on private sources for gifts and bequests of art works and purchase money, and even for the funding of art gallery and museum buildings, extensions and refurbishments.<sup>56</sup> As early as 1922, the Museums Association unsuccessfully argued for a Royal Commission to examine this aspect of British provincial art galleries and museums. In the same year, the Curator of Manchester City Art Gallery, from 1914-45, Lawrence Haward (1878-1957), publicly expressed the need for this and other developing collections to attract central government funds:

There is, we think, every prospect of a healthy expansion of municipal galleries and museums, but the local provision of art galleries and their contents should not be a matter for municipalities alone. There is a limit to what can be expected from local effort, even though the limit has nowhere yet been approached.<sup>57</sup>

There were, in fact, several abortive proposals for the introduction of a national museum framework which would administer central government purchase funds for non-national institutions; the latter measure would be in addition to the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. Early in 1939, Lord De La Warr (1900-76), President of the Board of Education, from 1938-40, and a private collector of contemporary British

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p.20.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*, p.21.

<sup>56</sup> See for instance Sydney Frank Markham, *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles (other than the National Museums)*, Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and T. & A. Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1938.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted from Lawrence Haward's address to the Royal Society of Arts, printed in 'The Art Gallery and the City: Manchester's Example: Mr. Haward Outlines a Live Policy', *The (Manchester) Guardian*, 1st June, 1922.

art, promised to establish a Royal Commission and outlined plans for a provincial art gallery and museum service; the outbreak of the Second World War, however, prevented the introduction of these measures. De La Warr's interest in progressive contemporary culture led him to be instrumental, as mayor of Bexhill-on-Sea, from 1932-35, in securing local authority funding for the radically-designed entertainment pavilion, created by Eric Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff, which opened in 1935. Following wartime discussions between the Museums Association and the Ministry of Reconstruction, in March 1943, the Museums Association produced its own plan entitled 'A Memorandum on Museums and Reconstruction', which was submitted to the Ministry in May 1945.<sup>58</sup> This proposed the establishment of a central government-funded 'Museum and Gallery Grants Board' which would oversee local authority provisions for non-national art galleries and museums; ensure the employment of qualified staff; provide training courses; administer loan and touring exhibitions; and give a special advisory role to an art gallery or museum for each region. In November 1946, the former Director of the National Gallery, from 1934-45, Kenneth Clark (1903-83), in his role as Chairman of the Art Panel, from 1946-48 and 1951-53, of the newly constituted Arts Council of Great Britain (hereafter the Arts Council), proposed the extension of this body's remit. Clark's radical idea was that central government should allocate £50,000 to the Arts Council, which would then assume responsibility for the administration of a new system of non-national art gallery purchase grants specifically for contemporary British art.<sup>59</sup>

In 1949, George Tomlinson (1890-1952), Labour Minister of Education, from 1947-51, drew up the outlines for two parliamentary bills, the 'Libraries and Museums Bill'

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<sup>58</sup> This document was published as part of 'Museums and Galleries: A National Service: A Post-War Policy: Submitted by The Council of the Museums Association', Museums Association, *Museums Journal*, Vol. xlv, June 1945, pp.33-45. It was subsequently reprinted as a separate pamphlet in 1945. For its submission see Education Records: EB/3/39 P.R.O.

<sup>59</sup> 'Arts Council of Great Britain Minutes 1945-46, A.C.G.B.: Art Panel Paper No.1': Tate Gallery Records T.G.148, Tate Gallery Archive.

and the 'Museums Bill', as part of central government's new nationalization policy. Under the Museums Bill of 1949 (also referred to as the 'Amending Bill') it was proposed that central government would set aside a five-year fund of £250,000 for distribution to local authorities and governing bodies of voluntary and independent cultural institutions in the provinces. In addition to improved financial provisions, the Minister also proposed that national art galleries and museums should acquire an enhanced official status as forums for training and expertise; the Tate Gallery, would therefore, under this arrangement, have acted as the main adviser for acquisitions of contemporary British art. Local authorities, however, objected to the Museums Bill, because it would have brought about for the first time direct central government involvement in local government's cultural decisions, such as art purchases for collections.<sup>60</sup> In 1949, the Public Libraries, Museums and Art Galleries Bill was drafted to be presented to the House of Commons in 1950, but the economic crisis and change of government, in 1951, brought an end to the introduction of this legislation.<sup>61</sup>

#### **2.4. Local Authority Art Gallery and Museum Collecting Policies**

Attempts to focus and define collection growth required a framework. One way both to counter and to harness private benefaction was through the writing of an official collecting policy. While the wide-scale formal adoption of these policies is a comparatively recent development, it should be noted that municipal institutions have recorded their collecting interests and aims in a range of private and published forms, throughout the twentieth-century. These documents included "wants list" of artists' names; private curatorial statements of intent, such as the correspondence between a curator and an artist, or a source of funding; internal memoranda; the museum

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<sup>60</sup> Neither of these Bills reached a formal draft stage. The P.R.O., House of Lords Library and the National Museum of Labour History hold no further information on these two Bills.

<sup>61</sup> 'Legislation for the 1950 Session: Public Libraries, Museums and Art Galleries Bill', 12th May 1949: Treasury Records T227/91, P.R.O.

director's internal annual report; the published annual report; a written element of formal submissions to public and private grant-making bodies; public mission statements; published catalogues; permanent collection-based exhibitions; press interviews; and retrospectively, curatorial autobiographies. Formal written policies for local authority art galleries and museums began to be introduced during the 1930s. Leeds City Art Gallery, for example, adopted 'a policy for purchases' in 1934, and, in 1936, Southampton City Art Gallery published a policy, although this was written by the Gallery's art adviser, Kenneth Clark, then Director of the National Gallery, from 1934-45.<sup>62</sup> In 1939, John Rothenstein (1901-1992), the recently appointed Director of the Tate Gallery, from 1938-64, advocated the widespread introduction of collecting policies noting that:

the adoption by various art galleries of more definite policies, such as would enable them to make their requirements more precisely known, would not, I am convinced, discourage the private benefactor, but would rather stimulate and reassure them.<sup>63</sup>

Conversely, the lack of a policy would signal an absence of 'definite objectives' and institutions would be 'without the means, even where they had the will, to resist the importunities of those who, for one reason or another, wished to present or to bequeath examples of the popular academic painting of the day';<sup>64</sup> 'popular academic painting' was a reference to both the Royal Academy and the effects of the Chantrey Bequest on the Tate Gallery's holdings of British art. Immediately after the Second World War, the Museums Association published the document *The Development of Collections*, written by Trenchard Cox, which promoted the widespread adoption of formal collecting policies. Here collection development was firmly linked to ideas of

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<sup>62</sup> See 'A Policy for Purchases' in *Annual Report*, City of Leeds Public Art Gallery 1934-35, p.2; Letter: Kenneth Clark to Town Clerk, Southampton, 14th March, 1936: National Gallery Archive 201, National Gallery Archives; and 'Southampton Art Gallery Subcommittee Minutes', 2nd April, 1936 in *Annual Report*, Southampton City Art Gallery, 1936.

<sup>63</sup> John Rothenstein, 'Towards a Policy for Art Galleries', *The Connoisseur Magazine*, Vol. civ, October 1939, p.208.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

'fine quality' rather than quantity, as 'the prime function of all galleries must be to serve as a touchstone of artistic merit'.<sup>65</sup>

## **2.5. The Local and Regional Nature of Local Authority Art Galleries and Museums**

The concentration of influential artistic bodies and the creation of national art galleries and museums in London, inevitably created a hierarchical structure. "Local", "regional", or "provincial" museums and art galleries created in the nineteenth-century were seen as performing a secondary role to the main arena of art. In 1880, John Charles Robinson (1824-1913), formerly a prominent curator at the South Kensington Museum, outlined the distinctions to be drawn between national and local authority museums, which had coloured early relations between the Museum and provincial institutions, noting that 'provincial art museums' should be restricted to their 'direct educational value', specifically in relation to the economic and social 'wants and requirements of each locality'.<sup>66</sup> While at the South Kensington Museum, Robinson had used his position to oppose local authority collecting of Old Masters and sculpture, and the use of central government funds for this purpose, and had instead advocated the acquisition of copies and reproductions of Fine Art; he subsequently became the Surveyor to the Queen's Pictures, from 1882-1901. In addition, the term local art, within the art gallery and museum world, was often used as a generic description which covered topographical and documentary works, rather than art which was more readily associated with the category of Fine Art. Together these factors contributed to the relatively low status of local or regional Fine Art, a perception which was reinforced by the expansion of the commercial art world in London. This, in turn, was part of a wider cultural nexus of national curators and their

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<sup>65</sup> Trenchard Cox, *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, p.6.

<sup>66</sup> John Charles Robinson, 'Our National Art Collections and Provincial Art Museums' in *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. viii, 1880, p.253.

collections, critics and art historians, influential collectors and private collections, and pioneering exhibitions which created a persuasive consensus climate centred on London.<sup>67</sup> Within this context, municipal institutions and their collections became increasingly subject to a hierarchy, and this encouraged competitive collecting patterns defined by replication, emulation and duplication. An approach assisted by reinforcing loans from high-profile London-based public and private sources. The collecting of contemporary local art, therefore, became problematic as a burgeoning curatorial profession gave precedence to the 'comparative status of the collection' over the needs of local and regional artists and the public at large.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For an account of its later developments see Lawrence Alloway, 'Network: The Art World Described as a System', *Artforum*, Vol. xi, September 1972, pp.28-32.

<sup>68</sup> See Mervyn Levy, 'Museums or Mausoleums: The Summing-Up', *The Studio*, Vol.cixi, March 1961, pp.118-119.



## CHAPTER 3: THE PURPOSE OF PUBLIC ART GALLERIES, MUSEUMS AND THEIR COLLECTIONS

### 3.1. Education

In the nineteenth-century, the primary cultural role of municipal museums and art galleries was education. As early as 1840, it was noted that this role required two distinct types of institutions. These were the 'local museum', which aimed to improve design and manufacture through instructive exhibits, displays and lectures, and the 'public galleries of the higher works of art... the want of which, though not operating so prejudicially upon industry, is yet both morally and intellectually a serious evil'.<sup>69</sup> In practice, these educational aims were usually combined within a single municipal building. At the Mappin Art Gallery, for example, both the 'commercial and moral future of the town' was catered for, where the displays 'cannot fail to be humanizing and elevating on all who resort to the Gallery, while its effects on the artistic products of the town will be shown not so much directly in the production of designers as in a cultivation of the public taste demanding high artistic excellence'.<sup>70</sup> At the Walker Art Gallery, for example, the curatorial direction of the collection was to display it as a single entity, which offered both works of technical skill and those which 'by appealing to common feelings and sentiments of our daily life, have afforded a fine moral lesson'.<sup>71</sup>

In 1903, the *Museums Journal* carried an extract, in English, which advocated the new approach to collection division, adopted by some curators in Germany, which was the creation of an index collection and a study collection.<sup>72</sup> In the same year, an

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<sup>69</sup> Edward Edwards, *The Fine Arts in England; their State and Prospects considered relatively to National Education: Part I The Administrative Economy of the Fine Arts*, Saunders & Otley, London, 1840, p.327. This pamphlet was written in response to the House of Commons Committee on Arts and Manufactures 1836.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*, Simpkin, Marshall & Company, London, 1888, p.170.

<sup>71</sup> Walker Art Gallery, *Annual Report*, 1888, City of Liverpool, 1888, p.5.

<sup>72</sup> A. B. Meyer, 'K. Koetschau on Museums', *Museums Journal*, Vol. ii, June 1903,

alternative division of collections was defined in terms of a categorization of audiences and their needs by Francis Arthur Bather (1863-1934), a geologist and curator at the Natural History Museum, who in his role as President of the Museums Association, addressed the issue of institutional art collecting and its educational purpose. The beneficiaries were defined, by Bather, as the 'investigators' (a type of proto-type art historian); 'students of school or college standing, with whom are joined amateurs and collectors' and a 'lay public'.<sup>73</sup> In response to the needs of these audiences, collections would be divided into three sections which were:

- (1) a stored series, accessible only to investigators
- (2) an exhibited series intended for the instruction of students and for the assistance of amateurs...but denied to the public
- (3) a smaller series of carefully selected objects so displayed as to make the utmost appeal to the great public.<sup>74</sup>

Under this arrangement the role of the museum (here used in its generic sense to include art galleries) encompassed three aspects of education which were 'Investigation, Instruction and Inspiration'.<sup>75</sup> 'Investigation' was directed at the 'Specialist', 'Instruction' was the activity of the 'Student', and 'Inspiration' was aimed at the 'Man'.<sup>76</sup> In relation to 'Investigation' and 'Instruction', Bather was aware of one of the major pitfalls of such a stratified system of display: aesthetic boredom. In order to counteract this, he advised that displays should be distinctive as 'even those with a knowledge of the arts and a lively interest in the objects exhibited complain that oases of beauty are overwhelmed by the fatiguing desert of commonplace'.<sup>77</sup> The category

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pp.363-364.

<sup>73</sup> Francis Arthur Bather, 'Functions of Museums', [Presidential Address to the Museums Association Conference held at Aberdeen in 1903], *Museums Journal*, Vol.iii, September 1903, p.73.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, pp.93-94.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p.77.

'Inspiration' offered greater aesthetic freedom to the curator, as the role of the art gallery and museum here was to simply 'inculcate beauty'.<sup>78</sup>

Since early in their history, art galleries and museums were bracketed with libraries as public educational resources. Inevitably, those involved in the public library movement, of the nineteenth-century, sought to transpose the theory of library systems of classification to the display of the Fine, Applied and Decorative Arts, as an educational resource. In 1853, for example, the brothers John Woody and Wyatt Papworth (1822-94) published *Museums, Libraries, and Picture Galleries, Public and Private; Their Establishment, Formation, Arrangement and Architectural Construction*, in response to The Public Libraries Act 1850; the latter was appended to the book. Wyatt Papworth was an architect and antiquary who, together with his brother, had just published the first volume, in 1853, of their momentous *Dictionary of Architecture*. Under the heading 'Prerequisites of a good Picture Gallery', the Papworths suggested four display schemes. These were:

- (1) a 'miscellaneous arrangement' recommended as 'the most gratifying to the public'
- (2) 'according to the country of the painters'
- (3) 'according to the qualities of certain recognized schools of art'
- (4) 'according to a capricious classification of subjects'.<sup>79</sup>

In the latter half of the nineteenth-century, the two great art theoreticians and practitioners, William Morris and John Ruskin, promoted the spiritual, moral and practical (or applied educational) benefits of Fine Art and the Industrial Arts. These influential ideas informed one of the earliest published discussions, by Thomas Greenwood (1851-1908), on public museums and art galleries, which appeared in

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p.77.

<sup>79</sup> John Woody and Wyatt Papworth, *Museums, Libraries, and Picture Galleries, Public and Private; their establishment, formation, arrangement and architectural construction*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1853, p.43.

1888;<sup>80</sup> Greenwood was a major figure in the nineteenth-century library movement and supported the self-help ethic. One of the aims of this publication was to set out 'the rationale of art galleries'. Greenwood identified three interlinked educational experiences offered by art galleries. These were that 'they place us [the public] in direct communication with some of the best thoughts and feelings of highly-gifted people'; the public display of 'pictures, again, not only give us the records of the past and the present, but help us to gain an intimate knowledge of some of the best lives lived by men and women'; and that 'there is always something more to be learned from a picture than the picture itself can tell us'.<sup>81</sup> Thus pictures, it was argued, were 'powerful aids in education, as well as giving pleasure and restfulness to the mind', because they combined ideas of moral exemplars, a sense of history (and implied national identity) and beauty. By appealing to the public at large, art within a public art gallery and museum became 'essentially democratic in its character' and 'beautiful'.<sup>82</sup>

John Ruskin, whose views on art practice and its appreciation dominated the nineteenth-century, also addressed the nature of art galleries and museums, and their methods of display and interpretation. In his essay entitled 'A Museum or Picture Gallery: Its Functions and its Formation', which appeared in the influential *Art Journal*, Ruskin argued that both the objects and the displays should convey aesthetic experiences. An arrangement or hang should be an 'example of perfect order and perfect elegance, in the true sense of that test word, to the disorderly and rude populace'.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the display should also function as the outward expression of man's creative continuity, which Ruskin termed the 'heroic in the life of man'.<sup>84</sup> An influential figure in the nineteenth-century museum movement was Thomas C. Horsfall

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*, Simpkin, Marshall & Company, London, 1888, p.10.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>83</sup> John Ruskin, 'A Museum or Picture Gallery: Its Functions and its Formation', *The Art Journal*, Vol. xix, June 1880, p.161.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p.162.

(1841-1932), son of a wealthy Manchester cotton merchant. Horsfall was a follower of Ruskin, and with others had founded the Horsfall Art Museum (subsequently the Manchester Art Museum) in 1877; Ruskin wrote the preface to Horsfall's publication, *The Study of Beauty*. Horsfall's aim was to educate and inspire the working classes, and, in 1886, he moved his Museum to the industrial area of Ancoats, where he established one of the earliest loan schemes for schools. The Museum's collection was thoroughly eclectic covering paintings, engravings, photographs, reproductions, antiquities, ceramics, glass, metalwork, Natural History specimens and views of old Manchester; in 1918 the local authority assumed responsibility for the Museum which eventually closed in 1953. In relation to the newly created local authority art gallery for Manchester, which was Manchester City Art Gallery, and had opened in 1883, Horsfall published several long letters, in 1890, which outlined his views as to what constituted 'a gallery of good pictures'.<sup>85</sup> In the following extract, Horsfall recommended that several collections should be created within Manchester City Art Gallery, in order to cover a broad educational remit:

No one can intelligently and fully enjoy any picture or statue unless he has some measure of three kinds of knowledge. (1) He must know something about the subject represented, or he cannot enjoy the expression by the works of the artist's feeling and thought; (2) he must know something of the process of the art in which the artist has worked, or he cannot know what effects the artist sought or might have sought; (3) he must know something of the history of the art, or he cannot understand what elements in the work are due to the artist himself and what to his time and place; or enjoy at all some of the finest works ever produced.<sup>86</sup>

Under the remit of late nineteenth-century education, municipal displays of art, either through temporary loans or collection exhibits, came to be associated with aesthetic experiences of beauty and taste, morality, British history and applied knowledge.

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<sup>85</sup> Thomas C. Horsfall, 'Letter to the Editor', *Manchester Courier*, 1890, extract in *The Late Victorians: Art, Design and Society 1852-1910*, Bernard Denvir, 1986, p.29.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p.29.

### 3.1.2. Art Galleries, Museums and Aesthetics

In the nineteenth century, the influential theorist, Walter Pater (1839-94), an associate of the Pre-Raphaelite painters and a key figure in what became known as the Aesthetic Movement, gave the term "aesthetics" a particular meaning, key elements of which were an individual's pleasure in response to an art work's innate qualities. This experience of art was in marked contrast to the moralizing and socially beneficial role of art in society promulgated by Morris and Ruskin. Public art collections potentially provided the perfect setting for putting these ideas into practice. Despite their association with the Victorian Age, the impact of these ideas did not abruptly cease with the death of Ruskin, in 1900, or with the demise of Queen Victoria, in 1903, but continued to inform the writings of a new generation of art critics and curators, whose careers straddled both the nineteenth and twentieth century. These included D.S. MacColl, Roger Fry and Frank Rutter, and senior public art curators, such as Lawrence Haward, Elijah Howarth, Charles Holmes, Solomon Kaines Smith, John Rothenstein, Kenneth Clark and Trenchard Cox. Specialists in their own right, many of these figures enjoyed combined professions, as writers on art, and public curators, and, in some instances, such as Fry, MacColl and Holmes, as semi-professional artists. Through their publications and curatorial roles, public art collections continued to be credited with creating a morally and spiritually healthier population, and an aware and receptive audience, who could readily be transformed into twentieth-century consumers, in the form of leisure (a new interwar concept), or as owners of art objects.

The picture gallery of the nineteenth century, as has been previously noted, offered two possible arrangements, a historical hang, or a miscellaneous hang. In 1903, Francis Bather, as President of the Museums Association, called for the arrangement of 'public rooms of art museums' in 'a more artistic manner';<sup>87</sup> although, as has been

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<sup>87</sup> Francis Arthur Bather, 'Functions of Museums', [Museums Association Conference

noted earlier, Bather was a geologist, his official address aimed to highlight current museum issues in general. Bather emphasized the over-riding need for harmonious arrangements. Here only a selection of the finest works in the collection would be put on display, as 'the art museum should not merely exhibit works of art; it should be a work of art' and thus achieve its Ruskin-inspired function 'to spread an appreciation of beauty in all its forms, a love of beauty, a hatred of ugliness'.<sup>88</sup>

In 1906, Roger Fry, the British critic and artist, as the recently appointed Curator of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, published his vision for the future in the essay 'Ideals of a Picture Gallery'. Here Fry defined the 'public picture gallery' as a place where the audience would 'acquire definite notions about the historical sequence of artistic expression' and develop a 'susceptibility to the finest artistic impressions by a careful attention, fixed with all patience and humility, only upon the works of the great creative minds'.<sup>89</sup> Fry had previously edited an edition of Sir Joshua Reynolds' famous *Discourses*, and it is not inconceivable to suppose that Fry's own reference to 'the historical sequence of artistic expression' drew on Reynolds' promotion of creative continuity, from the Old Master artists onwards, linked to high aesthetic standards;<sup>90</sup> Fry had in fact made several competent copies of Old Master-type art works, as part of his own practical art training. The seeking out of neglected art works from the Metropolitan's stores and the nature of the art market was a logical (Fry, after all had an exemplary background in the Natural Sciences) and practical response to the competitive nature of both public and private collections in

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Presidential Address 1903], *Museums Journal*, Vol.iii, September 1903, p.76.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p.80 and p.76.

<sup>89</sup> Roger Fry, 'Ideals of a Picture Gallery', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol.i, March 1906, p.59.

<sup>90</sup> Roger Fry, 'Introduction' to *Discourses Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Kt.*, Seeley & Company, London, 1905. For a discussion of Reynolds' influence on Fry's ideas see Christopher Green (ed.) *Art Made Modern: Roger Fry's Vision of Art*, The Courtauld Gallery and Merrell Holberton, London, 1999, pp.14-16.

America, and the soaring prices of major acknowledged masterpieces. Where Fry differed from his contemporaries was in his approach which both challenged ideas of received knowledge, and identified art galleries and museums as having the cultural authority to conduct their own reassessments of Fine Art's cultural worth. This marriage of scholar-connoisseur ideals with ideas of common perception and creativity, resulted in displays where an arrangement directed by aesthetics was given precedence over the presentation of a historical narrative.<sup>91</sup> Gallery rooms were to be arranged so 'that it shall be apparent to each and all that some things are more worthy than others of prolonged and serious attention'.<sup>92</sup> Art works were deemed to possess inherent aesthetic qualities, which only the scholar-connoisseur could recognize and interpret, but that a broad public could, through regular contemplation, come to appreciate; this belief would subsequently be encapsulated in Clive Bell's (1881-1966) dictum for contemporary progressive art, 'significant form'. A progressive art critic and art theorist, Bell was closely associated with Fry and the Bloomsbury Group; his wife was the painter Vanessa Bell. In 1914, Clive Bell's beliefs were encapsulated in his seminal book *Art*.

By the interwar period, the growth of large municipal institutions' art collections necessitated the re-presenting of their displays of predominantly British art. The curator, Solomon Kaines Smith, believed that 'a general education in the history of art' could be combined with the opportunity to 'exercise' the 'aesthetic faculties'.<sup>93</sup> Under his directorship, a general aesthetic experience within a broad historical hang was

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<sup>91</sup> Flaminia Gennari Santori, 'European Masterpieces for America: Roger Fry and the Metropolitan Museum of Art' in *Art Made Modern: Roger Fry's Vision of Art*, (ed.) Christopher Green, The Courtauld Gallery and Merrell Holberton, London, 1999, p.114. Santori's discussion, however, neglects the financial and practical demands of public collecting.

<sup>92</sup> Roger Fry, 'Ideals of a Picture Gallery', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Vol. i, March 1906, p.59.

<sup>93</sup> Solomon Kaines Smith, 'Leeds City Art Gallery', *The Evening Post* [Leeds], 7th March, 1925. This article gives details of the spectacular refurbishment of Leeds City Art Gallery, under Solomon. Kaines Smith.



introduced into gallery rooms at Leeds City Art Gallery, which had been experimentally refurbished in 1925; an exercise in the educational aesthetic experience which had its antecedence in the ideas of Ruskin and Fry. Few provincial local authority art galleries and museums, however, could afford the introduction of new "white light" lighting schemes and lustre-like paint effects, as at Leeds City Art Gallery. A subsequent scheme of redecoration and re-arrangement, unveiled in 1933, was undertaken by John Rothenstein, as the Director, from March 1932 to December 1933. Mouldings and other Victorian decorations were removed, while gallery walls were covered with paper in shades of biscuit grey-blue with a stippled surface effect, the combined effect of which served to brighten the galleries. As part of this new aesthetic experience, separate rooms designated for the display of the Gallery's British contemporary watercolours and contemporary oil paintings were introduced.<sup>94</sup> These pre-1945 refurbishments, of Victorian gallery rooms, aimed to provide a more contemporary and sympathetic setting for both the domestic-scale and progressive forms of Twentieth-Century British Art. In 1949, Trenchard Cox drew attention to the continued widespread existence of art gallery and museum internal decoration, which dated from the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and argued that the aesthetic character of these interiors hindered the sympathetic display of Twentieth-Century British Art. The very aesthetics of the majority of local authority buildings were deemed anachronistic where 'pictures were displayed in vast halls tricked out with every conceivable ornament on cornice and on capital, and with tessellated floors of brilliantly variegated hues'.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Museums Association, 'Redecoration and Re-arrangement of the Leeds City Art Gallery Collection', *Museums Journal*, Vol. xxxiii, October 1933, p.266.

<sup>95</sup> Trenchard Cox, 'The Provincial Museum', part of a series of lectures delivered at the Royal Society of Arts, and subsequently published in full as the pamphlet *Museums in Modern Life*, Royal Society of Arts, London, 1949, p.13. An edited version of the lecture also appeared in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, May 1949, pp.31-34.

The role of the 'provincial picture gallery' in shaping the 'modern sensibility' was also addressed by Herbert Read, the influential visual arts theorist and former Curator of Decorative Arts at the V. & A. Museum, from 1922-31, who had been inspired by recent changes in display practices following visits to German art galleries and museums.<sup>96</sup> In 1932, Read recommended that institutions should rid themselves of art which exemplified the 'popular empiricism in taste' and replace this with modern art selected on the basis of 'knowledge and sensibility and a cultivated taste'.<sup>97</sup> Fry's more radical ideas, on art displays and contemporary art, were, to judge by surviving documentary evidence, seldom taken up in Britain. Indeed his advocacy later attracted the open hostility of the prominent municipal curator, Solomon Kaines Smith, who wrote that 'there is no aesthetic need... for exploration, whether scientific or empirical, of the underlying principle of plastic form, or for the translation of emotional reactions into diagrammatical design!'<sup>98</sup> One exception to this state of affairs was the short-lived experiment at Belfast Art Gallery, where, in 1936, the Gallery incorporated ethnographic 'specimens of primitive sculpture' alongside Fine Art in 'a specially designed unit'.<sup>99</sup>

The idea of art displays, determined by a guiding aesthetic did, however, influence several prominent curators. In 1934, for example, John Rothenstein, as the first Director of a new, purpose-built local authority art gallery in Sheffield, the Graves Art Gallery, introduced 'a severe aesthetic standard' in his presentation of Twentieth-

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<sup>96</sup> Herbert Read, 'The Problem of the Provincial Picture Gallery II - The Remedy', *The Listener*, 7th September, 1932, p.339. Read had previously published a two-part article based on his visits to German art galleries and museums, entitled 'The Modern Museum' which appeared in *The Listener*, 29th June, 1932, p.943 and 6th July, 1932, p.24.

<sup>97</sup> Herbert Read, 'The Problem of the Provincial Picture Gallery II - The Remedy', *The Listener*, 7th September, 1932, p.339.

<sup>98</sup> Solomon Kaines Smith, *Painters in England*, The Medici Society, London, 1934, p.110.

<sup>99</sup> See John Hewitt, 'Recent Developments in Gallery Display at Belfast', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lii, May 1952, p.45.

Century British Art,<sup>100</sup> Rothenstein was also responsible for the Ruskin Museum, in Sheffield, and remained as Director until 1938. This was in sharp contrast to the pre-existing municipal institution, the Mappin Art Gallery, which was originally created as a closed bequest collection of contemporary Victorian paintings of a popular character. Charles Holmes (1868-1936), as Director of the National Gallery, from 1916-28, shared Roger Fry's belief in a perceptual continuity which could be conveyed by a public picture gallery; both Holmes and Fry were scholars, connoisseurs, early Editors of the *Burlington Magazine*, founder members of the Contemporary Art Society (in the instance of Holmes until 1914) and competent trained artists. Holmes was also formerly the Slade Professor of Art, from 1904-10, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery, from 1917-36. In promoting the National Gallery as the pre-eminent public picture gallery in Europe, where 'in no other gallery are we so free from the risk of being misled by second-rate paintings',<sup>101</sup> Old Master paintings, represented by the 'Italian Schools', were interpreted by Holmes as providing the perceptual basis for modern art, whereby 'if the nature of that appeal is once rightly analysed, we have a firm foundation of knowledge, for future analyses'.<sup>102</sup> The provision of a sound aesthetic experience was seen as providing the foundations both for future learning and the appreciation of contemporary art. A miscellaneous hang, based on aesthetics, rather than historical divisions, predominated in municipal institutions, as a response to the broad scope of collections and the evident attraction of viewing works of popular appeal and sentiment. In the hands of a skilful and receptive curator, this display incorporated a range of possible aesthetic responses, but it was an approach which as collections grew in size became less attainable.

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<sup>100</sup> Sheffield City Art Galleries, *The City Museum and Mappin Art Gallery Extension, Weston Park: Official Opening by The Right Honourable Sir Philip Sasson Under Secretary of State for Art, 16th April, 1937*, City of Sheffield, 1937, p.29.

<sup>101</sup> 'Preface' by Charles Holmes to *The National Gallery: Italian Schools*, G. Bell & Sons, London, 1923, p.x.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid*, p.viii.

Ideas of art countering the ugly aspects of life retained their validity in the twentieth century, no doubt reinforced by the wide-ranging economic and social consequences of industrial expansion and two World Wars. After the First World War, for example, the 'art museum' was promoted as having a 'primarily aesthetic' function which was 'to cultivate the taste of the general public', and a secondary role to educate the art student.<sup>103</sup> The encouragement of original thought, ideas and enjoyment directed at the broad populace, as opposed to a curatorial-led didactic display of art history, was promoted by Solomon Kaines Smith. In his lecture entitled 'The Use of an Art Gallery', he argued that 'if art is not making work more pleasant and more easy in the living of life, it is not serving its useful purpose'.<sup>104</sup> The purpose of public art galleries and its relationship with contemporary British artists and a broad public, however, had its critics. One prominent representative of which was William Rothenstein, who was one of the 'Artists Trustees' of the Tate Gallery, from 1927-34. As both Professor of Mural Painting and Principal of the Royal College of Art, from 1920-35, he publicly promoted the civic and commercial patronage of contemporary British artists, in the form of mural painting and decorative art, which he argued would also have the greatest impact on a broad audience. In 1932, for example, his public address in Bradford was subsequently widely publicized throughout Yorkshire. Here Rothenstein declared that:

The proper place for the artist is in the streets of the city, decorating the walls of hospitals, schools and churches, and city halls, and representing things of common interest to everybody...

Do you seriously think that if you spend enormous sums every year in educating young artists all they should have to do is paint cubist pictures to amuse the highbrows of Bloomsbury? There are some who think that an art gallery is the proper place for creative work. An art

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<sup>103</sup> Lawrence Haward, 'The Function of Art Museums', *Museums Journal*, Vol. xxi, December 1921, p.119. This paper was previously read at the Museums Association's Conference held in Paris in July 1921.

<sup>104</sup> Solomon Kaines Smith, 'The Use of an Art Gallery', *Yorkshire Post*, 23rd. October, 1925.

gallery is well enough, but it is a cage for stuffed birds. What we want is living song in every village and city in the country.<sup>105</sup>

Interwar private touring exhibition schemes, some of which were also directed towards non-gallery and museum venues, such as the British Institute of Adult Education's 'Art for the People', launched in 1935, too promoted the idea of a beneficial popular visual arts education; the 'Art for the People' exhibition scheme was funded by the Carnegie U.K. Trust and private individuals, and subsequently by the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.) during the Second World War. The exhibits for 'Art for the People' were selected in consultation with an influential panel. Members of this were Kenneth Clark; Eric MacLagan, then Director of the V. & A. Museum; the painter Percy Jowett (1882-1955), Principal of the Royal College of Art, from 1935-48; Herbert Read; and Lord Ivor Spencer-Churchill (1898-1956), then Honorary Secretary of the Contemporary Art Society. During the Second World War, the 'Art for the People' exhibitions retained their popular character and included exhibits by Royal Academicians, Tate Gallery loans, works lent by the War Artists' Advisory Committee and examples of industrial design. In addition, the collective use of art galleries, museums, and non-gallery venues encouraged the idea that art could be accessible and inclusive, and this belief became part of a broad postwar shift towards a more socially democratic society, heralded by the landslide election of a Labour government in 1945. In the same year, the Museums Association published its policy document, *Museums and Galleries: A National Service: A Postwar Policy*. This publication ironically associated art galleries and museums with Germanic-inspired ideas which linked experiences of culture and Nature, as part of the spiritual progression and well-being of the population:

The mass-produced pleasures and amusements of today have the ill-effects of drugs - discontent, boredom, and loss of initiative. Museums and art galleries have done much, and given the necessary financial support could do much more, to combat these evils by stimulating an

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<sup>105</sup> William Rothenstein, 'Proper Place of the Artist: Sir William Rothenstein's Views: Bradford Address', *Yorkshire Post*, 17th September, 1932.

interest in Nature and in man's reactions to his environment, and by inculcating the appreciation of beauty without which life cannot be complete.<sup>106</sup>

The association of beauty with Fine Art, and thus an aesthetic experience, was a belief sustained by postwar publications such as Trenchard Cox's pamphlet *The Development of Collections*, written for the Museums Association. Here 'the prime function of all galleries' was 'to serve as a touchstone of artistic merit', where popular appeal and 'integrity of judgement' were united in a single display, as 'it is a mistake to consider that the two points of view are necessarily contradictory, for surely the works of supreme beauty are those which speak the language understood by all'.<sup>107</sup> Cox, however, acknowledged that the acquisition of contemporary art was difficult to situate within the concept of a unifying art gallery and museum aesthetic, as 'to decide which pictures among the profusion of works by contemporary painters, are likely to have more than an ephemeral value is one of the most perplexing tasks which confront a curator'.<sup>108</sup> The art market added to the uncertainty which surrounded cultural judgements, a factor noted by Frank Markham, the Museums Association's Secretary, who, in his *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles (other than the National Museums)* 1938, commissioned by the Carnegie U. K. Trustees, recorded that:

Even in art collections there is much that is almost valueless or, if pictures by John Collier, J. Aumonier, H.W.B. Davies, etc. now fetch less than £6 each, how much more are works by vastly inferior artists likely to be worth within terms of use or artistic value? <sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Museums Association, *Museums and Galleries: A National Service: A Post-War Policy*, Museums Association, London, 1945, p.5.

<sup>107</sup> Trenchard Cox, *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, p.6.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid*, p.8.

<sup>109</sup> Sydney Frank Markham. *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of the British Isles (other than the National Museums)*, Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and T. & A. Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1938, p.46.

As local funds from the rates and private sources were used for maintenance, running costs and purchases, it should be noted that municipal art galleries and museums were expected to collect and display regional or local art for the benefit of both artists, students and the community at large. This factor again came to the fore as a result of the Second World War. During this conflict, the cultural relevance of art galleries and museums, as places to display contemporary British art, was challenged by the use of non-gallery and museum venues, where 'the difference between art as a background to everyday life and art as mere museum furniture hardly needs pointing out'.<sup>110</sup> Set against demands for emergency housing, for example, and the renewal of peacetime infrastructures, local authority art galleries and museums had to justify their continued existence. One way to reinvest and sustain the local cultural relevance of municipal art galleries and museums, in postwar Britain, was through the creation of local or provincial art collections of aesthetic merit.<sup>111</sup> The role of the art gallery as part of civic cultural life within a larger entity, such as the pre-war civic complex at Leeds (which included a library and concert hall), and the civic centre at Southampton (which included a new art school), was also considered. In 1949, Trenchard Cox, then Director of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery observed that:

I see no reason why my perfect provincial museum [here used generically] should not be the focal point of the cultural life of the region; it should maintain a close link with other cultural organizations, such as those relating to music and drama, and should work in close co-operation with the local art schools, the libraries and with educational authorities generally. In fact, it would offer the public incomparable opportunities of seeing, hearing and learning about all kinds of works of art in surroundings compatible with the beauty of the exhibits and in circumstances conducive to physical and intellectual enjoyment'.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Eric Newton, *Art for Everybody: Britain Advances*, (The British Council publication) Longmans Green & Company, London, 1943, pp.24-25.

<sup>111</sup> This approach was advocated by Trenchard Cox in *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, p.6.

<sup>112</sup> Trenchard Cox, 'The Provincial Museum', part of a series of lectures delivered at the Royal Society of Arts, and subsequently published in full as the pamphlet *Museums in Modern Life*, Royal Society of Arts, London, 1949, p.22. An edited version of the

### 3.1.3. Applied, Practical or Useful Knowledge

The nineteenth-century creation of the South Kensington Museum and the establishment of a Circulation Department for the loan of Industrial Arts objects and Fine Art reproductions, promoted the idea that the educational role of the art gallery and museum should be primarily associated with the economic production and consumption of objects. Local authority art galleries and museums, particularly in northern England, Britain's industrial heartland, were encouraged to follow the example of the South Kensington Museum, by providing both study and display collections of the Fine and Industrial Arts. Study collections, which represented high aesthetic standards, were established for the benefit of students, artists and local manufactures. At Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, for example, a 'historical collection of drawings and studies by eminent artists of the British school' was created which 'by means of sketches and studies in various stages of completion...is intended to give students and others some idea of the way in which the artists prepared for their finished work'.<sup>113</sup> These study collections also incorporated a diverse range of objects and visual material, such as industrial design products, plaster casts, drawings, Old Master reproductions and architectural photographs.

By 1900, local authority plaster cast collections, in emulation of the educational resources established by the Royal Academy and the V. & A. Museum, could be found throughout England, Scotland and Wales; these included the institutions at Batley, Dundee, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Newport, Paisley, Plymouth, Preston and Salford; as late as 1909, Birmingham initiated plans for a plaster cast collection. In addition, the display collection was also available to be studied and copied, but at the same time was aimed at a wider public. Prior to the Second World War, for example,

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lecture also appeared in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, May 1949, pp.31-34.

<sup>113</sup> Cartwright Memorial Hall, *Historical Collection of Drawings and Studies by Eminent Artists of the British School*, Bradford, u.d. but c.1921.



specific student days, subject to an entrance fee, were offered by both the Castle Museums of Norwich and Nottingham, while the Walker Art Gallery introduced additional study mornings, during the hours of general public access. Art schools were sometimes located within the same building, or adjacent to an art gallery and museum, which reinforced the educational enterprise. Notable examples included the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, at Exeter, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Southampton City Art Gallery and Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

In 1929, the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries of 1929, established in 1927, published the first part of its report. Set against a looming economic crisis, the *Report* nevertheless argued for increased central government funding, on the grounds that art galleries and museums performed an essential educational role. Education here, was defined as the conveyance of factual knowledge, and notably absent was any reference to aesthetic experiences and the educational needs of an art-trained constituency:

without them [art galleries and museums], the educational fabric of the State would be quite incomplete. To the scholar they afford the indispensable material for study in almost every domain of learning, to the artist inspiration, and to industry the resources of science. To the schoolchild they present the outward and visible explanation of what he has been taught in books. To the general public they offer edification and instruction.<sup>114</sup>

The economic Depression, of the early 1930s, brought the very future survival of municipal art galleries and museums into question. These institutions had to prove their economic and social relevance against a background of now all too visible hardships experienced by large sectors of the population. In 1933, the Museums Association published a response to this challenge entitled *The Policy of the Provincial Art Gallery*, by Charles Carter (1903-87), then Deputy Director of the

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<sup>114</sup> *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Interim Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1928, pp.28-29.

Walker Art Gallery, from 1931-36. This article presented a new definition of a public art gallery, which combined nineteenth-century views with contemporary ideas (points 3 and 4), as to its role in society. Here, Carter identified the four purposes of a contemporary art gallery as:

- (1) a source of spiritual renewal against an increasingly mechanized age
- (2) a creative resource for students, artists and craftsmen working in the field of design
- (3) a cultural centre
- (4) [as an exhibition forum for] local art associations and schools to exhibit their work.<sup>115</sup>

Within this framework there were several patterns of collecting which could be pursued. Those few major institutions with ample financial resources could reasonably form collections which 'contain works only of the highest quality' with the intention of creating either historical hangs, or aesthetic arrangements.<sup>116</sup> The aesthetic display was modelled on the idea of a 'museum of taste' identified with the Kunstgewerbe Museum in Cologne, where 'geometric ornament' was 'illustrated' by a Peruvian textile and a modern cubist design.<sup>117</sup> The reference to 'geometric ornament' was an obvious variant on Roger Fry's ideas, although within the context of the local authority art gallery and museum in Britain it is clear that manufactured, as opposed to inherently hand-made objects, were to be the subject of aesthetic comparison. This perceptual union between contemporary design and Fine Art gained widespread currency during the interwar years in Britain, through the emergence of the artist-designer, teachers, enlightened businessmen, professional organizations, and specialist and general publications and articles;<sup>118</sup> Laura Knight R.A., John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Paul Nash give an indication of the diverse and vast numbers of artists whose careers crossed over into both disciplines. Within this expanding cultural context, the

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<sup>115</sup> Charles Carter, 'The Policy of the Provincial Art Gallery', *Museums Journal*, Vol. xxxiii, May 1933, p.45.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> For a discussion of this phenomenon see Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

maintenance of municipal art galleries and museums out of the rates could be justified on economic, social and spiritual grounds, because of the fusion which was taking place between ideas on design aesthetics and progressive contemporary art. Art galleries and museums with smaller or limited financial resources could pursue three collecting options. These were the acquisition of local art, which would appeal to 'local patriotism'; contemporary art which excluded 'Victorian academism' and the 'latest eccentricity from Paris' (notably Ben Nicholson and foreign abstract art); and temporary exhibitions which would give the institution a 'living policy'.<sup>119</sup> A collection of local art, Carter noted, however, may only prove suitable as a study collection in terms of aesthetic quality. Collecting, in the field of contemporary art, was even more precarious in terms of recognized cultural value, and here, Carter recommended the joint reliance on institutional membership of the Contemporary Art Society (see Chapter 8) and the role of the private individual collector, both as sources of art gifts and informed opinion on Twentieth-Century British Art.

Similar radical ideas were also more widely disseminated by Philip Hendy, during the 1930s, partially in response to the unrealized project for a new art gallery at Leeds; from 1934-45, Hendy was the Director of both Leeds City Art Gallery and Temple Newsam House. In 1935, for example, Hendy's provocatively entitled article 'Galleries as Art "Dumps" ', appeared in the popular *Daily Mirror*. Here Hendy advocated that local authority art galleries should become public cultural centres following models established in the United States, where opera, theatre and a lecture hall were included. The need to provide a specifically contemporary and broad visual education was addressed in an article of 1937, entitled the 'Ideal Art Gallery', which detailed an interview with Hendy.<sup>120</sup> Such a place would include displays of contemporary design, Applied Art, photographs and film stills (apparently aimed at both adults and

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<sup>119</sup> Charles Carter, 'The Policy of the Provincial Art Gallery', *Museums Journal*, Vol. xxxiii, May 1933, pp.47-48.

<sup>120</sup> *Yorkshire Observer*, 'Ideal Art Gallery', *Yorkshire Observer*, 6th April, 1937.

children, as the Directors Rene Clair and Walt Disney are mentioned). While stressing that Fine Art retained its aesthetic importance for provincial audiences, Hendy argued that a basic visual education had to be more broadly based which could be both intelligible and relevant to the industrial character of the region:

There must always be pictures in our art galleries, but I don't think the art gallery of the future will concentrate upon pictures so much as it does today...I believe that in a big industrial town artistic education must begin with simple things. The gallery should have a collection of good pottery and glass, textiles and furniture, and it should begin with the new, with things produced under modern industrial conditions, and work back to the old, instead of beginning with the old and stopping there, seeming to disparage the new.<sup>121</sup>

### **3.2. Art History**

In 1903, the founding of the scholarly art journal, the *Burlington Magazine*, signalled a new departure and level of enquiry for both the private connoisseur and nascent curatorial profession; it was co-founded by Charles Holmes, who was the Editor until 1909. Despite his own training in Fine Art, D. S. MacColl (1859-1948) was an early advocate of the university-trained curator with a specialist knowledge of art history.<sup>122</sup> MacColl had a distinguished academic background, and having trained as a painter and designer, was a quasi-professional artist. He was an influential writer and critic, and a poet, as well as occupying two key curatorial posts as Keeper of the Tate Gallery, from 1906-11, and Keeper of the Wallace Collection, from 1911-24. This view point was at odds with local authorities' then current practice of often employing curators with Fine Art backgrounds. At the heart of MacColl's recommendations was an artificial division between practitioners and theorists, which gained increasing currency throughout the twentieth century, as an art history degree became the requirement for an art curator. During the period 1900-39, local authority art galleries and museums employed a number of curators who had trained as artists, notably at the

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<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> D. S. MacColl, 'Minutes of Evidence, 14th December 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.111.

Royal College of Art, which as the former National Art Training School (renamed in 1896) was officially linked with the V. & A. Museum. These curators included William Grant Murray (1877-1950), Glynn Vivian Art Gallery; Robert B. Dawson, Kidderminster Art Gallery; A. F. Reeve Fowkes, Towner Art Gallery; and J. J. Brownswood followed by A. A. Cooper, Wolverhampton Art Gallery; some of these curators also taught at the local authority art school, such as William Grant Murray.

In 1932 the Courtauld Institute of Art, which rapidly gained an international reputation for the study of art, opened as the first centre for art history studies in the United Kingdom; prior to this, limited opportunities existed for the study of art history at the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh. The Institute was inherently a European-inspired creation with a strong francophile basis and its creation was due to the far-sighted generosity of Samuel Courtauld, a powerful patron of the arts, who was both a Trustee of the Tate Gallery, from 1927-37, and the National Gallery, from 1931-47. In support of this significant cultural development and conscious of the impact art history studies had already had on curatorship in Germany, Herbert Read, promoted the 'employment of a specialist' and the appointment of 'consultative or area directors when small galleries are involved', as a solution to what he saw as the poor management and lack of curatorial direction determining the development of local authority art collections in Britain,<sup>123</sup> a perspective which served to reinforce the pre-existing art gallery and museum hierarchy in which municipal curators were seen as dependent upon the advisory role of national curators, or other influential figures in the London art world. Such criticisms, coupled with the Museums Association's post-1927 nation-wide membership-drive, aimed at curators, promoted the idea that art curators were part of a distinct discipline-led profession. The belief that art galleries and museums, in the form of 'picture galleries' should be directed towards a narrowly-

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<sup>123</sup> Herbert Read, 'The Problem of the Provincial Picture Gallery II - The Remedy', *The Listener*, 7th September, 1932, p.339.

defined view of visual education was promoted in the *Miers Report* of 1928; a process reinforced by the growth in provincial art gallery and museum publications.<sup>124</sup> In the *Miers Report* it was noted that:

a disappointing feature of the picture galleries is the total absence, in general, of any arrangement which would help to explain such things as the history of art, the development of a particular school, or the different periods of any given artist.<sup>125</sup>

There were, however, exceptions, such as at Brighton Art Gallery, which had introduced a chronological hang in 1907, and by 1931 the Laing Art Gallery's collection had grown sufficiently for a hang of the British School, from the seventeenth century to the present day, to be introduced by C. Bernard Stevenson, its curator from 1904-57.

The Second World War and its attendant programme of art exhibitions and popular art publications gave additional credence to the idea that indigenous contemporary cultural and its objects were worth preserving for long-term general public benefit, because these were part of an aesthetic chronology; not surprisingly, a form of neo-Romanticism in the visual arts and literature prospered during and immediately after the War. This established a profound point of reference for art history, then an emerging academic discipline in Britain. Students and researchers in this area began to replace the pre-war artist-trained local authority art curators. As a result, there was a subtle shift from Fry's idea of collecting selective examples of art towards sequential chronological collecting, commonly referred to as survey-like collecting.<sup>126</sup> The

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<sup>124</sup> For a discussion of the growth in art gallery and museum publications see Giles Waterfield, 'The Origins of the Early Picture Gallery Catalogue in Europe, and its Manifestations in Victorian Britain', in *Art Museums* (ed.) Susan Pearce, The Athlone Press, London, 1995, pp.42-73.

<sup>125</sup> Henry Miers and Sydney Frank Markham, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than National Museums)*, Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and T. & A. Constable, Edinburgh, 1928, p.46.

<sup>126</sup> The implementation of the 'technology of the series' was part of the 'machinery of a history of art which sequences each object and provides it with sources (ancestors) and

increasing role of the art history-trained curator helped to 'systematize knowledge' in the form of linear displays of art history.<sup>127</sup> It was a development, however, which had its critics. Writing in *The Studio*, in 1960, Mervyn Levy (1915-66) argued that a municipal art curator should be 'a practising painter first and a scholar second', so as to avoid a 'sameness' of collections, where names rather than quality were the criterion.<sup>128</sup> Levy was an artist and art critic, who had trained at the Swansea School of Art and the Royal College of Art, and was, from the 1950s, successively art critic for *The Studio* and *Studio International*, and a popularizer of art for the B.B.C.

Public collecting directed towards the creation of a broad educational resource, therefore, gave way to the idea of creating, however unrealistic, in both practical and financial terms, survey-like collections associated with national institutions. A new phenomenon, the gap-filling process, resulted from this survey-like approach to collecting associated with the needs of scholarship and the academic discipline art history. D.S. MacColl, however, highlighted the early drawbacks of such an approach, even at the National Gallery. On behalf of the National Art Collections Fund, he submitted a memorandum to the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, in 1929, where he criticized the National Gallery for its 'collection of specimens of periods and the filling of so called gaps instead of securing masterpieces irrespective of names'.<sup>129</sup> In his submission, MacColl drew an important distinction between the 'art gallery' and an 'art museum'. Gap-filling was equated with the survey-like quasi-scientific collecting associated with an art museum, whereas an informed

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consequences (descendants) beyond itself. For a discussion of this development see Philip Fisher quoted in Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Routledge and Kegan, London and New York, 1995, p.97.

<sup>127</sup> For the use of 'systematize knowledge' see Dennis Farr, *English Art 1870-1940*, Oxford University Press, London, 1984, p.355.

<sup>128</sup> Mervyn Levy, 'Museums or Mausoleums: Leeds City Art Gallery', *The Studio*, Vol. clx, August 1960, p.73.

<sup>129</sup> D. S. MacColl, 'Minutes of Evidence, 14th December, 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.111.

response to the inherent aesthetic qualities of an art work was associated with purchasing for an art gallery. The art gallery was, therefore, deemed to be involved in selective acquisitions of at least high aesthetic quality, if not masterpieces, whereas the art museum was seen by MacColl as gripped by a survey-like fervour in pursuit of art as material evidence.

Collecting, as part of an art history-defined process, gradually removed collections from the needs of the artist and students in the fields of art and design, which were patronage and sources of study; a notable exception to this was the contemporary design collection established by Lawrence Haward, as part of Manchester City Art Gallery's holdings. This changing purpose of collections was noted by the artist-designer and educationalist, Robert Anning Bell, who, in 1931, criticized the widespread expenditure on 'filling up of gaps with often very indifferent works of no value to the producers of art'.<sup>130</sup> Despite such objections, gap-filling which aimed to represent a particular artist or style, deemed interesting or significant, was pursued by major local authority art galleries, such as the Walker Art Gallery which, in 1939, for example, recorded that it had acquired 'several works by recent and living British artists, which fill gaps in our collection, notably Charles Conder, Mark Fisher, Augustus John and Rowland Suddaby';<sup>131</sup> artists who represented the tail-end of British Impressionism and Slade School of Art symbolism and figuration.

### **3.3. Patronage**<sup>132</sup>

During the period 1845-1945 the creation and enlargement of local authority art galleries and museums was largely the outcome of collective or individual private enterprise. Notable examples of which included the creation of the Mappin Art

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<sup>130</sup> See E. Maclagan, 'Museum Planning', *Journal R.I.B.A.*, Vol. xxxviii, 1931, p.547.

<sup>131</sup> Walker Art Gallery, *Annual Report*, 1938-39, City of Liverpool, 1939, p.3.

<sup>132</sup> The term patronage is used here, in its widest sense, to define the use of money or influence to advance the interests of Fine Art and its practitioners.



Gallery, by John Newton Mappin, in 1887, and the Graves Art Gallery, by Alderman J. G. Graves, in 1934, both of which were in Sheffield; in 1927, Thomas R. Ferens' gift of £45,000 for the construction of Ferens Art Gallery, in Hull and a paintings purchase fund of £20,000; and the funding of an additional eighteen new galleries at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, from 1912-19, by the newspaper proprietor, John Feeney. Occasionally works of art were commissioned to be incorporated into the fabric of these buildings, such as the war memorial by Gilbert Ledward at Stockport War Memorial and Art Gallery. Early in their history, municipal art galleries and museums also functioned as significant sales venues, both for local, regional and national societies of artists (such as the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Engravers), and for annual exhibitions which were, as has been previously noted, modelled on the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition. Two early nineteenth-century examples of provincial sales exhibitions were the 'Living Artists' Exhibition', held at the Castle Museum, in Norwich, and the 'Sheffield Society of Artists' Exhibitions' held at the Mappin Art Gallery. In 1877, the Walker Art Gallery was established for the main purpose of housing an annual 'Autumn Exhibition', and this was followed by the introduction of similar exhibitions at Manchester City Art Gallery, in 1882, and Leeds City Art Gallery, in 1888. Collectively these exhibitions remained a regular feature at local authority art galleries and museums, until 1939. They included the Autumn Exhibition at Aberdeen Art Gallery; Spring Exhibition at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery; Spring and Autumn Exhibitions at Brighton Art Gallery; Summer Exhibition at Doncaster Art Gallery; Autumn Exhibition at Huddersfield Art Gallery; Spring Exhibition at Oldham Art Gallery; Spring Exhibition at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, in Preston; Spring Exhibition at Atkinson Art Gallery, in Southport; and Spring, Summer and Autumn Exhibitions at Worcester Art Gallery. These exhibitions, despite their apparent local character, did in fact attract national and even international submissions. Local authority art galleries and museums, as has been noted, purchased works from these exhibitions, and also, as a cultural venue, promoted and channelled private local and regional patronage.

During the 1930s regular exhibitions included Leeds City Art Gallery's 'Yorkshire Artists' Exhibitions' (where Henry Moore and Ben Nicholson exhibited); Laing Art Gallery's 'Artists of the Northern Counties' (from 1932, the 'Annual Exhibition of Works by Northern Artists'); Walker Art Gallery's 'Lancashire and Cheshire Artists' Exhibition'; and, in 1939, the first 'Hampshire Artists' Exhibition' was held at the briefly opened Southampton City Art Gallery. Collectively these "living artists" exhibitions were part of a widespread interwar cultural phenomenon which continued notably in northern England, at Bradford, Bolton, Hull, Newcastle and Wakefield, in the postwar era. This dual role as institutional patron and sales venue was particularly significant during the economic Depression of the 1930s, when John Rothenstein, as Director of the Sheffield City Art Galleries, noted that 'to support modern art is the most important function of a public art gallery'.<sup>133</sup> Another influential provincial Director, Solomon Kaines Smith, who had joined Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, in 1927, too, publicly advocated the idea of public art galleries supporting both local artists and artists in general, as patrons.<sup>134</sup> As we shall see in Chapter 8, the Contemporary Art Society, established in 1910, played a fundamental role in promoting the idea of provincial institutional patronage, largely for twentieth-century British artists, in opposition to the Royal Academy's influence and perceived maladministration of the Chantrey Bequest.

The patronage of local modern art by local authority art galleries and museums had been promoted by the *Miers Report*, although it acknowledged that 'this, of course, involves the risk of amassing a collection of indifferent works of art'.<sup>135</sup> A similar

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<sup>133</sup> John Rothenstein, 'Policy of Sheffield Art Galleries', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 1st October, 1934.

<sup>134</sup> See Solomon Kaines Smith, 'Shock Tactics at Art Galleries: Director's Conference [Museums Association]: Ratepayers and Modern Art', *The Guardian*, 9th July, 1931.

<sup>135</sup> Henry Miers and Sydney Frank Markham, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than National Museums)*, Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and T. & A. Constable Ltd., Edinburgh, 1928, p.45.

cautionary note, as to the aesthetic merits of local art, was expressed in the article '*Pictures and Policies*', which appeared in the Museums Association's professional publication, the *Museums Journal*, in 1934. This advised that 'a local section in a gallery' should be 'clearly marked and not confused with the general collection: otherwise there is a danger of the standard of the gallery as a whole being lowered'.<sup>136</sup> Local art, however, had the recommendation that it was affordable and plentiful. These characteristics were noted by the influential curator, Kenneth Clark, then Director of the National Gallery, who advised that 'local galleries should be encouraged to collect work of local interest, and not attempt to purchase expensive pictures in fashionable styles, which can be had on loan'.<sup>137</sup>

During the 1930s, the state of contemporary art in England was addressed in a series of B.B.C. radio lectures which culminated in the widely disseminated book *Art in England*, edited by R. S. Lambert. Published in 1938, by Penguin Books, its specific aim was to further stimulate widespread interest and debate. Several essays addressed the issue of contemporary art patronage in England and the development of what was termed "collective patronage". The latter was defined by one of the contributors, Roger Hinks, as the commissioning of artists, in the field of design, by public organizations and industry; Hinks was a cultural historian, who taught at the Warburg Institute, after it relocated from Hamburg to London, in January 1934. Through this employment, Hinks maintained that artists confirmed their social role, relevance and general public appreciation in society.<sup>138</sup> In his contribution, Jack Beddington (1893-1959), then the publicity manager for Shell-Mex & B.P., asserted that 'the day of the grand patron of the arts is over', and that the new type of private patron, exemplified

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<sup>136</sup> Major A. A. Longden, Department of Over-Seas Trade, 'Pictures and Policies', *Museums Journal*, Vol. xxxiii, February 1934, pp.388-389.

<sup>137</sup> Kenneth Clark, 'Art and the State', typescript: Clark Archive 16/4 S-T, 1934-79, Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>138</sup> Roger Hinks, 'How We Treat Our Art (1) Patronage in Art Today', in *Art in England*, R.S. Lambert (ed.), Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1935, pp.73-77.

by members of the Contemporary Art Society, such as Edward Marsh, bought on a modest scale, seldom commissioned works and favoured small-scale art which fitted into a domestic setting.<sup>139</sup> Beddington, however, believed that 'collective patronage' was 'most properly applicable to the methods adopted by museums, art galleries and societies [such as the Contemporary Art Society]'; whereas 'the commissioning of artists by an industrial firm' he defined as 'commercial patronage'.<sup>140</sup> This commercial support, Beddington maintained, re-engaged a broad public with more progressive art, and, in so doing, provided a valuable educational aesthetic experience.

Part of a post-1945 cultural phenomenon was the role played by curators and institutions as more active agents in the art world through commissions, artists-in-residence schemes and the establishment of exhibition-competitions, such as the 'John Moores', in 1957, at the Walker Art Gallery, and the Bradford 'International Print Biennale' at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, launched in 1969. As this discussion has outlined, the very fabric and exhibition history of local authority art galleries and museums embodied aspects of institutional patronage.

### **3.4. Heritage**

The establishment of national museums and art galleries was inextricably linked with nineteenth-century ideas of cultural prestige, national identity and civilization. External challenges to these ideas encouraged the concept of British heritage to develop. This centred on the art of the past, and a collecting area largely outside pre-1945 local authority collections, exemplified by Old Master works; a major exception to this was the Walker Art Gallery and its housing of the magnificent William Roscoe collection. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the National Gallery's Board of Trustees were actively defining a heritage function for the National Gallery, in response to the

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<sup>139</sup> Jack Beddington, 'How We Treat Our Art (1) Patronage in Art Today', in *Art in England*, R.S. Lambert (ed.), Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1935, p.82.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, p.83.

sale of Old Masters from British aristocratic collections on the international art market. In 1903 the National Art Collections Fund (N.A.C.F.) was established in response to this cultural development and calls for the retention of art works, through public collections; heritage was the N.A.C.F.'s founding central focus. In 1911 the National Gallery, not central government, engineered an official enquiry into 'the retention of important pictures in this country' which became known as the *Curzon Report* of 1915;<sup>141</sup> this *Report* was presented to both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and in so doing, served to fuel the heritage issue. The early relationship between the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery also defined the nature of heritage art within the context of public collections. The creation of the Tate Gallery as an annexe to the National Gallery, rather than as an autonomous collecting institution, physically excluded Twentieth-Century British Art from a heritage context. As the *Curzon Report* was keen to point out, the Tate Gallery would function as a 'Gallery of British Art of all periods', but that 'such pictures as have won recognition as masterpieces' would be continually transferred from the Tate Gallery to the National Gallery as the arena of lasting cultural values and heritage.<sup>142</sup> Recognition of the Tate Gallery's heritage role, specifically in relation to the collecting of modern British art, was further impeded by central government's continual resistance to the idea of an annual purchase grant until *The Massey Report*, published in 1945. A more poignant legacy of the Second World War was its exhibitions and publications which had temporarily suggested a cultural fusion between British art of the past and modern British art, as an expression of enduring national cultural values. The idea of

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<sup>141</sup> The full title of the *Curzon Report* was the *Report of the Committee of Trustees of the National Gallery appointed by the Trustees to Enquire into the Retention of Important Pictures in this Country and Other Matters Connected with the National Art Collections with Appendices*, H.M.S.O., London, 1915, [title page].

<sup>142</sup> National Gallery Committee of Trustees (Chairman Lord Curzon). *Minutes of Evidence of the Committee of Trustees of the National Gallery appointed by the Trustees to Enquire into the Retention of Important Pictures in this Country and Other Matters Connected with the National Art Collections*, H.M.S.O., London, 1914, p.38.

documenting and preserving Britain's heritage and ideas of cultural value lay behind such wartime schemes as 'Recording Britain'. The post-1945 heritage concept, however, would remain, until comparatively recently, embedded in notions of historic interest, retention and preservation which had limited currency in relation to examples of Twentieth-Century British Art.

## **SECTION 2**

### **CENTRAL GOVERNMENT-FUNDED ART COLLECTION SCHEMES**

#### **CHAPTER 4: THE V. & A. PURCHASE GRANT FUND**<sup>143</sup>

##### **4.1. Origins**

The first grant-making scheme was the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, originally known as the Local Museum Fund, which evolved from a nineteenth-century educational grant scheme under the auspices of the South Kensington Museum (from 1899, the V. & A. Museum). The scheme's original scope and implementation was defined by the changing educational remit of the V. & A. Museum and its collecting areas. In 1853, the newly created Science and Art Department assumed responsibility for the South Kensington Museum and with this came a shift of emphasis towards the didactical role of displays directed towards British manufacturing industries. A circulating exhibition scheme, through which art works were lent to provincial institutions for the purposes of study, was introduced by the Superintendent of Art Collections, John Charles Robinson, in 1854. This was followed by the Treasury's agreement, in 1856, to fund a purchase grant scheme, under the administration of the Science and Art Department, for the purchase of objects for schools of art.

After Robinson left the South Kensington Museum, as a curator, in 1863, (but continuing as an Art Referee until 1867), he wrote independently on the nature and

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<sup>143</sup> The following government departments were responsible for the allocation of this grant since its inception: Education Department 1881-1899, Board of Education 1899-1944, Ministry of Education 1944-1964, Department of Education and Science April 1964-1979 and the Office of Arts and Libraries November 1979-1992, the Department of National Heritage 1992-97 and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport from 1997 onwards. The Fund is now known as the M.L.A./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and is administered by the V. & A. on behalf of the Museums, Archives and Libraries Council. Its remit now includes the purchase of objects relating to the arts, literature and history by museums, galleries and specialist libraries in England and Wales. Commissioned works are now also eligible for a grant. In 1976 a separate arrangement for Scotland, the National Fund for Acquisitions (NFA), was created under the administration of the National Museums Scotland.

function of public art galleries and museums. Robinson's ideas included a central government fund for the purchase of Industrial Arts objects by non-national public art galleries and museums. This proposal was taken up by the Treasury, in 1881, when the Fund was established with an annual grant of £1,500 under the administration of the South Kensington Museum. In the previous year, Robinson had published the essay *Our National Art Collections and Provincial Art Museums*, in which he had drawn a distinction between the nature of the 'provincial art museums' and the 'great imperial or metropolitan institutions'; in other words, the local authority institutions and the national art galleries and museums in London.<sup>144</sup> The 'provincial art museums', Robinson argued, should confine their purchases to examples of the Industrial Arts while the representation of Fine Art 'must rely mainly on reproductions of fine works of art, rather than of original specimens'.<sup>145</sup> Evidently the Treasury, ever anxious to curb expenditure took note of this as the purchase grant scheme, administered by the South Kensington Museum, aimed primarily to provide objects as educational tools directed at students, practitioners and manufacturers outside London. Above all, the scope of the scheme reflected the educational concerns of the government office, the Department of Science and Art, rather than the Fine Art collection development needs of local authority art galleries and museums. This Department aimed, with varying degrees of success, to establish a national curriculum for training in the Industrial Arts (the Applied and Decorative Arts), rather than in Fine Art, at art schools outside London. In relation to this educational policy, purchase grants were available to public collections for the acquisition of reproductions of Fine Art objects (electrotypes, plaster casts and photographs) and Industrial Arts objects, defined as the 'architectural, ornamental and decorative arts'.<sup>146</sup> Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, for

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<sup>144</sup> John Charles Robinson, 'Our National Art Collections and Provincial Art Museums' in *The Nineteenth Century*, Vol. viii, 1880, p.253.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p.253.

<sup>146</sup> 'History of Scheme' in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.



example, received a grant in 1887 for the purchase of plaster casts, as an educational display collection.<sup>147</sup> While 50% of the purchase price was covered by the grant, a serious limitation of the scheme was that in order to satisfy central government accounting procedures, grants were made in the form of a reimbursement. Local authorities, therefore, had to be prepared initially to carry the full cost of purchases.

The exclusion of original Fine Art works and the financial requirements of the Fund resulted in few applications, and, in an attempt to remedy this situation, the term 'originals' was temporarily included in 1884. In 1885, the Treasury questioned the long-term relevance of the scheme and reduced the Fund to £1,200. This was followed by the Treasury's temporary cessation of the scheme, as fewer than six institutions had applied in 1887 and only £241 had been distributed as grants. This decision provoked a protest from the Liverpool Congress of the National Association for the Advancement of Art, under its influential President, Frederick Leighton, then President of the Royal Academy, and as a result, a reduced grant scheme of £1,000 was reinstated in 1889. In 1898, the Circulation Department of the new V. & A. Museum (formerly the South Kensington Museum) was created to tour educational exhibitions featuring both examples of the Industrial Arts and reproductions of Fine Art to provincial art galleries and museums; this Department also assumed responsibility for the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.

By 1900, several of Britain's major provincial local authority art galleries and museums, such as Aberdeen, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, had been in existence for more than ten years. The Museums Association wanted the grant scheme to be applied solely to the purchase of original objects. Following the removal of the science departments, structural changes and the reconfiguration of the Fine,

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<sup>147</sup> Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*, Simpkin, Marshall & Company, London, 1888, p.253.

Decorative and Industrial Arts collections, at the new V. & A. Museum, during the period 1899-1908, the Museums Association encouraged Glasgow Corporation and Sheffield Corporation to lobby the V. & A. Museum for changes to the Fund.. The then Fine Art curator for Glasgow (known as the Superintendent of Museums and Art Galleries of the Corporation of Glasgow, from 1876) was James Paton (1843-1921), who in 1896 was appointed President of the Museums Association; while Elijah Howarth, a founder member of the Museums Association, was the curator at Sheffield. The so-called "Glasgow letter" stressed the need for high-quality aesthetics, a quality associated with original art works, and declared that otherwise 'the equipment of Museums throughout the country by means of such reproductions will tend to a deplorable monotony and uniformity':<sup>148</sup> "museums" was used here generically to encompass both art galleries and museums. On the strength of these protests, the V. & A. Museum successfully persuaded the Treasury to increase the grant by £250 to £1,000, for the financial year 1899-1900 (although the Museums Association had lobbied for a grant of £3,000) and to £1,500, for the period 1900-02; the V. & A. Museum also gained the important right to carry over unspent funds to the next financial year; a right which it retains today. During the First World War, no grants were allocated and, as a result, by 1918 the scheme's reserves had risen to £2,100.

In 1919, there was a change in policy as a result of the appointment of new curatorial staff at the V. & A. Museum, and original examples of the Decorative Arts became favourably considered for grants. Fine Art, in the form of paintings, prints and sculpture, however, was still excluded, although electrotype prints and plaster casts for the purposes of study were eligible; however, this extension of the scheme together with the Treasury's introduction of an annual grant of £1,250 did not lead to an increase in applications. In 1923, the maximum grant was reduced to 40% of the

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<sup>148</sup> 'History of Scheme' in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

purchase price, this was followed by a further reduction to 33% for the financial year 1924-25. As a result of the economic Depression, the Fund was reduced to as little as £100, from 1932-36, and the maximum grant was set at 40% in 1932, and 33% of the purchase price in 1933. In an attempt to avoid the abolition of the scheme, the V. & A. Museum distributed details of the Fund's scope to some 150 eligible art galleries and museums; despite this, there was again little increase in applications, a response which reflected, in part, the generally limited funds available to local authority art galleries and museums, but more significantly the need for the scheme to be extended to cover Fine Art purchases. By the beginning of the twentieth-century, Victorian ideas of homogeneity and utility associated with the formation of Industrial Arts collections were being challenged by the influx of private Fine Art gifts and Fine Art exhibitions and loans, and the need for art galleries and museums to provide more broadly-based educational experiences, as outlined in Chapter 3.

#### **4.2. The Fine Art Category**

In 1927, a Royal Commission was appointed by central government to examine the current nature of national and non-national art galleries and museums and their collections. Several witnesses to the Commission criticized the scope and size of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. In his formal evidence, Frank Rutter proposed the extension of the scheme to specifically cover Fine Art and that in terms of its implementation, a system of validation for institutions according to their care and management of collections should be introduced;<sup>149</sup> the latter was only taken up following the creation of the Museums and Galleries Commission, a development discussed later in this chapter. In its *Final Report: Part I*, the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries 1929 recorded that 'whatever its value in the history of ideas or the purposes of academic definition, the distinction between fine and

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<sup>149</sup> Frank Rutter, 'Oral Evidence, 2nd. November 1928', *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries: Oral Evidence, Memoranda and Appendices to the Final Report*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, pp.47-50.

applied art has already broken down in practice'.<sup>150</sup> In response to this and other findings of the Commission, the first central government internal review was conducted by the Board of Education into the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and the general financial situation for local authority Fine Art purchases, for the period 1932-34. This review found that only six art galleries and museums had purchase funds larger than £100 and a 'seriously thought out purchase policy'.<sup>151</sup> It also recorded that local purchase funds came predominantly from bequests and other private sources, rather than the local authority, and these were largely used to purchase contemporary British oil paintings, usually from the Royal Academy, or for the acquisition of low-cost items, such as watercolours and pottery. The Board of Education, therefore, recommended that the scope and application of the Fund, then restricted to 'Applied Art', should incorporate the current collecting remit of the V. & A. Museum as a whole.

In April 1934, the grant scheme was re-named the Local Museum Fund, and its remit was extended to include Scotland and Northern Ireland; in 1953, this arrangement ceased and the Fund became restricted once more to England and Wales, when separate grant funds were created for Scotland and Northern Ireland, by the Ministry of Education, and this remains the arrangement today.<sup>152</sup> Under the Local Museum Fund, the Fine Art categories of paintings in watercolour, drawings and prints became eligible for maximum 50% grants, for the first time, as 'there is no question that the latter are desirable acquisitions for local museums especially when they are the work of

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<sup>150</sup> *Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, Final Report: Part I*, H.M.S.O., London, 1929, p.28.

<sup>151</sup> 'History of Scheme' in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

<sup>152</sup> The Art Fund for Scotland is part of the National Fund for Acquisitions and is currently administered by the National Museums of Scotland. The Art Fund for Northern Ireland is currently administered by the Northern Ireland Museums Council.

British Artists'.<sup>153</sup> The inclusion of oil paintings as a category was considered by Sir Henry Pelham, Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education, from 1931-37, and the recently created Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, but it was concluded that oil paintings should be excluded 'partly because they are outside the scope of the [V. & A.] Museum, but chiefly because their cost is generally so considerable that if they were made eligible for a grant there would be nothing left for the other classes of objects';<sup>154</sup> the scheme, it should be noted, continued to cover the Applied and Decorative Arts, as it does so today. The reproduction category, however, remained as did 'objects illustrative of the application of Experimental and Mechanical Science to Industry or Art'.<sup>155</sup>

The creation of the Local Museum Fund placed purchase grants within a professional framework, as they were now subject to conditions covering public access, professional standards of display and inter-regional co-operation.<sup>156</sup> Art works were to be bought for exhibition purposes (and not reserve or study collections) and to emphasize this fact, grant-receiving art galleries and museums were required to submit an annual report to the V. & A. Museum which stated the monthly number of visitors to the institution. This requirement stressed the broader educational role of collecting at a time when, as has been previously noted, the creation of reserve study collections

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<sup>153</sup> Letter: Board of Education to the Treasury, 20th November 1933 in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

<sup>154</sup> Letter: Sir Henry Pelham to the Secretary of the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, 13th July, 1933 in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> See Board of Education, 'Grant Regulations: Statutory Rules of Order 1934, No.364', H.M.S.O., London, 1934. Grants were made subject to 'the facilities for the use of the Museum or Art Gallery by the general public and by students, the arrangements for the safe custody, display and labelling of its collections, the co-ordination of its works with that of any similar institutions in the neighbourhood, and the views of any local authority who the Board may think fit to consult'.

were often in reality a form of storage. The regulations of the Local Museum Fund specifically stated that modern art work would be eligible, although the minimum purchase price of £10 largely excluded contemporary British printmaking, which post-1918 had enjoyed a revival, notably in the area of wood-engraving. In addition, no work purchased with a grant could be subsequently sold or exchanged, except with the permission of the Board of Education. This stipulation served to reinforce the idea that institutional collecting should be concerned with permanence and the retention of art works. To take account of the Fund's extended remit, the Treasury increased its funding to £500, for the financial year 1934-35. There was an immediate substantial increase in the number of applications for assistance with watercolour purchases; successful local authority institutions included Salford Art Gallery, which in 1934 purchased three twentieth-century British watercolours with a grant of £20.10s.<sup>157</sup> During the period 1935-39, approximately half the Fund's grants were made towards the purchase of watercolours, as institutions which had previously applied for grants towards Decorative Arts objects switched to the field of Fine Art,<sup>158</sup> in response to the rising number of applications, the Fund was increased to £750, for the financial year 1935-36, and for 1936-37 it was restored to its pre-Depression figure of £1,000.

Finished sculpture, usually in bronze, was included under the Fund despite belonging to the Fine Art category, as it was also defined as Applied Art because of its dominant use as ornamentation to architecture, memorials and public monuments in general. Successful grant applications, however, had to rely on substantial and combined local funding due to the relative high cost of cast sculpture in comparison with paintings. During the period 1936-38, for example, Leeds City Art Gallery used its two local Harding Funds, in addition to a purchase grant from the Local Museum Fund, in order

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<sup>157</sup> Salford Art Gallery, *Annual Report 1934-5*, 1935, p.8.

<sup>158</sup> 'History of Scheme: Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

to purchase Frank Dobson's 'Margaret Rawlings', and the additional local Bilbrough Bequest in order to acquire Jacob Epstein's 'Elsa'. The purchase of a major progressive work, Henry Moore's elmwood 'Reclining Figure' 1935, by Wakefield Art Gallery in 1942, was only made possible by drawing on the combined support of the local friends group, the Wakefield Permanent Art Fund, and the private collector, Eric C. Gregory (1887-1959), in addition to a grant from the Local Museum Fund. Gregory was a member of the Contemporary Art Society's Executive Committee; an early collector, fellow Yorkshireman and friend of Moore; and Chairman of (Percy) Lund Humphries, the publishing house.

#### **4.3. The Heritage Issue**

During the 1950s, the changing fortunes of the Fund were a result of the heritage issue debate, then taking place, and the conflicting demands of modern British art. In 1952, Rab Butler, Chancellor of the Exchequer, appointed the first Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to formulate export and import controls on the sale of works of art and other cultural items in general (Britain's heritage), as part of the Government's new austerity programme. The Reviewing Committee, however, went beyond its original central government directive, and examined the purchase funds available to local authority art galleries and museums. In 1956, it therefore recommended that the Local Museum Fund should be extended to include the category of oil paintings and that a substantial Central Purchase Fund should also be created specifically for the purchase of major art works.<sup>159</sup> The Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, together with Edward Bridges, then a senior civil servant at the Treasury, supported the creation of a Central Purchase Fund for the exclusive provision of Old Master purchase grants, in order to protect Britain's heritage, then under threat from the 'New York Art Market', 'foreigners and Jewish dealers'!<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art [Report], *The Needs of Local Collections*, H.M.S.O., London, 1956, p.6.

<sup>160</sup> Internal Treasury Memorandum, 9th May 1956 [signed Edward Bridges] and

In 1958, the internal *V. & A. Museum Review* recommended that oil paintings should be included as heritage art only, a proposal that excluded the majority of modest priced art works purchased by non-national art galleries and museums.<sup>161</sup> The Treasury refused to support this proposal, as the primary function of the Local Museum Fund was 'to encourage action by the responsible authorities, which are, of course, mainly local authorities, rather than to take over their responsibilities for them'.<sup>162</sup> The Fund existed, therefore, principally as a form of incentive but limited funding.

#### **4.4. Modern British Art**

Demands for the Local Museum Fund to include the purchase of modern British oil paintings were to be diverted via the idea of national art loan schemes. In 1951, the Tate Gallery had lent a large number of twentieth-century British works to provincial art galleries and museums, as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations. This was followed by the introduction of a comprehensive loan system under the National Gallery and Tate Gallery Act 1954. These loans were introduced both to solve display and storage problems, and in the belief that loans from a national collection would modify and supplement provincial public collections' presentations of modern British art.

The Arts Council's comprehensive range of touring exhibitions to local authority art galleries and museums, during the period 1951-68, also contributed to the idea that sustained loans could fulfil contemporary needs, but they inevitably drew attention to

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Internal Treasury Memorandum, 'Proposals for Purchase Fund for Works of Art', 25th April, 1956: Treasury Records T227/496, P.R.O.

<sup>161</sup> Letter: Peter Floud to the Treasury, Sir Harold Cloughton, Philip Hendy, and Leadbetter, 2nd December, 1958 in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

<sup>162</sup> 'Report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art 1958-59: Part A': Education Records EP1/18, P.R.O.



what local authority collections lacked. These Arts Council loan exhibitions were wide-ranging in scope and scale. They included major retrospectives such as the 'Memorial Exhibition of the Works of Frances Hodgkins 1869-1947' in 1952; general monographic exhibitions, such as 'Epstein' in 1952, 'Terry Frost' in 1964 and 'Peter Lanyon' in 1967; group shows such as '3 Young Collectors' in 1952, 'British Contemporary Paintings from Southern and Midland Galleries' in 1953, 'Contemporary Paintings from Southampton Art Gallery' in 1954, '6 Young Painters: Michael Andrews, John Bratby, Harold Cohen, Michael Froy, Derek Greaves and Philip Sutton' in 1956, and 'London Group 1914-64: Jubilee Exhibition' in 1964; pioneering sales exhibitions, such as 'Sixty Paintings for '51' and the 'Young Contemporaries' exhibitions, from 1949-68; specialist exhibitions focusing on new developments, such as 'Situation' in 1962, 'Chromatic Sculpture' in 1966 and 'In Motion: An Exhibition of Kinetic Art' in 1966; and survey-like authoritative exhibitions, such as the two-part exhibition 'British Painting 1925-50' curated in conjunction with Manchester City Art Gallery and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, in London, 'Contemporary British Sculpture' in 1958, 'New Painting 1958-61', 'Recent Trends in Painting' in 1963, 'New Painting 61-64' and 'Sculpture from the Arts Council Collection' in 1965. In 1958, the Treasury publicly supported the large-scale loan scheme of works from the Tate Gallery, administered by the Arts Council, as a surrogate form of collection development specifically for the representation of modern British art in local authority art galleries and museums.<sup>163</sup>

#### **4.5. The Oil Painting Category 1959**

In 1958, the *V. & A. Museum Review* recorded that out of 105 provincial art galleries and museums, only approximately 60 received local authority annual purchase grants. Of these, half received purchase grants of £100 or less, 'and therefore can be written

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<sup>163</sup> See H.M. Treasury, 'Government and the Arts in Britain', H.M.S.O., London, 1958.

off as far as any serious purchases are concerned'.<sup>164</sup> The *Review* also noted that during 1950-57, only 15% of eligible institutions had applied for purchase grants, due to rising art market prices. A consequence of this was that small, modest-scale local authority art galleries and museums were:

even worse off than they were before the [Second World] war, and the £25 or so which in the 1930s might have been used to buy a respectable John Nash now gets no further than a watercolour with a topographical appeal acquired from the annual show of the society of local artists.<sup>165</sup>

The Local Museum Fund, therefore, favoured major and richer provincial art galleries and museums, with the intention that these would purchase high quality art works 'as an enrichment of the common cultural heritage'.<sup>166</sup> This 'common cultural heritage' excluded 'objects of purely local interest' and art of 'inferior or of questionable authenticity'.<sup>167</sup> The *Review* supported the introduction of the oil painting category, but concluded that the inclusion of 'contemporary oil paintings' would prove too difficult to evaluate in terms of cultural worth, as 'to ask London [the Local Museum Fund] to endorse their [local authority art galleries' and museums'] taste in a contemporary acquisition is very different from asking for an assurance on the authenticity of an historic object'.<sup>168</sup>

Notwithstanding these qualms, under the Regulations for Grants to Local Museums and Art Galleries, (Revocation) Regulations 1959, the oil painting category was

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<sup>164</sup> This report recorded that nine towns spent over £2,000, six towns spent between £1,000 and £2,000, ten towns spent between £200 and £1,000, thirty towns spent between £100 and £200, and fifty towns spent between £50 and £100. See 'History of Scheme' in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*

introduced;<sup>169</sup> despite the nomenclature, all forms of painting were eligible under the new category. As we will see in this and subsequent discussions of the Fund, this change was largely brought about by a burgeoning heritage lobby which focused on the needs of Old Master and pre-1900 collecting, as opposed to twentieth-century art in general. The Fund was renamed the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and increased from £2,000 to £15,000 for the financial year 1959-60, in order to incorporate the new category.<sup>170</sup> A 40% maximum grant was introduced on the grounds that oil paintings would result in large grant allocations. No photograph or policy statement was then requested as part of the formal submission process which instead focused on an institution's sources of local purchase funds and its previous year's purchase expenditure.<sup>171</sup> Purchase grants remained retrospective with local authorities receiving reimbursement on presentation of a certificate of purchase. Only in exceptional circumstances were purchases under the minimum price of £50 eligible for a grant, as the purpose of the grant was to assist, but not replace local funding resources.

The new V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund could only function as long as market prices remained constant and the number of applications were limited and modest in their expectations. The Museums Association also noted that it 'seems likely that unless the

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<sup>169</sup> Internal Treasury Memorandum, 'Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases', 9th February, 1959: Treasury Records T218/288, P.R.O. As from 1st April, 1959, the Statutory Instrument for Grants to Local Museums and Art Galleries 1934 (b) was revoked. In addition the regulations under the Education Act 1921, 'which authorized grants towards the acquisition by museums and art galleries of works of art and other objects, but excluded oil paintings from the scope of such grants' were also revoked. These were replaced by regulations, as the Ministry of Education only had powers under the Education Act 1944 to issue regulations and not Statutory Instruments. A revised application form for grants was issued in 1959: see below.

<sup>170</sup> The Treasury proposed to increase the total Fund to £10,000, Peter Floud, Keeper of the Circulation Department, V. & A. Museum suggested £15,000, and the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries £20,000. In the event, the Treasury recommended that the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund should be increased from £2,000 to £15,000 for England and Wales.

<sup>171</sup> Application Form (Revised) 25.2.59.

smaller authorities can be persuaded to increase their own provision the greater part of the grant will go to the larger museums where the need is not quite so great'.<sup>172</sup> In addition, there were strong vested interests to hinder the use of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund for modern art purchases, despite the fact that, in 1959, the Contemporary Art Society had 63 local authority art gallery and museum subscribing members; a factor indicative of the collecting needs of municipal institutions. It was indeed largely the heritage issue which brought about the dramatic rise in the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund's finances over the period 1959-79;<sup>173</sup> for the financial year 1960-61 the Fund was doubled to £25,000, for 1973-74 it rose sharply to £400,000 and by 1978-79 it stood at £823,000. Ostensibly, the oil painting category was introduced as part of a public display of financial parity with the central government-funding of both the national art galleries and museums and the Arts Council, which all received increases to their individual purchase grants; for example, the Arts Council's annual purchase grant was increased to £4,813.0s.8d. for the financial year 1959-60. In reality, the increase to the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund was permitted by the Treasury, in order to divert demands away from the creation of a permanent and costly Central Purchase Fund for heritage art works.<sup>174</sup> The implication was that under the oil painting category, contemporary art would be refused in favour of heritage applications. At the same time there was the expectation by central government, that independent bodies, such as the Contemporary Art Society, and the Gulbenkian Foundation, whose plans were already privately known by the Treasury, through Edward Bridges, would provide the necessary funding to encourage and support the purchase of contemporary art by provincial art galleries and museums. In February 1959, Philip Hendy, as the National Gallery's Director, from 1946-67, proposed that the Fund

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<sup>172</sup> Editor, 'Editorial', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lix, 1959, p.2.

<sup>173</sup> The Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries used this issue to promote a substantial increase in the central government's support of the Fund; in 1963, for example, they recommended that the Fund should be increased from £25,000 to £200,000!

<sup>174</sup> Internal Treasury Memorandum, 'Museum and Gallery Purchase Grants-in-Aid': Treasury Records T227/518, P.R.O.

should only be used in conjunction with the export stop arrangement for heritage works.<sup>175</sup> This proposal, initially supported by the Treasury, was subsequently dropped as it was thought that the Tate Gallery would then renew the claim for a provincial contemporary painting purchase fund to be created under its administration.<sup>176</sup>

The introduction of the oil painting category had an immediate impact. In the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund's first financial year 1959-60, it received 77 applications of which 20 were for oil paintings. The allocation of 11 oil painting grants included the purchase of Francis Bacon's controversial painting 'Lying Figure' 1959, by Leicester Museum and Art Gallery for £900. This transaction introduced the "special price" factor, whereby art dealers would in future regularly offer at least a 10% reduction for V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund-assisted purchases. In order to resolve the conflicting financial demands of heritage and modern oil painting applications, the Treasury allowed the V. & A. Museum to apply for special central government grants for heritage export stop orders, on behalf of local museums and art galleries. The cultural benefits of the restructured V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund were publicized by the Museums Association which, in 1960, published a record of recent acquisitions of 'paintings, sculptures and drawings of the twentieth century acquired by British galleries between October 1959 and September 1960'.<sup>177</sup> This showed that 23 local authority art galleries and museums had purchased or received as gifts examples of Twentieth-Century British Art. The oil paintings purchased with grants from the V. &

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<sup>175</sup> Internal Treasury Memorandum, 'Grants-in-Aid to the V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases', 9th February, 1959: Treasury Records T218/288, P.R.O.

<sup>176</sup> For the first record of this proposal see Memorandum: Peter Floud, Keeper of Circulation [Department] V. & A. Museum, October 1958 in 'History of Scheme' in 'Treasury: Grants-in-Aid to V. & A. Museum and the Royal Scottish Museum for Local Museum Purchases (1933-1959)', file: Treasury Records T218/287, P.R.O.

<sup>177</sup> Museums Association, 'Recent Acquisitions Survey: Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings of the Twentieth Century Acquired by British Galleries, Between October 1959 and September 1960', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lx, December 1960, pp.234-237.

A. Purchase Grant Fund were Henry Mundy's 'Enclosed' (Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, in Eastbourne), Walter Sickert's 'Dieppe' (Ferens Art Gallery, in Hull), Francis Bacon's 'Lying Figure' (Leicester Museum and Art Gallery), Ivon Hitchens' 'Terwick Mill No.7.' and Christopher Wood's 'Sleeping Fisherman, Ploare' (Laing Art Gallery, in Newcastle), and Walter Sickert's 'Street Scene, Dieppe' (Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery). Two examples of sculpture, Jacob Epstein's 'Deidre' and Georg Ehrlich's 'Nibbling Goat', were also bought by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, with grants from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. Collectively, these works represented established artists, a selection indicative of a gap-filling approach to institutional collecting.

In April 1959, the Association of Municipal Corporations conducted a review of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. This noted that the Fund was not responsive to the speed required by the contemporary art market and that the size of the Fund could not cope with the number and scale of grant applications; as a result, grants had been reduced to between 12% and 30% of the purchase price.<sup>178</sup> In September 1959, the Association held further discussions as to the direction of the Fund. It concluded that central government should financially support the collection development activities of the Contemporary Art Society, due to the conflicting demands of high-priced heritage art and modern British art faced by the Fund. It was also noted that increased private taxation had resulted in a decline in gifts and bequests to public museums and art galleries in the U.K, thus making collection schemes vital to the long-term development of collections. In 1961, Philip James (1901-74), then the Art Adviser to the Gulbenkian Foundation's collection schemes (discussed in Volume II) and Editor of the *Museums Journal*, from 1960-64, also stressed the crucial need for both central

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<sup>178</sup> 'Libraries, Museums and Art Galleries Committee Meeting' 28th April, 1959 (London) in 'Association of Municipal Corporations Minutes 1959', file: Association of Municipal Corporations Records PRO30/72/92, P.R.O. The Association was established in 1873, and in 1974 was renamed the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. It was often consulted in relation to central government policies.

government-funded schemes, such as the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, and the national independent measures, such as the Gulbenkian Foundation's grants, from 1959-79.<sup>179</sup> James promoted the idea that the cultural authority of these non-local sources was a powerful argument in countering local authority charges of misuse of public funds. He saw that such schemes could generate long-term local authority purchase expenditure which, in turn, would enable provincial art galleries and museums to 'selectively but systematically' purchase 'the works of living artists'.<sup>180</sup>

In addition to the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund's enabling role, the Museums Association identified the restructured Fund as a symbolic body which could counter hostile local criticisms. At the Museums Association Conference, in 1960, the Director of the V. & A. Museum, Trenchard Cox, promoted contemporary art collecting as an essential aspect of provincial public art galleries and museums as 'it is one of the ways in which a director can make a museum a living organization and not a mere repository of dead, if precious, objects';<sup>181</sup> an echo of Sir William Flower's ideas discussed in Chapter 2. Cox also put forward the idea of specialization linked to high aesthetic standards by recommending that:

If one is buying for a big collection in the provinces, or building up from scratch, the director should try to give his or her creation a marked and individual character, to concentrate on a special line and develop it, provided always that it is a thoroughly good one.<sup>182</sup>

In the second year of the oil painting category, the Fund sought to address the nature of art collecting, undertaken by 'smaller-sized museums', which was identified as a concern with local art and modest priced purchases.<sup>183</sup> The Keeper of the V. & A.

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<sup>179</sup> Philip James, 'Editorial', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lxi, June 1961.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Trenchard Cox's contribution to 'Buying for Museums: An Abbreviated Report of the Discussion Held on 6th July, 1960', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lx, October 1960, p.179. This report was based on the proceeding of the Museums Association Conference held at Stoke-on-Trent in 1960.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, p.178.

<sup>183</sup> Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, *6th Report 1959-60*, H.M.S.O.,

Museum Circulation Department, from 1960-75, Hugh Wakefield, who was also a member of the Museums Association's Council, from 1960-63, showed an awareness of the distinct character of local authority collecting when he wrote that:

It is true that many of the acquisitions of the smaller institutions consist of contemporary paintings and sculpture by local artists which could scarcely be said to merit the support of government funds. The local artist, however, is not necessarily of interest only for local reasons; and one of the purposes of the grant fund is to encourage museums to buy material which is suited to their local function so long as it is of sufficiently high quality.<sup>184</sup>

Meanwhile, the dual demands of contemporary art and heritage items on the Fund remained an issue for the larger local authority art galleries and museums; for example, the Director of Sheffield City Art Galleries, from 1948-63, Richard Seddon (1915-2003), argued for a substantial increase to the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund;<sup>185</sup> Seddon had both trained as an artist, at the Royal College of Art, and was an academic, who was an active member of the Yorkshire art scene and the Yorkshire Federation of Museums (of which he was the past President and Vice-President). Philip Hendy, however, as Director of the National Gallery and President of the Museums Association, continued to promote the creation of a separate oil painting fund, under his Gallery's administration, for heritage art works only.<sup>186</sup> The Treasury refused to support this costly initiative, but, in 1962, the administration of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund was restructured to replace the ad hoc informal arrangements by which grant applications were considered, with the aim to introduce an equability to the allocation of heritage and modern art grants. As a result, in assessing grant applications, the Fund involved a wider range of expert opinions from national curators at the National Gallery, Tate Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery. In

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London, 1961, p.3.

<sup>184</sup> Hugh Wakefield 'Purchase Grants from the V. & A. Museum: 1960-61', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lxi, June 1961, pp.60-63.

<sup>185</sup> Sheffield City Art Galleries, *City Art Galleries Annual Report 1961-2*, City of Sheffield, 1962.

<sup>186</sup> See Education Records EB3/29, P.R.O.



addition, an Advisory Committee of 21 members was established of whom the following had a knowledge of modern British art, and in particular its contemporary aspect, and the function of art galleries and museums: Kenneth Clark, as former Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, from 1953-60; E. M. O'R. Dickey (1894-1977), former Staff Inspector for Art at the Ministry of Education, from 1931-57, and the first Curator of the Minories, in Colchester, from 1957-62; Lord Harlech, the 4th Baron (1885-1964), a former Trustee of the Tate Gallery, from 1931-38 and 1945-53, the National Gallery, from 1927-34 and 1936-41, and the British Museum, in 1937; Clifford Musgrave (1904-82), former Director of Williamson Art Gallery, from 1937-39, and Director of Brighton Art Gallery and Libraries, from 1939-68; and Stewart Mason (1906-1983), Director of Education for Leicestershire, from 1947-71, where he developed the art collection for schools scheme, and a member of the National Advisory Council on Art Education, where he was Vice-Chairman, from 1961-70, and subsequently Chairman, from 1970-74.

Applications for Twentieth-Century British Art purchases were assessed by a wide range of specialists in the field, although there continued to be a metropolitan bias in assessing local art. This restructuring had an immediate effect on applications and their success. In 1962, for example, Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum was able to purchase Sandra Blow's 'Painting 1962', an uncompromisingly contemporary abstract work. Despite John Rothenstein's resistance to abstract art, the Tate Gallery's then Director supported the painting's purchase at 225 guineas, as it was felt that a rejection by a national funding scheme would have a negative impact on the relationship between provincial curators and local authorities, and the long-term acquisition of more progressive examples of contemporary British art.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Letter: John Rothenstein to Carol Hogben, Assistant Keeper of the Circulation Department, V. & A. Museum, 18th April, 1962: Tate Gallery Records TGN 6/3 Part Two (1958-62), Tate Gallery Archive.

The long-term successful implementation of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund depended on the adequate provision of local funds. Post-1945, many art galleries and museums had begun to convert annual local authority purchase funds into accumulation funds, in an attempt to establish a capital base for purchase expenditure. They also relied on local and national funding-sources, but the provisions of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund specifically excluded non-local charitable sources as matched-funding. In a Minute of 12th April 1962, the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries argued that financial help from national charities (such as the National Art Collections Fund, Pilgrims Trust and Gulbenkian Foundation) should be counted as a local source of funding.<sup>188</sup> This proposal was incorporated in the Commission's draft report, the *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries*, which was circulated to the Ministry of Education, V. & A. Museum and Arts Council.<sup>189</sup>

#### **4.6. Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries 1963**

In 1963, the Standing Commission on Museums and Art Galleries published its report, *Survey of Provincial Museums and Galleries* (Rosse Report). Research for the *Survey* had started in 1960, and involved two detailed questionnaires which were sent to both the controlling local authorities and the curators in charge of individual art galleries and museums. The *Survey* included a record of purchase expenditure available to around 100 provincial art galleries and museums, in the U.K., for the financial year 1959-60. It showed an extraordinary diversity in purchase funding which ranged from £2 at Kirkcaldy Art Gallery, to £9,125 at the Laing Art Gallery. With the exception of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, the *Survey* also revealed that pre-1939 local purchase funds had remained virtually unchanged, and that major institutions continued to have the largest annual financial resources, although this was usually not more than £500. This situation applied to both long-

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<sup>188</sup> Tate Gallery Records TGN 6/3 Part Two (1958-62), Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>189</sup> 'Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries Minute, 12th April, 1962': Education Records EB3/29, P.R.O.

established nineteenth-century institutions, such as Dundee Art Gallery with £101, Oldham Art Gallery with £18 and Wolverhampton Art Gallery with £300, and to more recently established municipal institutions, such as the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum (opened in 1923) with £130, Bilston Art Gallery (opened in 1937) which had a purchase fund of £8, and Bagshaw Art Gallery (opened in 1948) with £34; Herbert Art Gallery, in Coventry, had opened in 1960 and therefore its purchase expenditure was not recorded by the *Survey*. In addition, the *Survey* noted that private purchase funding had not been sustained postwar, and that this had had a particularly adverse effect on collection development at provincial art galleries and museums, established post-1900, and the quality of art works they acquired. In order to remedy this situation, the *Survey* recommended that central government should substantially increase the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund to £200,000.

In response to these findings, central government increased the Fund to £50,000 for the financial year 1964-65, but this sum was allocated as grants within two months, due to the conflicting demands of heritage and modern art applications. In an attempt to accommodate these areas, two temporary funding categories within the Fund were created for historical paintings and modern paintings, from the financial year 1963-64;<sup>190</sup> "modern" was defined for this purpose as post-1914.<sup>191</sup> From the financial year 1964-65, a further grant category was created for 'Modern Sculpture and Historical Sculpture' in response to the high cost of sculpture in comparison with painting; works on paper, however, remained grouped as Drawings and Watercolours, and Prints. Despite these measures, by June 1964, the Fund had been exhausted, and in order to ensure that the Fund would function for the whole year, an additional set-aside fund was created for low cost works, as from the financial year 1965-66. The Fund was therefore doubled in size, but fixed at £100,000 for a five-year period, and maximum

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<sup>190</sup> From tables of successful grant applications 1963-78, photocopies supplied by Janet Davies, Purchase Grant Fund Officer, V. & A. Museum.

<sup>191</sup> Letter: Janet Davies, Purchase Grant Fund Officer, M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, V. & A. Museum to Author, June 1995.

grants were increased from 40% to 50% of the purchase price. Despite these measures, a large number of applications for objects costing more than £500 were refused during 1965-68, due to insufficient funds.<sup>192</sup> In an attempt to remedy this situation, the Fund was divided into two fixed amounts for the provision of large and small grants, from the financial year 1969-70. This together with a substantial increase of the Fund to £150,000 for the financial year 1970-71, extended the scheme and made possible the participation of art galleries and museums with modest-scale collections. Middlesbrough Art Gallery, for example, received regular grants from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, a factor which enabled the Gallery to secure 50% of its growing collection of Twentieth-Century British Art, during the years 1969-84.<sup>193</sup>

Concurrent with these changes to the Fund, was the introduction of new legislation covering local authority rate expenditure on art gallery and museum purchase funds. Despite the arms-length policy adopted by central government, the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 was the first general Act to embody the principle of direct intervention, whereby the Secretary of State for Education and Science gained powers to superintend and promote public services administered and funded by local authorities. This Act replaced all previous Acts covering England and Wales, in an attempt to introduce some uniformity. Under this legislation, a local authority was empowered to establish an annual amalgamation art fund for the purchase of art works for exhibition in an art gallery or museum. A limit was placed on the size of this art fund which could not exceed the product of one-fifth of a penny rate, while the total amount could not exceed a rate of one penny in the pound. Local authority art galleries and museums, therefore, had the possibility of retaining rate-supported

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<sup>192</sup> Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, *8th Report 1965-69*, H.M.S.O., London, 1970, p.112.

<sup>193</sup> Author in conversation with Kenneth Cozens, former Curator, Middlesbrough Art Gallery, June 1994.

purchase funds, in order to make more substantial purchases in conjunction with the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.

During the 1970s, the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund began to change its cultural role, as it shifted from a form of modest-scale enabling funding, to a substantial source of money which was increasingly used in combination with other non-local funds. In 1973, the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund was divided into separate sub-funds in order to ensure a fairer distribution amongst applications, and accordingly increased from £450,000 to £823,000.<sup>194</sup> Two grant funds, the A Fund and B Fund, were created for high price and lower value works, respectively; in the financial year 1978-79, a Special Fund was also created to assist with the retention of costly heritage items, with the provision that unspent monies were re-allocated to the A and B Funds. Quite a significant part of the A Fund grants, during this period, went to the Decorative Arts; for example, major furniture purchases were made by Temple Newsam, Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, in Bedford, and Cheltenham Art Gallery. Other areas, which received significant grants, were important British archaeological finds, the acquisition and removal of open-air museum buildings; and science, technology and industry purchases and transfers, until the establishment of the separate Science Museum Purchase Fund, in 1973, (later known as the PRISM Fund). In 1978, the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund also modified its regulations concerning local matched-funding and permitted national charity funds to be classed as a local source. Despite the wide-ranging demands, the change in character of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and its role proved significant for the development of local authority Twentieth-Century British Art collections. Sheffield City Art Galleries, for example, during the 1970s and 1980s received over £100,000 in grants from the Fund. Other major local authority institutions were also increasingly able to secure regular grants towards purchases of

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<sup>194</sup> Letter: Janet Davies, Purchase Grant Fund Officer, M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, V. & A. Museum to the Author, June 1995.

Twentieth-Century British Art. At Leeds City Art Gallery, for example, 19 grants were allocated from 1980-84, which enabled the Gallery to purchase major works by artists such as Anthony Caro, Gilbert and George, Richard Long and Paul Nash.

#### **4.7. Creation of the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund**

From the financial year 1983-84, the Fund was frozen at £1,114,000 until 1990. This was part of central government's then overall financial policy towards the arts which encouraged the simultaneous pursuit of private forms of funding and a retrenchment of central government expenditure. In 1985, financial responsibility for the Fund passed to the Museums and Galleries Commission, whilst the V. & A. Museum continued its administration. This placed the grant scheme within a framework oriented towards the standardization and regularization of professional curatorial practices. In 1988, for example, with the introduction of the M.G.C. Registration Scheme, this itself became a requirement of all applications to the renamed M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. Under the M.G.C. Registration Scheme all public art galleries and museums in the U.K. were required to introduce written collecting policies. These policies were required to be updated every five years, and structured according to collections management practices, the collecting interests of other geographically adjacent institutions and possible overlaps within a national context. At the New Art Gallery, in Walsall, for example, the *Acquisition and Disposal Policy* 1998 incorporated sections entitled 'Other museums with similar acquisition policies' and 'Other museums collecting in similar areas'. From the financial year 1988-89, the Fund introduced a system of staged grant allocations on an immediate, weekly or monthly basis, in order to both support the purchase of more major works of art and respond to the sudden appearance of art works on the art market. In pursuance of central government economic policy, the Fund introduced lower variable percentage grants rather than the standard 50% grant (or £60,000 maximum expenditure), in order that 'where possible, institutions will take an increased responsibility for purchases by, for instance, vigorous fund raising and actively pursuing discounts or private treaty sale

arrangements'.<sup>195</sup> The 1990s was, therefore, marked by a decline in the number of applications, but a simultaneous rise in the actual individual purchase prices of works; the minimum purchase price for the financial year 1995-96 was set at £500. The administrative link with the M.G.C. ensured that the key factors for grant allocations included the nature of the existing collection and a written current collecting policy. At the Ferens Art Gallery, for example, a grant was allocated towards the purchase of Gwen John's painting 'Seated Woman' as it 'fitted their collecting criteria perfectly in terms of quality and subject matter and shows the French influence on British artists in the first quarter of the twentieth-century'.<sup>196</sup>

By the 1990s, the widespread debate over acquisitions and disposals from public collections, coupled with the growing competition for purchase funds, strongly suggested the need for collections to identify their distinct or unique aspects. As long ago as 1973, the Department of Education and Science's report *Provincial Museums and Galleries* (Wright Report) had recommended the creation of 'centres of excellence' for provincial collections.<sup>197</sup> These and other findings were pursued by the Standing Commission's later report, *A Framework for a System for Museums* (Drew Report) 1979, which specified that a selected number of collections of provincial, national or international importance should be granted 'designated' status.<sup>198</sup> Nothing however came of these proposals, until 1996, when the M.G.C., with the approval of the Museums Association, launched the Designated Museums Scheme. Under this Scheme, non-national art galleries and museums with outstanding or unique collections received a special status, as part of a formal hierarchically-defined nation-wide

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<sup>195</sup> V. & A./M.G.C. Purchase Grant Fund For The Regions: New financial Arrangements for 1988-89', unpublished typed guidelines issued by the V. & A. Museum: Harris Museum and Art Gallery Records, Preston.

<sup>196</sup> V. & A. Museum, *V. & A. Museum/M.G.C. Purchase Grant Fund Report 1994-95*, V. & A. Museum, London, 1995, p.2.

<sup>197</sup> See 'Summary of Recommendations', pp.48-49 and p.63.

<sup>198</sup> See 'Chapter 3: Museums Designated for Direct Grant-Aid', pp.16-20; and 'Summary of Recommendations', p.62.

framework. The importance of this status was that institutions received priority from central government-funded purchase grant schemes administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.<sup>199</sup> During this decade, the Fund also began to respond to the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary Fine Art, by including craft alongside photography, film and video. These changes together with the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund's already broad remit contributed to the original scheme's transformation into a substantial funding source which for the financial year 1998-99 was £1,000,000. To curb the demands of major art works, which could be modern or heritage art, a limit was set at a 50% purchase grant, or £80,000. In addition, to ensure the continual local funding of purchases, 25% of the purchase price had to be provided by either the local authority or a local private source.

#### **4.8. The Impact of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund**

The main impact of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund on local authority Fine Art Collections was post-1945. The history of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund reveals an inherently adaptive scheme. It developed out of the provision of limited central government grants for the acquisition of what were educationally-wedded objects by local authority collections. The administrative role of the V. & A. Museum ensured that this educational remit would be maintained. Only with the introduction of the oil painting category, in 1959, did the Fund become identified with Fine Art purchasing. This change happened at a crucial period when British contemporary art was in the ascendancy, both in terms of the commercial art scene and nation-wide exhibitions. At the same time, the preservation of Britain's cultural heritage had become a major issue which focused on the provision of the export stop order and central government financial support. Set against this background, an inherent weakness of the post-1945

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<sup>199</sup> Museums Association, *Museums Briefing*, unpublished, u.p., London, August 1996.



V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund was its general and comprehensive nature in relation to types and periods of the Fine, Decorative and Applied Arts covered, and its geographical coverage of both England and Wales. Despite the scale of the Fund and its linkage with substantial independent grant-making bodies, the application process for local authority art galleries and museums became increasingly competitive and required strong advocacy skills on the part of curators. This element of competition ran counter to the concept of a co-operative curatorial community with shared cultural objectives; this was a professional framework fostered by the Museums Association. A more tangible limitation of the Fund, however, remained the conflicting demands of high priced pre-1900 heritage works in comparison with modern British art, and in particular its contemporary aspect. Given that the application process was based on the acquisition of a single work, institutions tended to prefer to make grant requests for more costly and likely to be pre-1900 works, rather than towards the acquisition of contemporary British art; an approach to purchasing which could be at variance with the main collecting aims of an institution. There were also associated issues of historic and aesthetic value which could prove prescriptive when Twentieth-Century British Art applications were assessed by art advisors from national institutions. Collectively, these drawbacks were a powerful argument for the need for independent collection schemes to support modern British art collecting by provincial public collections.

## CHAPTER 5: SPIN-OFFS AND ADJUNCTS

### 5.1. War Artists' Advisory Committee

The only central government-funded purchase scheme specifically for Twentieth-Century British Art was a result of the activities of the War Artists' Advisory Committee. The War Artists' Advisory Committee (W.A.A.C.) was established, in 1939, under the auspices of the Ministry of Information. It was officially created to employ British artists to record the Second World War at home and abroad. Privately, however, its instigator, Kenneth Clark, then Director of the National Gallery, envisaged that it 'was simply to keep artists at work on any pretext, and, as far as possible, to prevent them from being killed'.<sup>200</sup> Under Clark's chairmanship, more than 400 artists contributed over 6,000 works to several schemes established by the W.A.A.C. During the war, these works were displayed as part of morale-boosting exhibitions, throughout Great Britain, which were administered by the Museums Association and the British Institute of Adult Education (and subsequently the Council for the Encouragement of Arts and Music). To emphasize this cultural role, works were also reproduced in inexpensive publications; the Oxford University Press, for example, published two series of books entitled *War Pictures by British Artists*, in what were then vast editions of up to 24,000 copies. The W.A.A.C. schemes, which employed, commissioned and bought independent works from artists, were also a form of wartime patronage which made contemporary British art relevant again to mass audiences, in comparison with British Abstraction and British Surrealism of the 1930s. By documenting and expressing shared experiences, contemporary art became identified with heritage-associated ideas of preservation, national identity and civilization which appealed to the popular imagination.

In December 1944, all the national daily newspapers carried an announcement of the nation-wide distribution of W.A.A.C. works to national institutions and to provincial

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<sup>200</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Other Half: A Self-Portrait*, John Murray, London, 1977, p.22.

public art galleries and museums. Notices were also placed in the *Museums Journal* and curators had the opportunity to view W.A.A.C. works at the Royal Academy. The distribution of works was administered by the Allocations Committee, established in March 1946, and took place from 1946-47. Application guidelines stipulated that works would be allocated according to a particular local interest, or relevance in terms of subject or location, thus emphasizing the nature of the works as war records, rather than as aesthetic objects. Despite this, works were distributed in terms of their intrinsic aesthetic quality, or because a particular artist filled a perceived gap in the existing collection of Twentieth-Century British Art. It was an approach which created discrepancies; for example, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery received R. V. Pitchforth's watercolour 'Liverpool in Fog'. In terms of representation, the distribution introduced a younger generation of notable artists into national and provincial collections, such as Eric Ravilious, Edward Ardizzone, Edward Bawden, Carel Weight, Thomas Hennell, John Piper and Mervyn Peake, several of whom were better known as illustrators and commercial artists, rather than as Fine Art practitioners. The W.A.A.C. distribution scheme also introduced a new form of local art in provincial collections which, in terms of audiences, had deep regional and national historical significance.

## **5.2. National Heritage Memorial Fund**

The dramatic rise in art market prices, particularly for heritage-type art, from the late 1970s onwards, highlighted the limitations of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, as it attempted an equitable approach to both applications for historical and modern works. In terms of central government funding, the only alternative was the principle of the Special Grant, established with the founding of the National Gallery, in 1824, by which the Treasury made exceptional grants towards the purchase of heritage-type art works for both national and non-national public institutions. During the 1980s, the concept of "heritage", as has been documented by the cultural historian, Robert Hewison, became redefined as a dominant issue which was promoted at the expense of contemporary

creativity and culture.<sup>201</sup> Part of the cultural shift included the establishment of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (N.H.M.F.), in 1980, as a nation-wide grant fund to assist towards the costs of acquiring, maintaining or preserving works of art and other objects, all deemed of 'importance to the national heritage' and of 'outstanding interest', by national and non-national public art galleries and museums.<sup>202</sup> The origins of the National Heritage Memorial Fund lie in the National Land Fund of 1946, which was originally created with a grant of £50 million from the Treasury to purchase land and buildings as a commemoration of Britain's wartime victory and as a war memorial 'which many would think finer than any work of art in stone or bronze'.<sup>203</sup> In 1957, its funds had largely remained unused, and the scheme was reduced to £1 million. In 1980, the residue of the Fund, plus an additional new grant from the Treasury, were allocated to the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

The primary object of the Fund was the prevention of the export of heritage items, and therefore its implementation tended to favour national institutions over local authority art galleries and museums, given the pre-eminent status of national collections. Heritage art was never clearly defined, but it was initially assumed by the Fund's administrators and the art gallery and museum community at large, that this term referred to pre-1900 art which had outstanding historical or artistic significance; the Fund's use was, therefore, not restricted to British art. This definition was subsequently modified to include art works completed prior to 1945, a rather arbitrary date in terms of artists' careers, but one which recognized, as has been noted, the cultural significance of British war art. A consequence of this historical division was that by the final decade of the twentieth century, few grants had been made towards the acquisition of twentieth-century British works. The current Fund now considers art

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<sup>201</sup> See Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, Methuen, London, 1987.

<sup>202</sup> National Heritage Memorial Fund, *Heritage Lottery and the National Heritage Memorial Fund: Annual Report and Accounts 1997-98*, 1998, u.p.

<sup>203</sup> National Heritage Memorial Fund website.

works which were completed at least 20 years before the date of purchase; a stance which continues to create anomalies.<sup>204</sup> In 1996, there was a public outcry following the application of the 20-year rule to a proposed purchase of Lucian Freud's 'Portrait on Grey Cover', by Abbot Hall Art Gallery and Museum, in Kendal.<sup>205</sup>

The importance of the Fund was the substantial and flexible role it played in securing major and expensive art works, as it could provide a grant of up to 90% of the purchase price which could be used in conjunction with other central government and privately-funded grant-making schemes. It was, however, a requirement of the Fund that other national and "recognized" independent sources, such as the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and the N.A.C.F., should be sought and guaranteed; the involvement of the N.A.C.F. further reinforced restricted definitions of what constituted heritage art. By far the Fund's greatest contribution towards the development of Twentieth-Century British Art collecting, by local authority art galleries and museums, was at Leeds City Art Gallery. This Gallery regularly received substantial grants, from 1982, towards the purchase of sculptures by major artists, such as Jacob Epstein, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. The substantial nature of the Fund encompassed the purchase of groups of works, or collections which formed a recognized entity, such as a selection of nine watercolours by Eric Ravilious, which were purchased by the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum in 1998. Here, in addition to grants from the local friends group, N.A.C.F. and the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund towards this purchase, the Heritage Lottery Fund provided the substantial grant of £77,800 as part of the total purchase price of £116,300. Ravilious was a local Sussex artist, who was employed as a war artist under the W.A.A.C. schemes, and his works, therefore, were deemed to have national significance. In

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<sup>204</sup> Letter: Jane Stancliffe, National Heritage Memorial Fund to the Author, November 1998.

<sup>205</sup> Dalya Alberge, 'Art Bodies Refuse Grants to Buy New Freud', *The Times*, 15th October, 1996.

general, however, local art was excluded from the Fund's scope, as grant allocations were subject to a cultural consensus, established by senior curators of national art galleries and museums, and prominent art historians, as to the aesthetic merits of a work and its place within art history, or history.

From 1995, the National Heritage Memorial Fund was also able to offer substantial grants towards purchases under the Heritage Lottery Fund (H.L.F.) which it also administered. As a result, high-priced works by major living British artists were bought by local authority collections with this assistance. These included Howard Hodgkin's painting 'Gardening' which was bought by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, in 1997, with a grant of £127,500 towards the total purchase price of £160,000. At Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, grants from the H.L.F. were also used to support institutional patronage, in conjunction with the Capital Projects: Commissions Category of the Arts Council of England's (A.C.E.) Lottery Fund, to purchase works for a new gallery room of 'transcultural arts'.<sup>206</sup> This display at Bradford was created primarily as a response to the local audience needs of a post-1945, ethnically diverse West Yorkshire community.

### **5.3. The Tate Gallery Five-Year Distribution Schemes**

In 1949, the Tate Gallery introduced five-year Distribution Schemes whereby works were lent to provincial art galleries and museums. Administered by the Arts Council, the Schemes were intended to be both inclusive and equitable and, by 1959, 24 major, medium-sized and minor local authority art galleries and museums throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were in receipt of loans.<sup>207</sup> These

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<sup>206</sup> N. Pooveya-Smith and Christine Hopper, *Cartwright Hall Art Gallery and its Collections*, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, Bradford, 1997, p.39.

<sup>207</sup> The 24 institutions were Cannon Hall Art Gallery, in Barnsley, Belfast Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum), Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Gracefield Arts Centre, in Dumfries, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art

loans functioned as a complement and contrast to municipal collections and were seen as filling gaps, albeit temporarily, with high quality art works.<sup>208</sup> The Distribution Schemes covered two distinct categories, which were British Painting, and Modern Painting and Sculpture, and they were up-dated periodically to retain a contemporary character. These Schemes initially represented a broad conspectus of creativity, but by the 1960s increasingly featured progressive abstract and semi-figurative paintings, such as Patrick Heron's 'Green and Purple Painting with Blue Disc', Roger Hilton's 'Grey Day By the Sea' and Garth Evans' 'White No.34'. Constructions and painted reliefs were also represented by works such as Victor Pasmore's 'Black Abstract', Malcolm Carder's 'Construction No. 21/64' and Matt Rugg's 'Painted Unit Relief'. In addition to the Schemes, the Tate Gallery also made a major loan of 38 pictures and sculptures, in 1959, to the recently opened Herbert Art Gallery, in Coventry, so as to encourage the development of a modern British art collection.

#### **5.4. Arts Council Art Collection**<sup>209</sup>

In 1939, Francis Watson (1907-88), the art writer and journalist who worked for the *Yorkshire Post*, had proposed the creation of 'a properly constituted authority, State supported, which would co-ordinate exhibitions and greatly extend the present functions of the Royal Academy' as a solution to declining patronage and audiences for contemporary British art.<sup>210</sup> This was fulfilled, in part, by the creation of the Arts

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Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Paisley Museum and Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Galleries, Southampton City Art Gallery, Southend Art Gallery, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Norwich, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Wakefield Art Gallery and Wolverhampton Art Gallery; art works were also borrowed by the National Museum of Wales (now the National Museum and Gallery Cardiff), the National Library, in Aberyswyth, and the trustee-status Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, in Bedford.

<sup>208</sup> Letter: Curator, Southampton City Art Gallery to Joanna Drew, Art Department, Arts Council of Great Britain, 23rd October, 1969 in 'Tate Gallery Loan Scheme: Galleries and Distribution Files', box: Arts Council Records, South Bank Centre.

<sup>209</sup> In 1967, the Arts Council of Great Britain was granted a new charter by which separate Arts Councils for Wales and Scotland were established.

<sup>210</sup> Francis Watson, *Art Lies Bleeding*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1939, p.244.

Council of Great Britain, in 1945, which included an Art Department whose remit covered the establishment of a touring art collection. This collection was the first central government-funded collection exclusively devoted to contemporary British art. Its formation was directed by an Art Panel whose early members were John Rothenstein, Director of the Tate Gallery; Philip Hendy; Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery; Samuel Courtauld, the eminent art collector; the artists Duncan Grant, Thomas Monnington and Henry Moore; William Emrys Williams; and from 1947, Herbert Read, the influential writer on art, design and education. Their collecting remit covered pictures, sculptures and reproductions, and aimed to provide an educational touring resource following the example of the V. & A. Museums's Circulation Department; the Arts Council continued to purchase art reproductions, as part of its touring collection, as late as 1966. This collection was promoted as a source of educative superior metropolitan aesthetic standards, in comparison with the non-national public collecting institutions, 'where the material is stored rather than displayed and is composed of examples selected for reasons of local sentiment or caprice, irrelevant and downright ugly when considered as works of art'.<sup>211</sup>

The Arts Council collection was originally formulated according to its primary function which was to provide the source material for small touring exhibitions. This material was defined as 'a representative group of pictures of current British art'.<sup>212</sup> As a model for collecting contemporary British art, the Arts Council collection followed a pattern distinct from the Tate Gallery:

because the kind of pictures we want are of a very much less expensive sort. The Tate buys a modern picture to be permanently on exhibition as the finest representation of a particular artist or school. We need

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<sup>211</sup> B. Ivor Evans and Mary Glasgow, *The Arts In England*, The Falcon Press, London, 1949, p.63. B. Ivor Evans was Vice-Chairman of the Arts Council, and Mary Glasgow was Secretary-General of the Arts Council.

<sup>212</sup> 'Arts Council Art Panel, Minutes of Evidence, 10th November, 1949', p.60 in 'Select Committee on Estimates: Enquiry into the Arts Council 1949-50', file, : Treasury Records T227/149, P.R.O.



pictures which are going round the country and which will give people a good idea of the best modern work, and so our purchases are on a very much more modest scale.<sup>213</sup>

During the 1970s and 1980s, an important adjunct to the Arts Council's formulation of a contemporary British art collection, as a definition of contemporary art practice, was its distribution of actual lists of works to public art galleries and museums, with the suggestion that these were the sort of works which institutions should be purchasing. As a public collection devoted exclusively to contemporary British art it increasingly took on the role as a centralized source of patronage where, despite the passage of time, no provision was made for de-accessioning.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>214</sup> See *The Times*, 'Joanna Drew', [Obituary], *The Times*, 21st. April, 2003. Drew joined the Arts Council, as an arts administrator, in 1952.

### **SECTION 3**

#### **INDEPENDENT ART COLLECTION SCHEMES**

##### **CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCTION**

This section examines the nature and implementation of various schemes established by several independent organizations; independent national loan and exhibition schemes; and independent provincial initiatives. It argues that these schemes ascribed and asserted particular functions to local authority art galleries and museums, and their collections of Twentieth-Century British Art; this was notably a concern with heritage and contemporary patronage. In the discussion which follows, attention is also drawn to the promotion of specific art forms and the perception of local and regional contemporary British art.

The earliest national schemes were created by the National Art Collections Fund (N.A.C.F.) and the Contemporary Art Society (C.A.S.), two originally closely interlinked membership art charities established in the first decade of the twentieth-century. Both embodied the concept of the informed, inspired amateur described by George Moore, the Irish writer on art and novelist, as 'a born collector' who 'can do more with a thousand a year than a corporation could do with a hundred thousand a year'.<sup>215</sup> This idea of innate cultural judgement drew on the nineteenth-century notion of the connoisseur and private collector, whose main interest was the aesthetic merits of a work. Despite the initial amateur and independent status of the N.A.C.F. and the C.A.S., these organizations, their activities and membership were often linked with the central government-funded scheme, the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, discussed in Chapter 4, and national collecting bodies and institutions, such as the Arts Council, Tate Gallery and the British Museum. These associations encouraged the gradual

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<sup>215</sup> George Moore, 'The Alderman in Art' in *Modern Painting*, Walter Scott Ltd., London, 1893, p.170.

transformation of both the N.A.C.F. and the C.A.S. into robust, professional and culturally astute organizations. Despite the publication of official C.A.S. histories and annual reports, Chapter 8 offers the first in-depth examination of the C.A.S.'s pre and post-1945 role; areas considered therefore include purchase grants, bequest and gifts of art, art loans, exhibitions and policy documents. By dividing and analyzing the C.A.S.'s contribution under specific sub-headings, rather than a chronological account, the thesis aims to show that the C.A.S. pursued a more complex range and levels of engagement with public collections, in its zealous pursuit of two founding aims: the patronage of British artists and the representation of Twentieth-Century British Art in public collections.

In Chapter 9, the little-known activities of the Scottish Modern Arts Association, established in 1907, are brought to the fore, alongside other later key national independent art schemes organized by the Contemporary Art Society for Wales, established in 1937, and the Henry Moore Foundation, launched in 1977. No official history exists for the Gulbenkian Foundation's considerable cultural activities in support of Twentieth-Century British Art, during the period 1959-79; although occasional articles were published contemporaneously with the Gulbenkian Foundation's schemes. Chapter 10 therefore examines at length the Foundation's impact on the growth of local authority art gallery and museum collections at a crucial period, in terms of British art practice and the expansion of the commercial sector; the Foundation's support of retrospective and prescient acquisitions is also highlighted. Chapter 11 examines the independent national loan and exhibition schemes the first of which was the Museums Association's Circulating Art Exhibitions, from 1922-37; followed by the Peter Stuyvesant and Alistair McAlpine Loan Collections of the 1960s and 1970s, and the issue-raising Royal Academy exhibition 'Primitives to Picasso', in 1962. The Section concludes with Chapter 12 devoted to a discussion of key independent provincial schemes which were the Charles Rutherston Loan Scheme, launched in 1925, National Museum of Wales Loan Scheme created in 1963; and the

exhibition competitions which were the 'John Moores', established at the Walker Art Gallery, in 1957, and the 'International Print Biennale' created at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, in 1968.

## CHAPTER 7: THE NATIONAL ART COLLECTIONS FUND<sup>216</sup>

### 7.1. Origins

As early as 1857, John Ruskin had called for the establishment of a 'great National Society' to purchase works of art for 'the various galleries in our great cities...watching there over their safety'.<sup>217</sup> It was, however, in response to the increasing sales of Old Master art works from aristocratic collections and escalating prices, that the writer on art and amateur artist, D.S. MacColl, suggested the formation of a fund-raising, heritage-oriented group of private individuals, in 1890.<sup>218</sup> This proposal was discussed by Christiana Herringham (1852-1929), a fresco artist and scholar of substantial independent means; MacColl; Roger Fry; and Claude Phillips (1846-1924), Keeper (Director) of the Wallace Collection, from 1897-1911, and art critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, from 1897-24. This led to a meeting with representatives from the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery in 1903. Initially the creation of the 'Society of Friends of the National Gallery', modelled on the Société des Amis du Louvre and the Kaiser Friederich-Museums-Verein, was considered as a controllable source of art and money. A more independent membership organization, 'The National Art Collections League', was also proposed which would financially assist all national collections with Fine Art purchases. The merger of the nascent League with the Friends of the British Museum, in 1903, created the National Art Collections Fund (N.A.C.F.) as a body of individual subscribing members. As its title suggests, the Fund was intended primarily as a source of funds for the benefit of national collecting institutions, and up until the Second World War, the principal beneficiaries of the N.A.C.F. were the British Museum, National Gallery and the Tate Gallery. The primary object of the N.A.C.F. was to save Old Masters and other heritage-type art

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<sup>216</sup> Now known as the Art Fund.

<sup>217</sup> John Ruskin, 'The National Gallery: A Preface', in E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds.), *The Works of John Ruskin, 1819-1900*, George Allen, London, 1903-12, Vol. v., pp.451-54

<sup>218</sup> D. S. MacColl, 'Friends of the National Gallery', *Saturday Review*, 1st. December 1900.

works for the Nation, as Charles Aitken (then Director of the Tate Gallery) noted in the N.A.C.F.'s interwar official resumé of its achievements:

The National Art-Collections Fund has been chiefly concerned with the salvage of paintings by the Older Masters and of set purpose has left the acquisition of contemporary works, where the final verdict of taste is as yet undetermined, to other bodies such as the Contemporary Art Society, or to the initiative of enthusiastic collectors and officials.<sup>219</sup>

Under the direction of Roger Fry and D.S. MacColl, however, modern art was included in response to the mis-management of the Chantrey Bequest which, until 1946, was the Tate Gallery's main source of purchase money for contemporary art created in the British Isles.<sup>220</sup> In 1903, three sub-funds were established by the N.A.C.F. into which subscriptions and donations could be paid to support purchases. These sub-funds were 'Old Master Purchases', 'Works of the Modern School' and 'Other Works of Art'; a 'Reserve Fund' was also created.<sup>221</sup> Three purchasing committees were appointed by the National Art Collections Fund's Executive Committee to administer these sub-funds. The idea was that purchases would not be made on a regular or even annual basis, but that the sub-funds would accumulate and be drawn upon when works on the art market needed saving for the Nation. The N.A.C.F. thus defined its purchasing function as responding to the dictates of the art market. It was also constituted to act both as a channel for art, in the form of general gifts, bequests and in memoriam gifts, and to accept legacies.<sup>222</sup>

The first N.A.C.F. Council of 1903-4, a considerable body of 49 individual members, was consciously structured as a heritage lobby which combined collecting objectives with the elite of society. It included artists, senior curators and Trustees of national art

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<sup>219</sup> National Art Collections Fund, *Twenty-five Years of the N.A.C.F. 1903-1928*, Robert Maclehose & Company Ltd. and the University Press, Glasgow, 1928, p.103.

<sup>220</sup> Mary Largo, *Christiana Herringham and the Edwardian Art Scene*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia 1996, p.127.

<sup>221</sup> Guard Book Number 2: N.A.C.F. Archive 9328.16.5, Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>222</sup> Museums Association, 'General Notes: National Art Collections Fund', *Museums Journal*, Vol. iii, December 1903, pp.202-203.

institutions, alongside wealthy and often aristocratic art collectors whose main interests were pre-twentieth-century art.<sup>223</sup> The Council's membership included the Royal Academicians Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Sir Aston Webb and Sir Edward J. Poynter P.R.A., and Walter Crane, Frederick Brown and James Guthrie, who in their ex-officio capacity represented the training and practice of art in England and Scotland. Alongside these practitioners were the curators Sir Charles Holroyd (1861-1917), the first Keeper of the Tate Gallery, from 1897-1905, who had both trained and taught at the Slade School of Art; and Alfred G. Temple (1848-1928), Curator of the Guildhall Art Gallery, London, from 1890, who organized a notable series of exhibitions of historic and contemporary British and foreign art at the Gallery. Several National Gallery and Tate Gallery Trustees, who were then predominantly drawn from the wealthy British aristocracy, also joined the Council, such as David Alexander Lindsay, the 27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarres (1871-1940), who was appointed the N.A.C.F.'s first Chairman, from 1903-21; Lord Curzon, the 1st Marquess of Kedleston (1859-1925); and Robert Witt (1872-1952), an accomplished amateur artist and the N.A.C.F.'s first President. The inclusion of eminent artists, however, suggests that, initially, support of contemporary British artists who worked in the Fine, Applied and Decorative Arts fields was also envisaged as role of the Fund and that purchase grants from the N.A.C.F would reinforce the educational role of art galleries and museums, following the model established by the V. & A. Museum.

More radical proposals for the use of the Fund, directed towards contemporary British art, came from prominent figures outside the Fund's membership. William Rothenstein, a leading francophile artist, put forward the idea that the Fund should encourage local authority art galleries and museums to be institutional patrons of contemporary British

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<sup>223</sup> For a complete list of these members see National Art Collections Fund, *Twenty-Five Years of the N.A.C.F.: 1903-1928*, Robert Macle hose & Company Ltd. and the University Press of Glasgow, 1928.

art.<sup>224</sup> While Frank Rutter saw the Fund as providing the Tate Gallery with an alternative to the Chantrey Bequest.<sup>225</sup> The author, Mary Largo, has suggested that Roger Fry, as a member of the N.A.C.F.'s first Executive Committee, had wanted the Fund to be more broadly-based as 'a democratic coalition of collectors, gallery administrators and trustees, artists, and any of the general public who cared or wished to learn about art'.<sup>226</sup> It was only with the launch of the Contemporary Art Society, however, that all these ideas would be realized in a organization which sought to cut across the divisions between public and private, amateur and professional, and social hierarchies in the form of old and new money. In 1906, Roger Fry left the N.A.C.F.'s Executive Committee, when he took up his post as Curator of Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; in 1910, he returned to England.

## **7.2. Aims**

In 1910, the N.A.C.F. established the 'A' Sub-Committee to purchase modern art for public collections. Its members included Philip Morrell (1870-1943), the politician; Roger Fry; and Charles Holmes, then Director of the National Portrait Gallery, from 1909-16, and Editor of the newly-launched *Burlington Magazine*, a publication directed at the scholar and connoisseur. From this initiative sprang the Contemporary Art Society, later in the same year.<sup>227</sup> The establishment of the Contemporary Art Society (C.A.S.), in 1910, signalled the N.A.C.F.'s major withdrawal from involvement in contemporary art. During the period 1910-45, the N.A.C.F. continued, however, to act as a conduit for Twentieth-Century British Art gifts, largely from its private members, which were distributed to its main beneficiary, the Tate Gallery, and a

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<sup>224</sup> Mary Largo, *Christiana Herringham and the Edwardian Art Scene*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1996, p.125.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid*, p.127.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid*, p.81.

<sup>227</sup> Letter: R. C. Witt, Honorary Secretary of the N.A.C.F. to Charles Aitken, 20th April, 1910: N.A.C.F. Archive, Letter Copy Books 9328.16.4., Tate Gallery Archive.



limited number of municipal art galleries, such as Brighton Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and the Walker Art Gallery.

The Finance Act 1921, extended exemption from death duties so as to include the private sale of art works to the N.A.C.F.; the Fund, therefore, acquired the same cultural status as a national collection. Under this arrangement, the N.A.C.F. began to attract an increasing number of bequests and gifts. In 1931, the influential private collector and promoter of contemporary British and foreign art, Michael Sadler, asked the N.A.C.F. to distribute part of his art collection to ten public art galleries, in memory of his wife.<sup>228</sup> The recipient municipal institutions included Leeds City Art Gallery, which acquired nine works on paper by key artists such as Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Walter Sickert and Philip Wilson Steer. Another example of a notable bequest, encouraged by the change in central government legislation, was the Fulford Bequest, from which Cartwright Hall Art Gallery received Mark Gertler's painting 'Tulips' in 1945.

In order to stimulate postwar institutional patronage, the N.A.C.F. gave an increasing number of grants to local authority art galleries and museums towards specific purchases of modern British art. These were either 100% grants, for less costly works, such as Jacob Epstein's bronze bust 'Peggy Jean Asleep' purchased in 1954 for Wakefield Art Gallery, or 50% grants, for example, towards the purchase of Matthew Smith's painting 'Still Life With Bow' by Wakefield Art Gallery in 1958. The N.A.C.F.'s support of municipal collecting of modern British art, however, remained sporadic and during the years 1971-80, the N.A.C.F. ceased to support expensive purchases of modern British art, on the understanding that these areas would be covered by the C.A.S.<sup>229</sup> This period, however, coincided with rising art market prices

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<sup>228</sup> Michael Sadler was a member of the N.A.C.F. Executive Committee.

<sup>229</sup> See Letter: The Earl of Crawford and Balcarres to Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, 8th June 1970: Bolton Museum and Art Gallery Records. Bolton Museum

and a financial crisis at the C.A.S. which obliged the N.A.C.F. to renew its grant-making for examples of Twentieth-Century British Art; in order to accommodate this renewed remit, the N.A.C.F. grants were reduced to 25% of the total purchase price.<sup>230</sup> In allocating these grants, the N.A.C.F. sought to retain its organization's commitment to art which had "stood the test of time", and grants were restricted to, where possible, major art works by established and mid-career British artists. Examples purchased under this scheme included William Roberts' painting 'The Dancers' bought by Kelvingrove Art Gallery in 1977; Frank Auerbach's painting 'Head of J.Y.M. 1' bought by Southampton City Art Gallery in 1982; and Lynn Chadwick's sculpture 'Radar' bought by Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in 1984. In the 1980s, the N.A.C.F. restructured its grant schemes and based these on the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. Monthly meetings were held by the N.A.C.F. Executive Committee to consider applications, expert opinions and valuations, and a Grants Officer was appointed. In addition, eligibility for grants was determined by registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission (M.G.C.).

The N.A.C.F., under its Finance Act status, acted as an important conduit for single gifts, groups of works and whole private collections of Twentieth-Century British Art; a role which sustained the gap-filling principle in local authority collection development. In 1967, for example, the publisher and art collector, Thomas Balston, left a sizeable collection of predominantly Twentieth-Century British Art to the N.A.C.F. for distribution. National, trustees-status, university and local authority art galleries and museums all benefited from this allocation in 1968. Bequests such as this functioned as sources of significant gap-filling works, particularly those by Mark

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and Art Gallery had requested a grant from the N.A.C.F. towards the purchase of a sculpture by Barbara Hepworth.

<sup>230</sup> See National Art Collections Fund, *Monet to Freud: A Loan Exhibition of Works of Art from 1870 to the Present Day Acquired for the Nation with the Assistance of the National Art Collections Fund*, Sotheby's, London, 1988.

Gertler which formed an important part of Balston's collection.<sup>231</sup> Individual members of the N.A.C.F. were also able to specify the destination of their gifts. In 1992, for example, 17 works under the Professor Robert Holmes Bequest were presented through the N.A.C.F. to Leeds City Art Gallery. This bequest constituted a substantial grouping of neo-Romantic art, an aspect of British art from the period 1940-50, which was until then, sparsely represented in Leeds City Art Gallery's otherwise major collection of Twentieth-Century British Art.

### **7.3. The Modern Art Fund and Collection Schemes**

It was not, however, until the launch of the Modern Art Fund, in 1989, that the N.A.C.F. officially returned to support the acquisition of Twentieth-Century British Art on a significant scale. The impetus for this Fund came from the perception that there was a gap between the acquisitions of the C.A.S. and the N.A.C.F. when it came to representing 'the old masters of tomorrow' in non-national art galleries and museums.<sup>232</sup> This support, in the form of purchase grants, aimed to assimilate modern art within a definition of heritage-type art, where 'the acquisition of works by artists with a good track record, preferably before their prices have hit the dizzy heights of some modern stars' would strengthen existing public collections of Twentieth-Century British Art.<sup>233</sup> To maximize the Fund's use, purchases were made principally from artists who had already gained a reputation, but were not part of an international art

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<sup>231</sup> These gifts were Mark Gertler 'Sleeping Nude' (Ulster Museum, formerly Belfast Museum and Art Gallery); Robert Austin 'Gazelles', H. S. Beham 'Women's Bath', Tom Nash 'Joshua and the Sun', Elmslie Owen 'Abstract' and Eric Ravilious 'The Tractor' (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery); Mark Gertler 'Fish' and C. Utin 'Kitchen Interior' (Leeds City Art Gallery); Dennis Hawkins 'Bus Pier, Putney' (Manchester City Art Gallery); R. O. Dunlop 'Lalita' and Mark Gertler 'Portrait of Thomas Balston' (Laing Art Gallery); Mark Gertler 'Bouquet and Sunshade' (Castle Museum, Nottingham); and Mark Gertler 'The Artist's Sister' (Swindon Art Gallery).

<sup>232</sup> Nicholas Goodison, 'The National Art-Collections Fund' in *Monet to Freud: A Loan Exhibition of Works of Art from 1870 to the Present Day Acquired for the Nation with the Assistance of the National Art Collections Fund*, Sotheby's, London, 1988, u.p.

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*

market. These included the Scottish artist, Stephen Campbell, whose painting 'Three men of exactly the same size in an unequal room' was purchased for Leeds City Art Gallery.

A Development Board 'composed of prominent figures from the business and financial communities' was established to raise £3,000,000, as an endowment, from which it was hoped that an annual income of around £250,000 would be available for the Modern Art Fund.<sup>234</sup> Drawing on this Fund, the N.A.C.F. launched the Corporate and Private Patronage Scheme in 1991; subsequently renamed the Contemporary Art Initiative 1991. This Scheme involved the N.A.C.F. acting as 'a broker' which united art galleries and museums, art dealers, corporate and public supporters in a collective fund-raising process.<sup>235</sup> A selection committee was also established which included the prominent art critic, Richard Cork, with a specialist knowledge of contemporary British art, and Richard Morphet (b.1938), Keeper of the Modern Collection at the Tate Gallery, from 1986-96, in order to assess both the status of institutions and proposed acquisitions. Under this arrangement, public art gallery and museum curators were invited to select up to three contemporary art works from London art dealers, as potential acquisitions. A ceiling limit of £10,000 was placed on any one purchase, although this provision was subsequently removed; for example, Perth Museum and Art Gallery purchased a work costing £15,000.

Under the Corporate and Private Patronage Scheme, eighteen non-national art galleries and museums approached the Fund for financial assistance towards the purchase of twenty-two works, but only seven were selected. The N.A.C.F. judged these works to be of 'somewhat variable quality'; the short lead-in time for the

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<sup>234</sup> National Art Collections Fund, *The Modern Art Fund*, N.A.C.F., London, 1992, p.5.

<sup>235</sup> Nicholas Goodison, 'Chairman's Report', [Modern Art Fund], *Review*, National Art Collections Fund, 1991, p.6.

Scheme, however, had made it difficult for many art galleries and museums to find and research really first-rate art works.<sup>236</sup> Each institution received an 85% grant towards the total purchase price of a work, which was made up of a 50% grant from the N.A.C.F. and a 35% grant from private sponsorship provided by the Baring Foundation; participating art dealers also discounted purchase prices. The twentieth-century British works purchased for local authority art galleries and museums under this Scheme were David Hockney's print 'The Student: Homage to Picasso' 1973 (Wakefield Art Gallery); Bernard Meadows' bronze sculpture 'Startled Bird' 1955 (Leeds City Art Gallery); Len Tabner's mixed-media painting 'Cowbar Breakwater' 1988 (Laing Art Gallery); Adrian Berg's painting 'Punch Bowl: Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park' 1983-4 and David Mach's sculpture 'Some Like it Hot' (Manchester City Art Gallery); and John Byrne's painting 'Jock and the Tiger Cat' c.1978 (Perth Museum and Art Gallery). The trustee-status Abbot Hall Art Gallery, in Kendal, and the Fitzwilliam Museum, a major university institution, in Cambridge, also received grants under this Scheme.

#### **7.4. Contemporary Art Initiative 1992**

Through its general grant-making, the N.A.C.F. continued to support Twentieth-Century British Art purchases. In 1992, following the appointment of a new Director, David Barrie, formally in the diplomatic service, the N.A.C.F. launched the Contemporary Art Initiative 1992. Its first scheme was 'Investing now for the Collection of the Future'. A list of London art dealers, who specialized in modern art, and in particular its contemporary aspect, and were willing to offer discount prices to public provincial art galleries and museums, was again compiled by the N.A.C.F. Under this scheme, the N.A.C.F. provided a 50% grant towards a maximum purchase price of £10,000; the scheme, potentially, could also operate in conjunction with other public and independent funding sources. This approach to collection development

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<sup>236</sup> Letter: Manchester City Art Gallery to the Author, November 1993.

fundamentally differed from the C.A.S.'s collection development initiatives, in that it allowed local curators to select works. By 1993, however, the combination of the N.A.C.F.'s limited administrative resources and the mixed quality of submissions brought the scheme to an abrupt end.<sup>237</sup>

### **7.5. Postscript**

A corollary to this was central government's creation of the National Lottery, in November 1994. From 1995 both the Heritage Lottery Fund (H.L.F.) and the Arts Council made new types of grants towards art purchases, and the N.A.C.F. collaborated as part of potential and substantial pooled-funding. In 1997, for example, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery was able to acquire Anish Kapoor's sculpture, 'Turning the World Inside Out' 1995 for £90,000, with funding from the N.A.C.F., the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England and the Henry Moore Foundation. This commissioned cast provided Cartwright Hall Art Gallery with a seminal work for its new gallery of transcultural art. The N.A.C.F. also facilitated a new type of joint purchasing initiative involving Tate Britain (formerly the Tate Gallery, Millbank) and the Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust, in 1999; as a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, the latter had assumed responsibility for the local authority art galleries and museums in Sheffield, from April 1998. The painting 'Zacharias and Elizabeth' 1913-14, by Stanley Spencer, previously on long-term loan to Sheffield, was bought with combined funds from the N.A.C.F., National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Friends of the Tate Gallery, private benefactors and central government's Acceptance-in-Lieu Scheme. This arrangement, with the Tate Gallery was part of a new partnership scheme which united the Gallery with five provincial art galleries; the other local authority institutions were the Castle Museum, in Norwich, New Art Gallery, in Walsall, and City Museum and Art Gallery, in Stoke-on-Trent. Key features of this arrangement include information and advice on

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<sup>237</sup> Author in conversation with the N.A.C.F.'s Grants Officer, Mary Yule, July 1994.

proposed acquisitions and access to the collections of Tate Britain and Tate Modern, as the basis for major loan exhibitions beyond the metropolis. The N.A.C.F. also continues to be a channel for gifts and bequests of Twentieth-Century British Art. In 2000, the influential and controversial collector, Charles Saatchi, presented thirty-nine contemporary British works to public art galleries in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; the recipient institutions were Leeds City Art Gallery, New Art Gallery, in Walsall, Swindon Art Gallery, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Paisley Art Gallery and the Ulster Museum. One hundred works had also previously been presented to the Arts Council, in 1999.

### **7.6. Impact of the National Art Collections Fund**

The N.A.C.F. had originated as largely a heritage-driven body focused on the collecting needs of national collections. This guiding principle, the retention of art works for the nation, informed the N.A.C.F.'s cultural role as a distributor of Twentieth-Century British Art, in the form of gifts and bequests. Once the C.A.S. had been established, in 1910, the N.A.C.F. largely withdrew from making purchase grants towards Twentieth-Century British Art acquisitions, until the 1980s. This change in policy coincided with, as has been previously noted, central government's introduction of the National Heritage Memorial Fund. The N.H.M.F. represented a substantial source of purchase grant funding for heritage items and this development encouraged the N.A.C.F. to re-engage with Twentieth-Century British Art, and in particular its contemporary aspect, through the creation of collection schemes. In so doing, the N.A.C.F. did not seek to replicate the function of the C.A.S., but to define a new category of purchase grant funding for heritage-linked modern British art by established artists. Throughout its long history, the N.A.C.F. retained a sense of high art aesthetic standards and scholarship-linked connoisseurship, aspects which, as has been previously noted, were an essential part of national institutional collecting. A consequence of this approach was that when specific grant funds for the purchase of modern British art, and in particular its contemporary aspect, were established in the

1980s and 1990s, the N.A.C.F. attempted to pre-judge the heritage status of art. The N.A.C.F. distribution of Twentieth-Century British Art, in the form of bequests and gifts, similarly reinforced the sense of heritage, particularly when these works came from prominent private collections or individuals. At the same time, such works also acted as often significant gap-fillers, given their retrospective character, so as to further articulate public collections as forms of British art history.



## **CHAPTER 8: THE CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY**

### **8.1. Origins**

Although, by 1900, the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions of contemporary British art had expanded to include exhibitors associated with the New English Art Club, the Academy remained broadly hostile to "foreign influences" on British art which were not easily assimilated with traditional genres and picture-making techniques. Robert Ross (1869-1918) wryly summed up the challenge which faced the C.A.S. when he noted that 'the English people generally require their art to be endorsed by Death or the Royal Academy. The Contemporary Art Society believe the prestige attaching to both is over-estimated'.<sup>238</sup>

Originally called the Modern Art Association, the Contemporary Art Society (C.A.S.) was a conscious reaction on the part of private individuals, some of whom were already collectors, to a new century of visual creativity. Its launch, in 1910, coincided with a series of ground-breaking exhibitions held mainly in London, during the years 1910-14, which Dr. Anna Gruetzner Robins has identified as defining the beginnings of modernism in British art.<sup>239</sup> A key figure who contributed to this development was Roger Fry, whose well-documented exhibitions 'Manet and the Post-Impressionists' 1910 and the 'Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition' 1912 were a succès de scandale in their deliberate challenge to indigenous tastes and aesthetic values.

From the outset, the C.A.S. amalgamated professional and amateur interests through its first Executive Committee of 1910, which included writers, collectors, London contemporary art dealers and curators of national collecting institutions, several of

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<sup>238</sup> Robert Ross, then Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, quoted in *Guide to the Re-Opening Exhibition, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery and an exhibition of Modern Pictures Organized by the Contemporary Art Society*, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, 1912, u.p.

<sup>239</sup> Anna Gruetzner Robins, *Modern Art in Britain 1910-19*, Merrell Holberton and Barbican Art Gallery, London, 1997.

whom were also members of the N.A.C.F. These were the art critic Clive Bell; Arthur Clutton-Brock (1868-1924), essayist, journalist and art critic for *The Times*, from 1908-24, who was then influenced by William Morris; Frank Rinder (1863-1937), the Scottish art critic for the *Glasgow Herald* and an authority on Scottish art; John Bowyer Nichols (1859-?), the poet and art critic for the *Westminster Gazette*; D. S. MacColl; Roger Fry; and Robert Ross, art critic for *The Morning Post*, from 1908-12. As the former Director of the Carfax Gallery, from 1901-09, which he had re-launched, in 1901, as the first London commercial gallery to specialize in Twentieth-Century British Art, Ross had supported French Impressionism and its influences on British art, but he remained critical of artists associated with Post-Impressionism. The Carfax Gallery, therefore, promoted the careers of artists such as William Nicholson, Charles Shannon, Walter Sickert, Philip Wilson Steer and William Rothenstein, whose works were among the early C.A.S. acquisitions. Ross's knowledge of the art market, led to his appointment as a valuer for the Board of the Inland Revenue, from 1912-14, and as an additional Tate Gallery Trustee, in 1917; from 1912-18, he was also a member of the N.A.C.F. Executive Committee. These prominent figures were joined by the private owners and collectors of art Cyril K. Butler (1864-1936), then Chairman of the Petty Sessional Division of Paddington, from 1912-13; Augustus Daniel (1866-1950), formerly the Assistant Director of the British School at Rome, from 1906-07; Judge William Evans (1847-1918); Ernest Marsh (1863-1945), the pioneering collector of Studio Pottery; Thomas Lister, the 4th Baron (Lord) Ribblesdale (1854-1925), a politician and huntsman; Philip Morrell, who replaced the Honourable Gervase Beckett M.P.; Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, the 8th Baron (Lord) Howard de Walden (1880-1946), a keen amateur artist, Lady Ottoline Morrell's cousin and the C.A.S.'s first President; Lord Henry Cavendish Bentinck (1863-1931), half-brother of the Duke of Portland and Lady Ottoline's brother, a connoisseur and collector of modern art, and the C.A.S.'s first Chairman; and Robert Windsor-Clive, the 1st Earl of Plymouth (1857-1923), President of the Museums Association, in 1905, and the C.A.S.'s first Treasurer. There were also two national curators who were

Campbell Dodgson (1867-1948) Curator, from 1893, and subsequently Keeper, from 1912-32, of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, who used his family money to create a large collection of contemporary British and mainland European prints; and Charles Aitken, then the Curator of Whitechapel Art Gallery, until 1911. The C.A.S. was not intended to be homogenous in its outlook, and its first Executive Committee incorporated 'widely different opinions' held by members, such as Roger Fry and Lord Ribblesdale.<sup>240</sup> Ribblesdale had been painted by the Royal Academician, John Singer Sargent, who with his nouveau swagger painting technique was Fry's *bete noir*. Following Sargent's death and the creation of the Tate Gallery's Sargent Gallery, in 1926, Fry spitefully summed up Sargent as 'striking and undistinguished as an illustrator and non-existent as an artist'.<sup>241</sup>

The C.A.S.'s early individual membership, from 1910-13, was equally wide-ranging and included London art dealers, such as Ernest Brown and Cecil Phillips of The Leicester Galleries, established in 1902; and William S. Marchant, Director of the Goupil Gallery which, from 1890, promoted then little known francophile artists such as Glyn Philpot, Walter Greaves, Augustus John, William Nicholson, William Orpen, Walter Sickert and Philip Wilson Steer. A range of artists were also members, such as the fashionable portrait painters John Singer Sargent and Phillip de Laszlo, and the influential teacher at the Slade School of Art, Henry Tonks. Trustees of the National Gallery and Tate Gallery, such as Lord Curzon and Robert Witt; and Charles Holmes, then Director of the National Portrait Gallery, from 1909-16, joined. A number of wealthy provincially-based collectors also became members such as Edward Cecil Guinness, the 1st Earl of Iveagh (1847-1927); Colonel T.W. Harding; Alfred A. de Pass (1861-?); Charles Rothenstein (1866-1927), subsequently Rutherston, a

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<sup>240</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1910-12*, C.A.S., London, p.2.

<sup>241</sup> Roger Fry, 'J.S. Sargent as Seen at the Royal Academy Exhibition of Works, 1926, and in the National Gallery' in *Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1926, p.135.

merchant; Michael Sadler; and the Dutch businessman, Frank C. Stoop, whose collection of modern foreign art created a core of major international art at the Tate Gallery, when it was bequeathed in 1933. The supporter of the early public museum movement and its educational benefits, Thomas C. Horsfall, was also an early member; and the art administrator, collector and dealer, Isidore Spielmann (1854-1925), who was also a founder member of the N.A.C.F.

Despite the broad scope of the C.A.S.'s Executive Committee and early general membership, Fry's aesthetic ideas dominated the C.A.S. from its establishment until his death in 1934. When, for example, Edward Marsh, who became a leading member of the C.A.S., made his first purchase of contemporary British art, in 1911, it was Duncan Grant's painting 'Parrot Tulips', a typical example of early Bloomsbury art promoted by Roger Fry; it was bought from the Carfax Gallery. Bloomsbury art and home-grown art which could be equated with Fry's ideas, outlined in Chapter 2, held sway to such an extent that, early in 1913, D.S. MacColl, another founder member of the C.A.S., resigned; an action which illustrated the division which existed among the francophiles in Britain, between those supportive of French Impressionism and its influence, exemplified by D.S. MacColl, and Post-Impressionism and Abstraction. During the interwar period, Fry publicly promoted the C.A.S. as the antidote to the 'philanthropic generosity, Ministries of Fine Arts, committees of taste, and other such expensive machinery'.<sup>242</sup> In order to distinguish the 'enlightened self-interest' of the C.A.S. from rival private schemes and the general nation-wide practice of bequests and gifts, Fry stressed that the C.A.S. was a body of private patrons who had 'studied the question of artistic value'.<sup>243</sup> By 1923, however, the C.A.S. had become a "society" organization, whose activities also mirrored the social-calendar status of the Royal Academy. Its members included the wives of Winston Churchill, Somerset

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<sup>242</sup> Roger Fry, [Letters to the Editor] 'Modern British Art: Indiscriminate Patrons', *The Times*, 30th January, 1926.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*

Maugham, Harold Nicolson (Vita Sackville-West) and Oswald Mosley. Contemporary celebrities also joined, such as Ivor Novello, alongside the titled and powerful, such as Gerald Tyrwhitt-Wilson, the 14th Baron (Lord) Berners (1883-1950), a diplomat, composer and competent amateur artist, who had received tuition from Walter Sickert. These changes, combined with a certain personal animosity against Fry, led the ex-Vorticist painter, Edward Wadsworth, to withdraw his subscription, in 1931, complaining that 'the Society was neither a Contemporary Society nor an Art Society'.<sup>244</sup>

## **8.2. Aims**

By establishing itself as both an individual and institutional national membership society 'for the acquisition of works of modern art for loan or gift to public galleries', the C.A.S. aimed to place itself at the heart of contemporary cultural life in Britain.<sup>245</sup> The early aims of the C.A.S. sought to combine the concept of official patronage with the growth and development of national and municipal contemporary British art collections.<sup>246</sup> Even after the creation of the New English Art Club, in 1888, public collecting continued to be dominated by the Royal Academy, and this, together with the aristocratic collector's concern with Old Masters, had resulted in the neglect of 'men of remarkable talent, who are imperfectly, or not at all, represented in the National and Municipal Galleries'.<sup>247</sup> In 1909, while discussions were taking place as to the nature and direction of the C.A.S., it is worth noting that David Croal Thomson (1855-1930), art dealer and partner in the French Gallery, from 1909-18, where he

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<sup>244</sup> Contemporary Art Society Minutes: C.A.S. Archives 9215.2.2.2., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>245</sup> This founding statement appears in the very first *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1910-12*, C.A.S., London, 1913, p.1.

<sup>246</sup> For the founding aims of the C.A.S. see 'Objects of the Society' in *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1910-12*, C.A.S., London, 1913, pp.1-2.

<sup>247</sup> Leicester Museums and Art Gallery, *Guide to the Re-Opening Exhibition, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery and an exhibition of Modern Pictures Organized by the Contemporary Art Society*, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, 1912, u.p.

specialized in the Barbizon School and the Hague School, publicly promoted the Royal Academy as 'the most influential of all the societies which act as intermediaries between the producers and consumers of art works', a role which the C.A.S. deliberately aimed to challenge;<sup>248</sup> Thomson was also the former Editor of *The Art Journal*, from 1892-1902. Several local authority institutions then had considerable local purchasing resources; for example, Manchester City Art Gallery and Hull Corporation (prior to the establishment of the Ferens Art Gallery) had annual purchase sums of £2,000, and the Walker Art Gallery had approximately £1,000 as interest from the Earl of Derby Bequest, for the 'encouragement of rising artists' and £60 from the Autumn Exhibition.<sup>249</sup>

In 1919, the Imperial Arts League (I.A.L.), was launched as a rival, but socially more broadly-based membership arts organization than the C.A.S. which aimed to promote more progressive forms of the arts (Fine Art, Design, Craft and the Performing Arts) in the provinces. Central to this policy were ideas of decentralization and education. The League publicly endorsed the promotion of institutional patronage and noted that 'the municipal galleries are the only public patrons that the living British artist possesses in this country, as the state galleries do not spend so much as a farthing a year on the purchase of works by living British artists'.<sup>250</sup> Municipal rather than national institutions were identified as prospective institutional patrons, as the British Museum and the V. & A. Museum were then not actively engaged in purchasing contemporary art, and as has been noted earlier, the Tate Gallery did not receive its first central government annual purchase grant until 1946.

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<sup>248</sup> *The Art Journal* (special issue) *The Royal Academy Winter Exhibition 1909*, quoted by Dianne Sachko Macleod in *Art and the Victorian Middleclass: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.361.

<sup>249</sup> Walker Art Gallery, *Illustrated Catalogue of the Permanent Collection*, Liverpool Corporation, 1927, p.viii.

<sup>250</sup> 'Modern British Art', *Imperial Arts League Journal*, January 1919, pp.140-141.

Before it petered out, after 1926, the I.A.L. managed to organize a number of sales exhibitions of contemporary British art, as well as offering portfolios of works on paper for sale to a provincial public of "modest means". At the Basnett Gallery, a commercial venue in Liverpool, for example, a collection of works by Edward McKnight Kauffer (the American-born, but British-based painter and poster designer, then causing a sensation on the London Underground) was shown, in 1925, and this was followed by an I.A.L. exhibition which included paintings by the young Paris-trained Cedric Morris and sculpture by Frank Dobson, in the same year.

During the interwar period, the C.A.S. began to widen its original emphasis on 'vital contemporary painting which has stood the test of time',<sup>251</sup> to incorporate younger and unknown British artists as:

Side by side with the enrichment of the collections, the Society has the further aim, in the interests of the artists themselves, of supplying, so far as its means allow, the falling off in private buying which has resulted from the present financial stringency. These are difficult times for young painters and sculptors who have to live on the proceeds of their works, and the need for some form of public patronage was never greater than now.<sup>252</sup>

Occasional examples of public art, in the form of sculpture or decorative (mural) painting were also acquired by the C.A.S., such as Thomas Monnington's painted panel 'Allegory' in 1925; the C.A.S. later presented this work to the Tate Gallery in 1939.

In response to the general economic crises of 1929-33, the C.A.S. promoted the idea of prescient purchasing by provincial local authority art galleries and museums. At the height of the Depression, in 1931, the C.A.S. declared that:

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<sup>251</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1910-12*, C.A.S., London, 1913, p.1.

<sup>252</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1925*, C.A.S., London, p.3.

A moment's reflection on the vast sums spent annually on the purchase of the Art of the past should convince us as to the expediency of buying effectively before the verdict of successive generations places on certain modern works a value beyond the reach of the ordinary purse. A shilling well spent today will go as far as a pound tomorrow.<sup>253</sup>

This promotional statement highlighted an important point which was that at least some of what was then categorized as "modern" or "contemporary" British art would eventually become heritage-type art. London commercial art dealers, such as the Beaux Arts Gallery, also attempted to further the idea of the institutional patron with exhibitions entitled 'Exhibition of Pictures Suitable for Public Galleries and Important Collections', in 1930.

Throughout the 1930s, the C.A.S. continued to acquire works by both 'leading artists' and artists fresh from art school, such as Geoffrey Nelson and Winston MacQuoid, who despite the C.A.S.'s continual support never achieved lasting renown.<sup>254</sup> In order to sustain certain key artists, during the Depression, the C.A.S. spent the unprecedented sum of £990 on 18 purchases in 1932.<sup>255</sup> These artists included promising and established painters, such as Duncan Grant, Mark Gertler and Edward Wadsworth, and the sculptor, Frank Dobson. In 1933, the C.A.S. extended its patronage to Britain's then most controversial artist associated with continental abstraction, Ben Nicholson. The publication of *Art in England*, in 1938, which was aimed at the "general reader", and the associated preceding public broadcasts, widely publicized the important role the C.A.S.'s was playing as part of a comprehensive system of patronage. Its contribution was highlighted in Georges Duthuit's essay entitled 'Our Art Institutions: A Famous Art Society' and Edward Marsh's piece 'How

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<sup>253</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1930-31*, C.A.S., London, 1931, p.3.

<sup>254</sup> See Whitechapel Art Gallery, *Contemporary Art Society's Collection*, Contemporary Art Society and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1937.

<sup>255</sup> See Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1932-33*, C.A.S., London, 1933.



We Treat Our Art: (1) Patronage in Art Today',<sup>256</sup> Duthuit was a French art critic and theorist, who was Matisse's son-in-law, and had studied, with Roger Fry, under the philosopher and mystic Matthew Prichard (1865-1936). Through its 'loans and gifts', the C.A.S. also continued to promote the 'diffusion of a metropolitan standard of taste in the provinces'.<sup>257</sup> These educational activities, directed at the local art curator, art gallery sub-committee, local authority council and public in general, were pursued by the C.A.S. in the belief that they would 'give the localities a chance of seeing new work which they would otherwise know nothing about'.<sup>258</sup>

At the end of the Second World War, the C.A.S. reiterated its dual aims to encourage 'the talent of little-known artists as well as enriching public collections with works by painters, draughtsmen and sculptors of established reputation'.<sup>259</sup> It continued to promote the development of local authority collections linked to ideas of contemporary art patronage, whereby the C.A.S. acted as the 'most direct link between the studios and public collections of this country'.<sup>260</sup> The C.A.S. also discussed its own adoption of a future purchasing policy and a definition of contemporary art. It was 'generally agreed that while works of artists who had died recently might be bought, preference should be given to the works of living artists'.<sup>261</sup> The designation 'living artists', therefore, encompassed all practising artists, as opposed to young and up-and-coming artists usually associated with contemporary art.

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<sup>256</sup> See R.S. Lambert (ed.), *Art in England*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1938, pp.59-65 and pp.78-82.

<sup>257</sup> 'Address given by Edward Marsh at the Fifth Ordinary Meeting of the Contemporary Art Society', u.d. but c.1939: Contemporary Art Society Archives, C.A.S. Signed Minutes 9215.2.2.3, Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>258</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> Tate Gallery, *The Contemporary Art Society: An Exhibition of a Selection From the Acquisitions of the Contemporary Art Society from its Foundation in 1910 up to the Present Day*, Tate Gallery, London, 1946, p.1.

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>261</sup> Contemporary Art Society (C.A.S.) Minutes 1946: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.2.2.4., Tate Gallery Archive.

During the 1950s, the C.A.S. began to expand upon its activities which promoted provincial art galleries and museums as patrons of contemporary art; the general currency of this cultural phenomenon, the 'museum as patron', (here used generically) was noted by Herbert Read in 1954.<sup>262</sup> As part of this policy, the C.A.S. supported the launch of two new provincially-based contemporary art competition-exhibitions which were the 'John Moores', established in 1957, and held at the Walker Art Gallery, and the 'Northern Young Contemporaries' exhibitions of the 1960s, which were held at the university institution, the Whitworth Art Gallery, in Manchester.<sup>263</sup>

The C.A.S.'s launch of a contemporary Art Fair exhibition at the Mall Galleries, London, in 1975, was ostensibly aimed at the institutional patron, but was also conceived as a measure to off-set the C.A.S.'s period of financial crisis; following the Fair's failure, a series of annual grants from the Arts Council helped to sustain the C.A.S. It was publicized as a selected exhibition which featured 'over one hundred British artists lent by leading London art dealers and considered by the Contemporary Art Society to be worthy of acquisition by Public Art Galleries'.<sup>264</sup> In assisting local authority art galleries and museums to collect, the C.A.S. here adopted the public role of a filtering mechanism which through the Fair would 'enable gallery Directors with limited time to hunt round the galleries for themselves to see a selected group of works from dealers' galleries in one place at one time'.<sup>265</sup> The C.A.S. hoped, that a long-term benefit of the Fair would be the establishment of links between London art dealers and provincial art gallery curators. Paintings, drawings and sculpture by 150 artists were chosen from 26 commercial art galleries by a C.A.S. sub-committee; the price range of works varied considerably, from £250 to £32,000, in order to encourage

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<sup>262</sup> Herbert Read, 'The Museum and the Artist', *College Art Journal*, Vol. xiii, Summer 1954, pp.289-293.

<sup>263</sup> For a discussion of the impact of the 'John Moores' competition-exhibition see Vol. II, Chapter 12, pp.78-84.

<sup>264</sup> Cover to the *Art Fair* catalogue, London, 1975.

<sup>265</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to the Author, October 1995.

purchases. Directors and senior curators from thirty-eight provincial art galleries and museums were invited to a private view of the Fair, but only seven works were sold to provincial art galleries and museums, while two were bought by the C.A.S.<sup>266</sup> The Fair was privately underwritten by Nancy Balfour (1911-97), then Honorary Treasurer of the C.A.S., from 1971-76, Alistair McAlpine (b.1942) and Neville Burston, and as it was not a financial success, it was discontinued. In 1984, the idea was resurrected as the C.A.S. Annual Art Market which placed an over-riding emphasis on patronage, this time directed at private individuals and institutions in general, and profile-linked revenue raising for the C.A.S.<sup>267</sup>

In order to fulfil its aims, the C.A.S. introduced several initiatives and schemes which were a loan collection and a related touring exhibition programme; the gift and distribution of art works; purchase grants; and the support of other organizations' activities. Initially, the C.A.S. conceived collection development at provincial art galleries and museums as dependent upon London-based and provincial loan exhibitions which functioned as forms of contemporary art knowledge. This was followed by occasional gifts from the C.A.S. to these institutions which only became part of a formal distribution scheme after 1932, when allocations of art works were made on a regular basis to subscribing institutions only.

### **8.3. C.A.S. Collection**

From its early beginnings, the C.A.S. used the term "collection" to describe its acquisitions available for loan and presentation. This appropriation of curatorial terminology had significant ramifications, because the C.A.S. presented its body of Twentieth-Century British Art, and in particular its contemporary aspect, as a

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<sup>266</sup> No further details concerning the art works and purchasing institutions are currently available.

<sup>267</sup> Author in conversation with Nancy Balfour, 1995. The C.A.S. Market launched in 1984 was an entirely different initiative, and was aimed directly at a buying public, who would not necessarily regard themselves as collectors.

structured and deliberate selection. The term "collection", for example, was used by the C.A.S. to describe its public profile-raising exhibition held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, in 1937, which featured purchases, gifts and bequests to the Society.<sup>268</sup> Unlike its institutional counterparts, however, the C.A.S. collection was constituted as a 'half-way house'.<sup>269</sup> D.S. MacColl had formulated this process by which works were retained for loan, before being either presented as gifts to an art gallery or museum, or sold through the commercial art market. It was a practice based on his earlier career experience, as the second Keeper of Art at the Tate Gallery, where the transfer of British art works between the National Gallery and the Tate Gallery had been introduced, in 1897, based on the Louvre-Musée du Luxembourg collecting model. This fluid collecting structure aimed 'to maintain the principle of essential unity and continuity of national pictorial art'.<sup>270</sup> In the hands of the C.A.S., however, it was to ensure that 'rash purchases, such as there must be from time to time, could be allowed to fall out, instead of being eternalized' within a museum or art gallery collection.<sup>271</sup>

Through a combination of purchases and gifts, the C.A.S. collection grew rapidly between 1910-12 to around 200 art works. This selection was dominated by British artists, who had responded to new creative ideas which had developed principally in France since the 1880s and ran counter to Royal Academy aesthetics.<sup>272</sup> The C.A.S.'s

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<sup>268</sup> See Whitechapel Art Gallery, *Contemporary Art Society's Collection*, Contemporary Art Society and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1937.

<sup>269</sup> D. S. MacColl, 'The Origin and Aims of the Contemporary Art Society,' in *Catalogue of the Special Loan Collection of Selected Pictures by Contemporary British Artists*, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, 1912, p.8.

<sup>270</sup> National Gallery Committee of Trustees, *Report of the Committee of Trustees of the National Gallery appointed by the Trustees to Enquire into the Retention of Important Pictures in this Country and Other Matters Connected with the National Art Collections with Appendices*, H.M.S.O., London, 1915, p.31.

<sup>271</sup> D. S. MacColl, 'The Origin and Aims of the Contemporary Art Society' in *Catalogue of the Special Loan Collection of Selected Pictures by Contemporary British Artists*, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, 1912, p.9.

<sup>272</sup> For a discussion of Royal Academy aesthetics see Kenneth McConkey, *British Impression*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1989.

collection included Walter Sickert and Eric Gill; several artists who had trained or taught at the Slade School of Art, such as William Nicholson, Ambrose McEvoy, William Rothenstein, Augustus John, Gwen John, Henry Tonks; and Muirhead Bone, a founder member of the Society of Twelve. Until 1939, the C.A.S. continued to rely heavily on gifts of art works which, after 1931, extended to include bequests. The C.A.S. also occasionally purchased works in conjunction with private individuals and its sister organization, the N.A.C.F., and by special subscription.

### 8.3.1. Acquisition Process

The Royal Academy's administration of the Chantrey Bequest involved a large and internal committee of ten members, and had been identified by D. S. MacColl as responsible for contributing to the regressive choice of purchases associated with a committee dominated by self-interested elderly artists.<sup>273</sup> Local authority sub-committees, as noted in Chapter 2, could also be unwieldy. The C.A.S. initially, therefore, relied on the intermittent use of small purchase sub-committees, from 1910-22, but these were finally disbanded on the recommendation of William S. Marchant, in favour of one individual's selection, acting as if they were a private collector.<sup>274</sup> The divergent interests of the sub-committees, drawn from the first C.A.S. Executive Committee, reflected the heterogeneity of the early individual members' collecting interests and sympathies, later recorded by Roger Fry, who observed that:

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<sup>273</sup> D. S. MacColl, 'The Origin and Aims of the Contemporary Art Society' in *Catalogue of the Special Loan of Selected Pictures by Contemporary British Artists*, Laing Art Gallery, 1912, p.7.

<sup>274</sup> William S. Marchant quoted in '[Discussion] The Problem of Provincial Galleries and Art Museums with Special Reference to Manchester', Lawrence Haward, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. xxii, July 1922, p.642. The first purchase sub-committee consisted of D.S. MacColl, Roger Fry and Robert Ross. Following their disbandment, committees continued to be used by the C.A.S. for the loan or gift of art works, and in 1923 'a small Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. Aitken, Mr. Edward Marsh and Mr. Ernest Marsh [the pottery enthusiast]' was established for this purpose. See C.A.S. Bound Minutes 1923: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.2.2.1, Tate Gallery Archive.

Oddly enough, with a very small society which I helped to start for buying works of art - we started with two or three people buying together. We found we could not work it at all because of the great divergence of opinion of what should be bought. I think everybody has different ideas.<sup>275</sup>

In part, to address this issue, the C.A.S. introduced a scheme of individual buyers, in November 1911, who were appointed for a six-month period, so as to ensure variety of artists and art works.<sup>276</sup> The C.A.S. made a virtue of these so-called single buyers not acting in relation to a specific collecting policy, or by reference to particular institutions' collections. Here the C.A.S. argued that this approach allowed both the freedom to express 'personal individuality' and 'a wide range of trends in modern painting' to be represented,<sup>277</sup> although the C.A.S. in fact neglected two contemporary areas of collecting, British Abstraction and British Surrealism.<sup>278</sup> In 1924, a new acquisition method was introduced in response to the financial stringencies facing the C.A.S. The annual buyer was allocated 75% of the year's total income and the remainder was used to establish a Reserve Fund. In addition to the single annual buyer, purchases were now subject to the approval of at least half the C.A.S. Executive Committee. The buyer was also encouraged to raise additional funds for their proposed purchases, by seeking independently new individual member subscriptions and donations.

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<sup>275</sup> National Gallery Committee of Trustees, *Minutes of Evidence of the Committee of Trustees of the National Gallery appointed by the Trustees to Enquire into the Retention of Important Pictures in this Country and Other Matters Connected with the National Art Collections*, H.M.S.O., London, 1914, p.54.

<sup>276</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Report (with Illustrations) For the Years 1914-1919*, C.A.S., London, 1920, p.3.

<sup>277</sup> Arts Council of Great Britain, 'A Selection of Paintings and Drawings Acquired by the Contemporary Art Society', Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1948, p.3.

<sup>278</sup> See Edward Lucie-Smith, 'The Contemporary Art Society Record: What They Bought Well, and What They Missed' in *British Contemporary Art 1910-1990: 80 Years of Collecting by the Contemporary Art Society*, Contemporary Art Society, C.A.S. and The Herbert Press, London, 1991.

As has been noted above, de-acquisitions were part of the C.A.S.'s collecting process, whereby:

purchases are either retained by the Society, and lent from time to time for exhibitions, or presented outright to some public gallery. After a certain number of years it is in the power of the Committee to sell pictures which for any reason they no longer wish to keep and buy others with the proceeds.<sup>279</sup>

This model of collecting replicated the approach of the C.A.S.'s individual membership. One of the C.A.S.'s most prominent private collectors was Edward Marsh, who was a long-standing member of the C.A.S. Executive Committee, from 1917-53, and Chairman, from 1936-52. Marsh was the embodiment of the C.A.S.'s ideas and aspirations. He was a cultured upper-middle class civil servant, whose wish to support young artists' careers resulted in a house where even the doors were used as display areas. His declaration that 'I buy pictures by the pricking of my thumbs' encapsulated Marsh's approach to collecting and expressed the amateur nature of the C.A.S., as opposed to the then nascent policy planning and programming of the art gallery and museum curator.<sup>280</sup> In his essay '*Patronage in Art To-day*', written in 1935, Marsh outlined his approach to collecting which was to purchase '(1) painters who were good judges of pictures, painters who were admired by (1) [and] the best examples of (1) painters which aroused the Lust of Possession'.<sup>281</sup> This approach to collecting attempted to link a private collector's knowledge and aesthetic response towards art with the judgement of other artists, rather than by reference to art critics, the nascent British art history profession, or the promotional activities of art dealers. The pivotal role of the private collector was promoted by the C.A.S. through its exhibition 'The Private Collector: An Exhibition of Pictures and Sculpture Selected

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<sup>279</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1932-33*, C.A.S., London, p.6.

<sup>280</sup> 'Preface' to Bluecoat Gallery, *An Honest Patron: A Tribute to Sir Edward Marsh*, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, 1976, p.9.

<sup>281</sup> Edward Marsh, 'How We Treat Our Art: (1) Patronage in Art To-day' in *Art in England*, (ed.) R. S. Lambert, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1938, p.80.

From the Members of the Contemporary Art Society's Own Collections', held at the Tate Gallery in 1950. This stressed the 'non-museum mood' of the works collected by private collectors, as they were free from the 'sterility' associated with 'museum art';<sup>282</sup> the term 'museum art' was used in its generic sense to refer to art galleries and museums as store houses and depositories. Here the C.A.S. implicitly defined its own instinctive, but informed approach to collecting which judged each work on its individual merits, as distinct from a curatorial need to acquire works as historical documents within an imposed ordering process of objects. In 1959, *The Listener* praised the advantages of the single buyer approach maintained by the C.A.S., as:

Normally the buyer with a flair for spotting talent is quickly stifled by a committee whose guiding lights are expediency, art politics or fashion, or perhaps less dangerously just plain ignorance, and always there is an eminence grise with a personal axe to grind, so that the resulting acquisition is almost invariably a pale compromise.<sup>283</sup>

The system of rotating annual buyers was maintained by Nancy Balfour, who in 1978, as the new Chairwomen of the C.A.S., emphasized the advantages of a purchasing process which deliberately cultivated 'great variety', while committees were equated with compromise and mediocrity.<sup>284</sup> By the 1970s, however, the principles which guided the C.A.S. annual buyers, as many as three for Fine Art in one year, were openly contradictory and varied. Some believed that a collection was being formed, while others saw the acquisitions as non-cohesive. The selection criteria also varied with some buyers applying their knowledge of provincial collections, while others followed their own personal tastes. The focus of selection was equally varied, as some buyers thought that established artists should be chosen, while others deliberately sought out the new, unusual and controversial.<sup>285</sup> In the C.A.S.'s most recent official

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<sup>282</sup> Tate Gallery, *The Private Collector*, Tate Gallery, London, 1950, u.p.

<sup>283</sup> J. Wood Palmer, 'Contemporary Gamblers in Art', *The Listener*, Vol. lxi, 5th March, 1959, p.422.

<sup>284</sup> Nancy Balfour, 'The Contemporary Art Society: What it is and What it does', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lxxviii, December 1978, pp.134-136.

<sup>285</sup> See for instance the purchasing explanations in Portsmouth City Museum and Art Gallery, *Art For Today: Contemporary Art Society Recent Acquisitions for Public*



history, Edward Lucie-Smith attempted to identify collecting patterns and traditions, but could only cite 'a kind of atavism' in response to the purchase of five works by Howard Hodgkin, during the years 1963-78, and the C.A.S.'s early commitment to Bloomsbury art.<sup>286</sup> There was, in fact, in terms of artists, styles and specific developments, no clearly directed collecting policy pursued by the C.A.S., but only a general sense of wanting to help artists working in the U.K., by ensuring that examples of contemporary art entered provincial art gallery and museum collections. It was a wide-ranging approach made possible by the increase in purchase funds available to the C.A.S., from 1968-78, which rose from £4,000 to £17,000. A notable concession to the collection management requirements of art galleries and museums came in 1979, when the annual purchaser for Fine Art was issued with guidelines covering the number of works to be bought within a specified budget, a size limit and conservation requirements.

In 1989, the C.A.S. sought to re-establish the cultural validity of the private collecting process within the context of provincial art gallery and museum collection development. This centred on the concept of unfettered individual judgement which was presented as part of a creative process itself. The C.A.S.'s two annual buyers were described as 'free to buy what they like', in contrast to the vetted purchasing undertaken by local authority art curators.<sup>287</sup> A buyer could, therefore, 'follow their eye, passion and conviction' with 'no need to compromise or explain in Committee'.<sup>288</sup> This approach, the C.A.S. reassured provincial institutions, also took account of art gallery and museum-orientated concerns which were 'size and quality which is suitable

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*Collections 1975-78*, Portsmouth City Museum and Art Gallery, 1979.

<sup>286</sup> See Edward Lucie-Smith, 'The Contemporary Art Society record; what they bought well, and what they missed' in *British Contemporary Art 1910-1990: 80 Years of Collecting by the Contemporary Art Society*, Contemporary Art Society, C.A.S. and The Herbert Press, 1991, p.150.

<sup>287</sup> Standard Letter: C.A.S. to subscribing provincial art galleries and museums, February 1989, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery Records.

<sup>288</sup> *ibid.*

for public display' and 'conservation problems'.<sup>289</sup> In response to the *C.A.S. Questionnaire 1989*, the C.A.S. appointed buyers on a biannual basis with the intention that this would allow for consideration and planning in the first year and purchasing in the second. Post-1995, the C.A.S., under its new Director, Gillian Hedley, a former local authority art gallery curator, restructured the purchasing process. Purchases were made on a triennial basis with the aim of countering a market-driven response by using a period of assessment and planning. A further initiative was the introduction of non-London based individuals and artists as buyers, such as Jane Lee, in 1995, with the aim of re-addressing the regional identity and status of contemporary art within provincial art gallery and museum collections.

### **8.3.2. C.A.S. Purchases: Pictures 1909-39**

During 1909-13, the Contemporary Art Society rapidly purchased pictures which represented British Impressionist and Bloomsbury-associated artists; these painters included Muirhead Bone, Charles Conder, Mark Fisher, Charles Holmes, Darsie Japp, Augustus John, Gwen John, Derwent Lees, Ambrose McEvoy, William Nicholson, William Rothenstein, Walter Sickert, W. Christian Symons, Henry Tonks; Vanessa Bell, Margaret Gere, Duncan Grant and Henry Lamb; and the more obscure Ernest Coll, William Eden, A.W. Rich and G. Sands. This diverse grouping reflected the private tastes of D.S. MacColl and Roger Fry. Notable omissions were Philip Wilson Steer and Scottish artists, and in 1914, as has been noted earlier, D.S. MacColl, a champion of Steer, ceased contact with the C.A.S. During 1914-19, however, works by 'more progressive painters of the day' such as the Camden Town-associated artists, Spencer Gore and Charles Ginner, and Paul Nash were purchased.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Report (with Illustrations) For the Years 1914-1919*, C.A.S., London, 1920, p.3.

As has been noted previously, purchases made by the annual C.A.S. buyers tended to express their own private tastes and enthusiasms, and the development of their own collections often ran concurrently with the acquisition activities of the C.A.S.. Lady Ottoline Morrell, in the role of an annual buyer, for example, purchased the painting 'The Fruit Sellers' by her protégé, Mark Gertler, for the C.A.S. in 1914. The annual C.A.S. buyer, Edward Marsh, used his private funds to purchase Christopher Wood's painting 'Harbour in Cornwall' for the C.A.S. in 1927, and from 1927-29, Marsh also bought several works by Wood for his own private collection. The interwar economic problems facing artists encouraged a more pluralistic approach to C.A.S. acquisitions, and in the 1930s the C.A.S. acquired its first examples of British Abstraction and "Super-realism"; for example, Ben Nicholson's painting 'St. Ives', bought in 1931, and Edward Wadsworth's painting 'The Blue Ribbon' which was purchased in 1933. In 1938, Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery and art advisor to the new Southampton City Art Gallery, then nearing completion, was appointed to the C.A.S. Executive Committee. At the C.A.S., Clark championed the purchase of new artistic developments, such as works by the Euston Road School, represented by Graham Bell, William Coldstream, Lawrence Gowing and Victor Pasmore, and works by the neo-Romantic artists, John Craxton, John Minton, John Piper and Graham Sutherland.

### **8.3.3. C.A.S. Purchases: Pictures 1939-45**

The Second World War marked the first period of intense purchasing activity by the C.A.S., in response to the plight of both artists and provincial art galleries and museums. The economic stringencies of war and subsequent postwar economy cuts led to the reduction of the V. & A Purchase Grant Fund to £100, for the period 1940-45, and it was only restored to £1,000 in the financial year 1949-50. From 1939, the C.A.S. itself received financial support, from the pioneering British Art Centre, towards the purchase of art works by contemporary British artists; the Centre held sales exhibitions at the Stafford Gallery in London. On the eve of war, John Rothenstein promoted the idea of creating a national or civic fund devoted to the

'limited patronage of a number of the most talented artists';<sup>291</sup> Rothenstein was a long-standing member of the C.A.S. Executive Committee, from 1938-65. It was a proposal taken up John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), the influential economist based at Cambridge University and Bloomsbury-associate who, in 1940, suggested that the C.A.S. should implement his economic theories by drawing on their Reserve Fund and thus dramatically increase the Society's expenditure on contemporary British art; Keynes had joined the C.A.S. in 1913, and in 1932 he was elected to the C.A.S. Executive Committee.

As long ago as 1921, Keynes had written the 'Foreword' to a London Group exhibition, where he stressed the importance of patronage in a civilized society and encouraged the purchase of works by young and unknown painters, as a discerning form of economic investment;<sup>292</sup> several Bloomsbury artists, including Roger Fry, were members of the London Group by this date. In 1925, Keynes instigated the London Artists' Association, an exhibiting body dominated by several Bloomsbury artists, which aimed to subsidize contemporary British artists. The other financial backers of this Association were the art collectors of progressive modern British and foreign art, Samuel Courtauld (1876-1947), the industrialist, Leo H. Myers (1881-1944), the novelist, and Frank Hindley Smith (c.1860-1939), the Bolton-based textile millionaire. In order to implement Keynes' ideas rapidly, the C.A.S. introduced five supplementary buyers, in 1940, each with £150 to spend. The buyers were Lord Ivor Spencer Churchill; St. John Hutchinson (1884-1942) the barrister and collector of contemporary French and British art; John Maynard Keynes; Campbell Dodgson; and his successor at the British Museum, A. M. Hind (1880-1957), Keeper of the

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<sup>291</sup> John Rothenstein, 'Towards a Policy for Art Galleries', *The Connoisseur Magazine*, Vol.civ, October 1939, p.210.

<sup>292</sup> 'Foreword' to 'London Group Exhibition', Mansard Gallery, October 1921 in *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes: Social, Political and Literary Writings*, Vol. xxviii, (ed.) Donald Moggridge, Macmillan and Cambridge University Press for the Royal Economic Society, London and Cambridge, 1982, pp.296-297.

Department of Prints and Drawings, from 1933-45. Hind was formerly the Slade Professor of Fine Art, from 1921-27, and a gifted amateur artist. Under this arrangement, the C.A.S. spent the record sum of £1,250 in 1940, followed by £930 in 1941; in 1941, John Rothenstein also acted as a supplementary 'main buyer' and was allocated £300. This wartime policy aimed to provide financial support for native artists in response to the virtual cessation of private purchasing. Through Kenneth Clark, a long-standing member of the C.A.S., from 1938-53, the C.A.S. also purchased patriotic home-front images, such as L. S. Lowry's painting 'A Mission Room', Henry Moore's shelter drawings, A. R. Middleton Todd's painting 'Rita: The Refugee' and E. Turpin's painting 'Night Shelter'. These purchases, together with the C.A.S.'s wartime exhibition activities, linked the organization to the War Artists' Advisory Committee's remit and to the general morale-boosting series of war-time cultural activities.

#### **8.3.4. C.A.S. Purchases: Pictures 1946-79**

The impact of the Second World War gave the museological ideas of growth, progress and survival a deep cultural resonance. These informed postwar policy documents such as Trenchard Cox's *The Development of Collections*, published by the Museums Association, which stated that 'in order to keep a gallery alive, and to make it an integral part of the cultural life of the city, it is essential that contemporary art should find a place there'.<sup>293</sup> Here the existence, survival and progression of local authority art galleries and museums was seen as intertwined with the display of contemporary works by living British artists. The postwar C.A.S. also sought to re-establish its cultural role by committing itself to support the career of Britain's then most controversial contemporary painter, Francis Bacon. In 1946, Colin Anderson (1904-80), a wealthy private collector and Director of the Orient (Shipping) Line, was the

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<sup>293</sup> Trenchard Cox, *The Development of Collections*, Museums Association, London, c.1945, p.8.

annual buyer for the C.A.S., and purchased the first Francis Bacon painting, 'Study for the Magdalene' (now known as 'Figure Study II'), for the Society. Anderson (knighted in 1950), as the Director of Anderson Green, had played a direct role in interwar "collective patronage" by commissioning many young artists and designers, and later privately supported artists, during the 1940s and 1950s, such as Francis Bacon.

The Bacon painting was a prescient purchase, in terms of public collections, and the C.A.S. found that even the Tate Gallery refused to accept the work as a gift; it was only in 1950 that the Tate purchased its first painting by Francis Bacon. This state of affairs caused the art writer, John Russell, ruefully to observe that 'one day a Director will be found convinced and brave enough to force upon his Committee the huge figure subject of Francis Bacon'.<sup>294</sup> In November 1948, the C.A.S. sent representatives from its Executive Committee to the new local authority institution Batley Art Gallery (now Bagshaw Art Gallery, in Huddersfield). The C.A.S. subsequently lent a small collection of art works to Batley Art Gallery to function 'like the grain of sand inserted in an oyster to make the nucleus of a pearl'.<sup>295</sup> This was followed, in 1952, by the presentation of the Bacon 'Study for the Magdalene' to Batley Art Gallery, as a pivotal work around which a collection of contemporary British art would be formed. It was the first Bacon to enter a local authority art collection in the U.K., and its presentation was accompanied by the stipulation that it should be publicly displayed at all times by the receiving institution. At Batley, however, a hostile local authority was only appeased by a "permanent loan" arrangement with other institutions, during the years 1954-70; for example, the painting was lent to the exhibition '50 Years of British Art: Golden Jubilee 1904-54', organized by Cartwright Hall Art Gallery. In May 1970, Huddersfield's local authority

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<sup>294</sup> John Russell, *From Sickert to 1948*, Lund Humphries, London, 1948, p.105.

<sup>295</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1946-47*, C.A.S., London, p.3.

voted to sell the Francis Bacon 'Study for the Magdalene' and was only prevented from so doing by the C.A.S.'s claim of ownership.

Despite the Batley set-back, the C.A.S. purchased further paintings by Bacon which were the 'Laughing Man', in 1949, and the 'Pope: Study after Velasquez', in 1952. This policy to represent Britain's most controversial painter, in local authority collections, was supported by Robert Sainsbury (1906-2000), the businessman, a member of the C.A.S. and one of the first private collectors of Bacon's art work. He established the R. J. Sainsbury Discretionary Settlement, in January 1957, which provided £1,600 plus associated income tax recovery.<sup>296</sup> This fund was created specifically for the purchase of up to four Francis Bacon paintings from the Hanover Art Gallery, a leading commercial art gallery in London; under this arrangement, it was agreed that this Gallery would offer special discounted prices. The following paintings were presented to the C.A.S., in 1957: 'Study for Figure No.4' 1956, 'Figures in a Landscape' 1956, 'Study for Figure No.6' 1956 and 'Study for Portrait of Van Gogh No.4' 1957.

The Bacon debacle of 1946 eventually led to the introduction of the regular C.A.S. 'Distribution Exhibitions', in 1959. For the first time, all art galleries and museums, which were subscribing members of the C.A.S., were invited to send senior curators to view in person C.A.S. acquisitions, as opposed to selecting from lists of art works, before requesting first and subsidiary choices. Allocations were then made by the C.A.S. according to 'local connections, special needs - and special pleading'.<sup>297</sup> This initiative, together with the Tate Gallery's acquisition of further paintings by Francis Bacon, encouraged several curators of major and minor local authority art galleries and museums to apply for works by Bacon from the C.A.S.'s first Distribution

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<sup>296</sup> Letter: R. J. Sainsbury to Pauline Vogelpoel, C.A.S., 22nd. January 1957: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.4.2.2., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>297</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to the Author, June 1995.

Exhibition. These local authority art galleries were Belfast Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, South London Art Gallery, Usher Art Gallery, in Lincoln, Walker Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, and Worksop Public Library and Museum. As a result of this interest, in 1959, the 'Laughing Man' was presented to Belfast Art Gallery; 'Figures in a Landscape' was presented to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; and 'Study for Figure No.4' was given to the National Gallery of South Australia, a subscribing institutional member of the C.A.S.; and the fourth work, 'Study for Figure No.6' was retained by the C.A.S and later presented to King's College, in 1961; the 'Pope: Study after Velasquez' had been presented to Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1956. From the 1950s to the early 1970s, the C.A.S. was particularly receptive to other new developments in British painting, such as the Kitchen Sink School and the postwar St. Ives School.<sup>298</sup> The C.A.S. also gave its support to both the exhibition programme of contemporary art organized by Bryan Robertson, Curator of the Whitechapel Art Gallery and a member of the C.A.S. Executive Committee, from 1957-73, and to provincial art gallery-generated enterprises, such as the 'John Moores' biannual exhibition-competition, launched in 1957, at the Walker Art Gallery.<sup>299</sup>

The move away from monolithic and object-based art in the 1970s was largely unrepresented by the C.A.S., because it could not be easily accommodated into an art gallery and museum setting. It has been suggested that this art was also avoided as it 'seemed likely to arouse curatorial prejudices', but it should be recalled that this art was often created as an overt reaction against the institutionalization of art and ideas of permanence, value, audience comprehension and enjoyment.<sup>300</sup> In 1977, in

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<sup>298</sup> See Edward Lucie-Smith, 'The Contemporary Art Society record: what they bought well, and what they missed', in *British Contemporary Art 1910-1990: 80 Years of Collecting by the Contemporary Art Society*, Contemporary Art Society, C.A.S. and The Herbert Press, 1991, p.150.

<sup>299</sup> For a discussion of the 'John Moores' competition-exhibition see Vol. II, Chapter 12, p.78-84.

<sup>300</sup> See Edward Lucie-Smith, 'The Contemporary Art Society record; what they



response to the development of a photography collection at the V. & A. Museum, photography was purchased for the first time by the C.A.S. This acquisition included examples by contemporary British photographers, such as Fay Godwin and Ian McKeever.

### **8.3.5. Private Gifts and Bequests 1910-97**

As has been noted in Chapter 2, by the early 1900s, the gift and bequest of works from private collectors and owners had become an established part of the development process for public art collections. During the first part of the twentieth-century, artists too, notably Frank Brangwyn and Walter Sickert, together with London art dealers, such as Agnew's, began to present works to public collections on a significant scale. The presentation of these art works was welcomed by local authority institutions as a means by which to ensure the growth of Twentieth-Century British Art collections; commitment from local sources, such as private individuals and friends groups; and popular audience interest.

In common with the public institutions, which it sought to support, the C.A.S. also initially heavily relied on gifts from private collectors as these helped to extend the C.A.S.'s own survey-like collection of Twentieth-Century British Art. In 1916, for example, an anonymous American benefactor presented C. R.W. Nevinson's major war work 'La Mitrailleuse', which was the C.A.S.'s first example of a Vorticist painting. This was followed, in 1926, by Sydney Schiff's substantial gift of forty-six paintings, drawings and one sculpture, which represented Bloomsbury, Vorticist-associated, Slade-trained and Scottish artists. In April 1931, the C.A.S. became incorporated and with this new charitable status it was able to receive both bequests of funds and works of art, initially up to the individual value of £200, from its private members and other

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bought well, and what they missed' in *British Contemporary Art 1910-1990: 80 Years of Collecting by the Contemporary Art Society*, Contemporary Art Society, C.A.S. and The Herbert Press, 1991, pp.151-152.

collectors. Up until 1939, the C.A.S. continued to receive a substantial number of art works from members of the C.A.S. Executive Committee. These included Lord Henry Bentinck; Thomas G. Blackwell (1884-1943), Director of Crosse and Blackwell, who occasionally wrote for *The Studio*; Muirhead Bone; Campbell Dodgson; Edward Marsh; Michael Sadler; and Philip Sassoon. During the period 1925-33, for example, Edward Marsh made a series of annual gifts of contemporary British art works to the C.A.S. for loan and distribution to either the Tate Gallery, or to provincial art galleries and museums.<sup>301</sup> The collector, Michael Sadler also presented a large collection of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth-century British drawings to Cooper Art Gallery, in Barnsley, jointly through the C.A.S. and the N.A.C.F., during the period 1932-33.

Groups and small collections of works continued to be presented to the C.A.S. during and immediately after the Second World War. These included the S. E. Thornton Bequest of a large collection of twentieth-century British paintings, among which were examples by Duncan Grant, John Nash, Lucien Pissarro, Walter Sickert and Philip Wilson Steer; and Miss A. F. Brown's collection which included Ben Nicholson's painting 'Design', a stone carving by Henry Moore and three drawings by William Roberts. Gifts to the C.A.S. were particularly important in representing artists early in their careers. During the years 1942-43 and 1946-47, for example, Edward Marsh presented 15 works to the C.A.S., which included pictures by the artists Robert Buhler, Lawrence Gowing, Mervyn Peake and Julian Trevelyan.

Large-scale gifts and bequests of a retrospective and contemporary character were particularly important because they enabled collections to fill gaps. In 1945,

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<sup>301</sup> These included paintings by Ivon Hitchens and William Roberts in 1925; Cedric Morris in 1926; David Jones, Winifred Nicholson and Christopher Wood in 1927; Cedric Morris and Christopher Wood in 1928; Richard Eurich, Ivon Hitchens and Paul Nash in 1929; William Coldstream, Sylvia Gosse, Thérèse Lessore, Robert Medley, Henry Moore and Leon Underwood during the period 1930-31; and David Jones during the period 1932-33.

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, for example, received pictures by Duncan Grant, Paul Nash, John Piper and Graham Sutherland from the Kenneth Clark gift of 58 modern pictures to the C.A.S. During 1953-54, the Edward Marsh Bequest of some 200 mainly British paintings, drawings and sculptures, dating from 1910-37, were distributed to national and local authority art galleries; this presentation followed the nation-wide touring exhibition, entitled 'Sir Edward Marsh Memorial Exhibition', which featured a selection of oil paintings, watercolours and drawings from the Bequest.<sup>302</sup> Despite the synoptic character of Edward Marsh's private collection, he deliberately specified that it was not to be retained as an entity in itself, but distributed to the C.A.S.'s subscribing art galleries and museums as a nation-wide retrospective source of Twentieth-Century British Art; works from this Bequest were presented to virtually all the art galleries and museums, some 100 in total, which then subscribed to the C.A.S. Occasionally, however, collectors did stipulate the destination of their gifts of works; for example, in 1976, Alistair McAlpine and Sir Colin and Lady Anderson stated that their works should be presented to the Tate Gallery, Aberdeen Art Gallery and the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, in Swansea. Gifts of large groups of works, which represented one artist's career, also contributed to art historical re-appraisals; for example, Mr. and Mrs. J. Newmark's gift of 28 drawings and paintings by David Bomberg, in 1981. The rise of the contemporary British art market, however, contributed to the decline in private bequests and gifts to the C.A.S. and public collections in general; the bequests by Miss Audrey Wilson, in 1992, and Nancy Balfour, in 1997, can be regarded as exceptional.

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<sup>302</sup> This exhibition toured to Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, West Hartlepool Art Gallery, Norwich Assembly Rooms, Cambridge Exhibition Room, Folkestone Art Gallery, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, in Exeter, Reading Art Gallery, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Batley Art Gallery and Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. See Letter: J. Wood Palmer, Arts Council of Great Britain, Art Department to Miss Bryant, Contemporary Art Society, 26th May, 1953: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.5.2.2, Tate Gallery Archive.

## **8.4. C.A.S. Exhibitions**

### **8.4.1. Loan Exhibitions to the Provinces 1911-79**

As has been noted in Chapter 2, there was a general need for a national source of loans of contemporary British art to be established. Roger Fry's exhibitions of 1910 and 1912 had illustrated how powerful exhibitions could be in reaching a mass audience through attendant press coverage. A fact not lost on the educational aims of the C.A.S., whose first programme of exhibitions in the provinces was targeted at specific cities in northern England which since the latter half of the nineteenth-century had been associated with industrial wealth and potential art patrons.<sup>303</sup> The C.A.S.'s combination of contemporary patronage and provincial collection development had its early critics. Walter Sickert wrote, in 1910, that the C.A.S.'s 'perambulating collection' would foster the creation of a particular art form, the 'exhibition picture', as opposed to the 'room picture'.<sup>304</sup> In effect, private patronage would be diverted into supporting contemporary equivalents of the attention-grabbing art fostered by the Royal Academy, and its annual Summer Exhibition and provincial variants.

During the period 1911-39, the C.A.S. lent works and exhibitions to 53 provincial local authority art galleries and museums in the U.K.<sup>305</sup> These loans were either

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<sup>303</sup> For a discussion of the role and impact of the nineteenth-century art patron in the regions see Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middleclass: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

<sup>304</sup> See Walter Sickert, 'The Contemporary Art Society', first published in *The New Age*, 4th August 1910, and republished in *Free House! Or the Artist as Craftsman*, (ed.) Osbert Sitwell, MacMillan and Company, London, 1947, p.86.

<sup>305</sup> These were Mappin Art Gallery, in Sheffield, Laing Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, York Art Gallery, Williamson Art Gallery, in Birkenhead, Rochdale Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Kingston-upon-Thames Museum, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Belfast Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum), Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, in Glasgow, West Park Museum, in Macclesfield, Burton-upon-Trent Art Gallery, Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery, Hanley Art Gallery, in Stoke-on-Trent, Bury Art Gallery, Bangor Museum and Art Gallery, Cheltenham Art Gallery, Usher Art Gallery, in Lincoln, Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Newbury District Museum, Derby Art Gallery, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Dunfermline Art Gallery, Oldham Art Gallery, Dunbar Art Gallery, Bottle Art Gallery, Reading Museum, Grundy Art Gallery, in Blackpool,

touring exhibitions organized by the C.A.S., or contributions to other public art exhibitions. The C.A.S.'s own touring exhibitions featured works presented by the C.A.S. to the Tate Gallery and provincial art galleries and museums; works presented through the C.A.S.'s Prints and Drawings Fund to the British Museum; works which the C.A.S. retained for future presentation to public collections; and loans from private individuals who were usually individual members of the C.A.S. Single "star" works, following the example of the Royal Academy, were also occasionally lent through the C.A.S. to public collections. The curator, Charles Aitken, advised on the selection of works for the early C.A.S. loan exhibitions; at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Aitken had introduced the first regular programme of contemporary British art exhibitions at a public art gallery in the U.K. Loan exhibitions and the loan of works were seen by the C.A.S. as a rapid and effective means of inculcating metropolitan aesthetic standards, particularly those associated with progressive contemporary British art so resoundly displayed in Fry's curated exhibitions of 1910 and 1912. The C.A.S. exhibitions were constructed as a 'sort of persuasive tour' which, together with an accompanying catalogue and lecture programme, aimed to counteract 'a misleading representation of modern art in British public collections, from that at the Tate Gallery downwards'.<sup>306</sup> British examples of Post-Impressionism and Vorticism, for example, were included which 'gave the visitors an opportunity of studying first-hand, influences which are beginning to play a large part in the development of Modern Art'.<sup>307</sup>

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Halifax Museum, Barnard Castle, Victoria Art Gallery, in Bath, Harrogate Art Gallery, Hove Art Gallery, Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, in Leamington Spa, Portsmouth Art Gallery, Cannon Hall Art Gallery and Museum, in Barnsley, Russell Coates Art Gallery, in Bournemouth, Folkestone Museum, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Salisbury Museum, Silverford Museum, Swindon Art Gallery, Wakefield Art Gallery, Carlisle Art Gallery (now Tullie House Museum), Old Trafford Museum, Kendal Museum, Newark-on-Trent Art Gallery, Stockport War Memorial and Art Gallery, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, in Swansea, and Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museum. Information abstracted from surviving C.A.S. published and unpublished material held by the C.A.S.

<sup>306</sup> D.S. MacColl quoted in [untitled] *The (Manchester) Guardian*, 7th December, 1911.

<sup>307</sup> Belfast Municipal Art Gallery, *Annual Report 1915*, City and County Borough of

The early C.A.S. exhibitions concentrated on key centres of prosperity where large art galleries had been erected. This was in response to a consultation meeting between the C.A.S. and local authority art curators, held in the summer of 1911, which established the need and demand for loan exhibitions of contemporary British art. Following a further meeting, in 1912, it was proposed that the C.A.S., in conjunction with the National Art Collections Fund, should establish exhibition sub-committees and appoint representatives in large provincial centres of population; these were Bath, Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Leeds, Lincoln, Liverpool, Manchester and Scarborough. These sub-committees had several interlinked functions which were to 'promote the interests of the local collections', 'help in organizing loan collections from the C.A.S. and other sources', and 'act as [the] intermediary between the C.A.S. and the local bodies'.<sup>308</sup> They were involved in the early C.A.S. exhibition entitled 'Loan Exhibition of Modern Paintings and Drawings: Contemporary Art Society and Others' which, from 1910-12, toured to Manchester City Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Kingston-upon-Thames Museum and Rochdale Art Gallery; this was followed by the C.A.S. exhibitions of modern British oil paintings and watercolours at Belfast Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, and the Mappin Art Gallery, from 1913-14. The outbreak of the First World War, however, effectively brought this partnership initiative to an end. As a cultural means of support, the new sub-committees pre-figured the establishment of friends organizations associated with a particular gallery or museum.

An essential aim of the C.A.S.'s loan exhibition scheme was to give cultural authority to collecting patterns for new art collections at provincial art galleries and museums. Exhibitions were organized and lent by the C.A.S. as inaugural displays to the Laing

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Belfast, 1915, p.4.

<sup>308</sup> Contemporary Art Society Board Meeting, 6th March, 1912: Contemporary Art Society Archives, C.A.S. Bound Minutes 1912, 9215.2.2.1, Tate Gallery Archive.

Art Gallery in 1912, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1913, Ferens Art Gallery in 1929 (which had opened in 1927), Batley Art Gallery in 1948, Bilston Art Gallery in 1953 (although it had opened briefly in 1937) and Herbert Art Gallery, at Coventry, in 1962. The Laing Art Gallery had, in fact, opened to the public in 1904, several years prior to the creation of the C.A.S., without a permanent collection, as its three gallery rooms were intended to show loan collections and special exhibitions.<sup>309</sup> In 1912, however, the 'Special Loan Collection of Selected Pictures by Contemporary British Artists' was held at the Gallery with the specific intention to launch the formation of a collection of Twentieth-Century British Art. It combined a contrasting selection from the C.A.S.'s loan collection, which was displayed as a distinct category; loans from other provincial art galleries and museums, many of which had been purchased from the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions; and, in marked contrast, works from the private collection of Michael Sadler. At Leicester, the C.A.S. exhibition was a vast compendium of key artists of the period which consisted of over 200 works on paper and oil paintings lent by the C.A.S.; private collectors who were C.A.S. members, such as Lord Henry Bentinck, A .M. Daniel, Campbell Dodgson, Judge Evans, Lady Ottoline Morrell; art collectors, such as Michael Sadler (who joined the C.A.S. c.1912) and Charles Rothenstein (later Rutherston); artists and influential teachers at the Slade School of Art, such as Frederick Brown, Philip Wilson Steer and Henry Tonks; and London art dealers, such as the Carfax Gallery and William Marchant. The C.A.S.'s exhibits for this exhibition included pictures of strong emotional appeal, such as Augustus John's 'Smiling Woman', Henry Lamb's 'Brittany Peasant Boy', William Rothenstein's 'Jews Praying' and Walter Sickert's 'Despair', and Eric Gill's iconic stone relief 'The Crucifixion'. Colourful works by the Camden Town Group, then one of the most progressive contemporary developments in British art, were also well represented by loans from private collectors.

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<sup>309</sup> Laing Art Gallery, *Catalogue of the Special Loan Collection of Selected Pictures by Contemporary British Artists*, Laing Art Gallery, 1912.

To establish a viable and varied presentation of contemporary British art, the C.A.S. displayed its collection in conjunction with loans from private collections belonging to subscribing members. In 1935, for example, Lady Ottoline Morrell lent 17 contemporary British works to Sheffield City Art Galleries and 13 paintings to Leeds City Art Gallery. This was the first time that works from this private collection had been shown in a provincial art gallery, with the aim to present the advanced tastes of a private London-based collector in comparison with a provincial local authority art gallery's collection. Selections of works from individual collections were also toured by the C.A.S. In 1931, for example, a group of paintings and drawings from Edward Marsh's collection was shown at the Laing Art Gallery, and a selection of works from his bequest subsequently toured to Bristol Art Gallery, Grays Art Gallery, in Hartlepool, The Assembly Rooms, in Norwich, The Exhibition Room, at Cambridge, Folkestone Art Gallery, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, in Exeter, Reading Museum, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Batley Art Gallery and Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. During 1951-52, another prominent collector, Howard Bliss, lent a substantial part of his collection, under the auspices of the C.A.S., which formed ten groups of six to ten works. These groups were displayed for six months at the local authority institutions Batley Art Gallery, Belfast Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Williamson Art Gallery, in Birkenhead, Russell Coates Museum, in Bournemouth, Brighton Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Derby Art Gallery, Harrogate Art Gallery, Hove Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Usher Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Newark-on-Trent Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Wakefield Art Gallery and Worcester Art Gallery and Museum; works were also lent to the Fitzwilliam Museum, part of Cambridge University.

Such loans extended the educational role of C.A.S. exhibitions, but they also had a symbolic function as private property which expressed, in tangible form, a financial



commitment to contemporary British art. In order to promote private individual postwar patronage, the C.A.S. curated the exhibition 'Two Private Collectors' which toured to provincial venues in 1954. Collecting more progressive examples of contemporary British art was a speculative venture, and the C.A.S. used its social society links to encourage the collector of pre-1900 art to consider the patronage of contemporary British artists; Edward Marsh, it should be noted, had initially started his own art collection by purchasing examples of eighteenth and nineteenth-century English pictures. As long ago as 1923, the C.A.S. organized the exhibition with the contrived title 'Contemporary Art Society: Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings Held at Grosvenor House by Kind Permission of the Duke of Westminster', which aimed to assuage doubts of those private individuals wishing to follow in the steps of the aristocratic art collector.<sup>310</sup>

In seeking to encourage the development of local authority collections of contemporary British art, the C.A.S. also drew on the Tate Gallery's status as a national collecting institution by borrowing examples of its more progressive independent purchases and gifts, made under its Director, Charles Aitken. In 1926, the Tate Gallery made its first loans to a C.A.S. exhibition, shown at Bury Art Gallery, which included works from the C.A.S.'s collection promised as future gifts to the Tate Gallery. The character of such C.A.S. exhibitions, however, could appear to be too progressive for even more receptive curators. In 1929, for example, Frank Lambert, then Director of Leeds City Art Gallery, opined that 'I should like to see their paintings and sculpture [the C.A.S.'s loans] before booking the collection, because they buy pictures, which even to my advanced tastes are sometimes rather queer'.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Contemporary Art Society, 'Introduction' to *Contemporary Art Society: Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings Held at Grosvenor House by Kind Permission of the Duke of Westminster*, Contemporary Art Society, London, 1923, p.2.

<sup>311</sup> Letter: Frank Lambert to C. R. Chisman, The Art Exhibitions Bureau, 11th October 1929: Leeds City Art Gallery Records: Box File: General 1921-27: file 'C.R. Chisman 1929'.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the C.A.S. resumed touring its own recent acquisitions as exhibitions, in order to boost the representation of contemporary British art in specific provincial art galleries and museums. These venues included the local authority galleries Russell Coates Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and Portsmouth City Art Gallery. In 1979, for example, the exhibition 'Art For Today: C.A.S. Recent Acquisitions for Public Collections 1975-78' was shown at Portsmouth City Art Gallery.

#### **8.4.2. Sales Exhibitions 1931-45**

A previously ignored aspect of the C.A.S.'s history was its involvement in the active sale of art works. These ventures were initially in response to periods of extreme economic crisis facing artists in Britain. The economic Depression of the 1930s encouraged the C.A.S. to combine its efforts with London art dealers. In 1932, for example, 'An Exhibition of some pictures acquired by the C.A.S.' was held at Arthur Tooth & Sons Galleries, a subscriber of the C.A.S. This exhibition was promoted as a 'collection of specially selected works by Contemporary British Artists' which were available for purchase.<sup>312</sup> It included a selection of paintings and works on paper from the C.A.S.'s collection and an adjacent display entitled 'Present a Picture through the C.A.S. to A Public Art Gallery'. The latter included examples by the most progressive British artists of the day, such as Barbara Hepworth, Frances Hodgkins (an Anglo-New Zealand artist), Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, John Skeaping and Matthew Smith. Prospective purchasers were, therefore, quite literally able to compare and follow the example of the C.A.S.'s patronage.

During the Second World War, the virtual disappearance of private patronage caused the C.A.S. to organize large-scale touring sales exhibitions of contemporary British

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<sup>312</sup> Arthur Tooth & Sons Galleries, *An Exhibition of Some Pictures Acquired by the Contemporary Art Society*, London, 1932, u.p.

art, such as 'British Painting Today'. This was toured by the Art Exhibitions Bureau which had been established in London, in 1918. The Bureau was a commercial organization which concentrated on nation-wide sales exhibitions of contemporary British art aimed at both public collections and private individuals. In 1939, for example, the Bureau lent the 'Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Members of the Camden Town Group' to Aberdeen Art Gallery, from which the Gallery made several purchases. The C.A.S. exhibition 'British Painting Today' was toured extensively by the Bureau to Bath, Salford, Liverpool, Aberdeen, Gateshead, Darlington, Burton-on-Trent, Birkenhead, Blackpool, Manchester, Derby, Harrogate, Rochdale, Edinburgh (National Gallery of Scotland), Glasgow, Dundee and finally London (Whitechapel Art Gallery). The 'principal object' of such C.A.S. sales exhibitions was to 'assist living artists in these difficult times by increasing the appreciation of modern art' and to set an example, the C.A.S. itself purchased from this exhibition.<sup>313</sup> Despite the comprehensive nature of the exhibition 'British Painting Today', which featured 100 single examples of artists' works ranging from 'the great veterans at the top down to young men whose work has so far hardly been seen in public', after an 18-month tour only 18 paintings were purchased.<sup>314</sup> The idea that a body of knowledge could be combined with sales exhibitions informed the C.A.S.'s future involvement in curated shows.

#### **8.4.3. Themed Exhibitions 1953-58**

Kenneth Clark had proposed, as early as 1949, that the C.A.S. should curate a programme of contemporary art exhibitions, in order to raise its profile, increase its membership and encourage private patronage of contemporary British art. The C.A.S., however, delayed implementing this proposal as preparations for the 'Festival of

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<sup>313</sup> Victoria Art Gallery, *Exhibition of British Painting Today Organized by the Contemporary Art Society*, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, 1940, u.p.

<sup>314</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1940*, C.A.S., London, 1940, p.7.

Britain' were underway.<sup>315</sup> The 'Festival of Britain', in 1951, heralded a long line of survey-exhibitions which examined aspects and chronological periods of Twentieth-Century British Art. These exhibitions were largely London-based, but also toured throughout the provinces, principally under the auspices of the central-government funded Arts Council and the commercially-run Art Exhibitions Bureau. In 1953, the C.A.S. launched its own contribution to this large-scale promotion of British visual culture. This was a series of three themed exhibitions which were 'Figures in Their Setting' from 1953-55, 'The Seasons' in 1956 and 'The Religious Theme' in 1958. All three themed exhibitions sought to encourage the creation of large scale-works suitable for public buildings, as the aim was to promote postwar collective patronage; the majority of works included were for sale. These exhibitions of commissioned art works were the first time the C.A.S. had deliberately sought to draw a distinction between art destined for a domestic setting and a new phenomenon in contemporary international art referred to as "gallery art".

These themed exhibitions were intended to have a survey-like character and therefore included established artists, such as Vanessa Bell (born in 1879); mid-career artists, such as Mary Potter (born in 1900); and a younger generation which included Elizabeth Frink (born in 1930) and Basil Blackshaw (born in 1932). Despite the importance of contemporary British abstract art, largely centred on St. Ives, the C.A.S. initially specified that all the exhibitions were to feature 'figurative as opposed to abstract art'.<sup>316</sup> This stipulation was subsequently modified so that three abstract artists who featured in the pioneering exhibition 'Statements: a review of British Abstract Art in 1956', held at the I.C.A., London, in 1957, could be included. These were Sandra Blow and Paul Feiler, who were represented in the exhibition 'Figures in

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<sup>315</sup> For this reason the C.A.S. also cancelled its first post-war exhibition for 1950 entitled 'Trends in British Art 1900-50'. See 'Planned Exhibitions' file: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.4.9.1-3, Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>316</sup> 'Essay' by Colin Anderson in *Figures in Their Setting*, Contemporary Art Society, Tate Gallery, London, 1953, u.p.

Their Setting', and Patrick Heron who was included in the exhibition 'The Seasons'. Although it is reasonable to speculate that some selected artists re-interpreted their art by giving their works new titles, the idea of themed contemporary exhibitions reinvested contemporary significance in both traditional pictorial forms and subject matter which had a long history of broad public appeal. All three C.A.S. exhibitions were shown at the Tate Gallery, and this venue, together with the C.A.S.'s offer of purchase grants to local authority art galleries and museums, aimed to generate both a curatorial and general interest in creative themes deeply-rooted in Western Art. By promoting thematic collecting, which could be linked to pre-existing historic art collections, the C.A.S. offered a viable alternative to the linear presentation of Twentieth-Century British art history and the associated collecting process of gap-filling.

#### **8.4.3.1. 'Figures in Their Setting' 1953-55**

'Figures in Their Setting' was devoted almost exclusively to contemporary British figurative painting as opposed to abstract art. Members of the exhibition sub-committee were the then current Chairman of the C.A.S, Raymond Mortimer (1895-1980), a writer and critic, who had been part of the Bloomsbury circle of 1920s; Sir Colin Anderson, then Honorary Treasurer of the C.A.S.; the artist Edward le Bas; and the curators Loraine Conran (1912-86), who had then recently left Southampton City Art Gallery, as its first Curator, from 1938-50, to become the Curator of the Iveagh Bequest at Kenwood House, in 1950; and John Rothenstein, then Director of the Tate Gallery and a member of the Art Panel of the Arts Council, from 1945-52 and 1953-55. This sub-committee invited about 100 artists to take part, of which 62 agreed. Following the example of the Festival of Britain exhibition 'Sixty Painters for '51', artists were asked to create large paintings, of at least 3ft in size, which had been 'carried beyond the sketch, to the calibre of a gallery picture'.<sup>317</sup> By encouraging the

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<sup>317</sup> *ibid.*

creation of non-domestic scale and non-abstract paintings of high quality, these stipulations aimed to respond to the specific nature and functions of a public art gallery and museum, and its art collections. In order to encourage sales, the exhibition was held at the Tate Gallery, in 1953, and subsequently toured as two separate groups to Leeds City Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, the Mappin Art Gallery, Grundy Art Gallery, in Blackpool, Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, in Preston, Huddersfield Art Gallery and Derby Art Gallery. Two funds were established by the C.A.S. for purchases and the provision of 20% purchase grants to those provincial art galleries and museums which wished to acquire works from the exhibition. The C.A.S. purchased eight works from 'Figures in Their Setting' and allocated four purchase grants to local authority art galleries and museums in England; see Lists 8.1. and 8.2.<sup>318</sup>

#### **List 8.1. C.A.S. Purchases from 'Figures in Their Setting' 1953**

Sandra Blow 'Two Figures', presented to the Victoria Art Gallery (Bath) in 1959

Martin Froy 'Cafe', presented to Harrogate Art Gallery in 1961

Robert Medley 'The Antique Room', presented to Huddersfield Art Gallery in 1956

Keith Vaughan 'Assembly of Figures', presented to Manchester City Art Gallery in 1956

Alan Reynolds 'The Poet goes Poaching', presented to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery in 1956

Paul Feiler 'Harbour Window', presented to an overseas public collection in 1959

Josef Herman 'Burgundian Scene', presented to an overseas public collection in 1956

Winifred Nicholson 'Calaques', current whereabouts unknown

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<sup>318</sup> 'Foreword' by Raymond Mortimer to the catalogue 'Figures in Their Setting', erroneously states that nine works were purchased.

### **List 8.2. C.A.S. Purchase Grants for 'Figures in Their Setting' 1953**

John Minton 'Painter and Model', Russell Coates Museum

Julian Trevelyan 'The Garage', Huddersfield Art Gallery

Bateson Mason 'Sleeping Fisherman', Castle Museum (Nottingham)

John Armstrong 'A Vision of St. Theresa', Harris Museum and Art Gallery

#### **8.4.3.2. 'The Seasons' 1956**

In 1954, Eric Newton recommended the theme 'the seasons' to the C.A.S. as 'one general and common to the history of British art'.<sup>319</sup> The exhibition 'The Seasons', held at the Tate Gallery in 1956, aimed both to highlight the continual figurative rather than abstract character of contemporary British art, and to reinforce this form of art-making as valid and contemporary for British artists; the painter Roger Hilton was one of the few abstract artists to be included in the exhibition. Members of the exhibition sub-committee were Sir Colin Anderson, then Vice-Chairman of the Tate Gallery Trustees, from 1953-59, and Chairman of the C.A.S. Executive Committee, from 1956-60; John Rothenstein; Raymond Mortimer; Peter Meyer (1894-1984), the art historian; and Eric Newton. This sub-committee compiled a list of 60 painters and sculptors, who were invited to submit recent works dealing with the theme seasons, and 57 artists agreed to participate. In addition to the theme, minimum and maximum dimensions of 2½ ft by 5ft were specified, and all works had to have been created since 1955, not previously exhibited and, in the instance of paintings, completed works rather than studies or sketches.

The C.A.S. again established two purchase funds, each of £1,000. The first was to support purchases made by the C.A.S. as part of a future C.A.S. allocation to provincial local authority art galleries and museums, while the second fund provided

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<sup>319</sup> 'Meeting: Wednesday, May 26th, 1954' in 'C.A.S. Minutes 1939-68': Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.2.3.1., Tate Gallery Archive.

25% purchase grants to provincial art galleries and museums; there was no restriction on prices charged by artists and their dealers, but the C.A.S. only funded purchases up to an individual price of £200. The C.A.S. bought five paintings and three sculptures from the exhibition by mid-career and less-established artists, such as William Scott and Reg Butler, and Patrick Heron and Derek Hill; see List 8.3. The C.A.S. also made purchase grants to several local authority art galleries and museums, the Tate Gallery and the Arts Council Collection; see List 8.4. In addition, independent purchases from the exhibition were made by the Arts Council, Dudley Art Gallery and Leeds City Art Gallery; see List 8.5.

### **List 8.3. C.A.S. Purchases from 'The Seasons' 1956**

#### **Paintings**

- Mary Kessell 'Winter Wood', presented to Brighton Art Gallery in 1959  
Derek Hill 'The Season of Thaw', presented to Herbert Art Gallery in 1959  
Joseph Herman 'Autumn Idyll', presented to South London Art Gallery in 1961  
William Scott 'Winter Still-Life', presented to the Tate Gallery in 1957  
Patrick Heron 'Winter Harbour', presented to an overseas public art gallery in 1959

#### **Sculpture**

- Reg Butler, bronze 'Torso (Summer)', presented to Manchester City Art Gallery in 1959  
F.E. McWilliam, plaster sculpture 'The Seasons', current whereabouts unknown  
Bernard Meadows, bronze 'Spring', current whereabouts unknown

### **List 8.4. C.A.S. Purchase Grants for 'The Seasons' 1956**

#### **Paintings**

- William Townsend 'Winter, Hexden Channel', Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery  
Michael Ayrtton 'Summer' and Ruskin Spear 'Spring at Rottingdean', Dudley Art Gallery  
John Armstrong 'Spring and Winter', Kelvingrove Art Gallery



Robert MacBryde 'Still Life', Castle Museum (Nottingham)

Adrian Ryan 'Summer Landscape', Jack Smith 'Winter' and Carel Weight 'Winter', Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Bateson Mason 'The Seasons', South London Art Gallery

Mary Potter 'Burning of the Leaves', Swindon Art Gallery:

### **Sculpture**

Lynn Chadwick 'The Seasons', Arts Council

## **List 8.5. Independent Purchases from 'The Seasons' 1956**

### **Paintings**

Keith Vaughan 'September' and Victor Willing 'Winter Machine', Arts Council

John Bratby 'Winter', Dudley Art Gallery

Paul Feiler 'Winter: Cornwall', Leeds City Art Gallery

### **8.4.3.3. 'The Religious Theme' 1958**

'The Religious Theme' exhibition was shown at the Tate Gallery in 1958 and then toured to several local authority art galleries and museums; these were Cheltenham Art Gallery, Bootle Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Rotherham Art Gallery, Bury Art Gallery, Batley Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Bankfield Museum, in Halifax, Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Scarborough Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, South London Art Gallery and the Castle Museum, in Nottingham. As with the previous two exhibitions, the aim was to generate a specific type of art, but with the additional remit to broaden the range of possible patronage for contemporary British artists. The exhibition was launched as a religious themed-exhibition in order to encourage a higher standard of religious art in Britain, in comparison with other countries such as France.<sup>320</sup> While the exhibition

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<sup>320</sup> Standard Letter: Pauline Vogelpoel to museum curators, 26th February, 1958: Contemporary Art Society Archives, Ephemera 9215.12.1.8 (1953-77), Tate Gallery Archive.

theme suggested a non-gallery setting and was directed towards a particular form of patronage, the 'various ecclesiastical authorities', its subject matter would have been easily assimilated within the historical dimension of an art gallery and museum collection.<sup>321</sup>

Following the example of previous exhibitions, a list of 80 invited artists was compiled by the exhibition sub-committee. Members of this exhibition sub-committee were Sir Colin Anderson, Peter Meyer, Loraine Conran, John Rothenstein, Eric Newton and the portrait painter, Derek Hill, who from 1953-55 and 1957-59 was Director of Art at the British School at Rome. The maximum dimension for works, 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>ft, aimed to take into account the scale of both public art gallery spaces and ecclesiastical buildings, while exhibits had to be completed works so that if purchased they could be directly installed. Two funds were again established for C.A.S. purchases up to £1,000 and to provide maximum 20% purchase grants to provincial art galleries and museums. The C.A.S. purchases, six paintings and one sculpture, aimed to cover several generations of twentieth-century British artists; see List 8.6. In the event, local authority art galleries and museums proved reluctant to engage in this form of contemporary institutional patronage. No purchase grants were requested by local authority institutions and only a single independent purchase was made by the Castle Museum, in Nottingham, which bought Ruskin Spear's painting 'Sunday Morning' from the exhibition. In an attempt to counter this poor response, the C.A.S. made a 10% purchase grant to the Arts Council, towards the purchase of Norman Adams' painting 'Holy Trees'.

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<sup>321</sup> *ibid.*

## **List 8.6. C.A.S. Purchases from 'The Religious Theme' 1958**

### **Paintings**

Sandra Blow 'Creation/In the Beginning', presented to Barnsley Art Gallery in 1961

Henry Inlander 'The Creation of Eve', presented to Belfast Art Gallery in 1961

Keith Vaughan 'Martyrdom of St. Sebastian', presented to Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in 1961

Robert Colquhoun 'Mater Dolorosa', presented to Manchester City Art Gallery in 1961

F. N. Souza 'Supper at Emmaus with the Believer and the Sceptic', presented to Wakefield Art Gallery in 1961

Basil Blackshaw 'Crucifixion, Drumore', current whereabouts unknown

### **Sculpture**

Bernard Meadows 'Running Bird', presented to Sheffield City Art Galleries in 1961

## **8.5. Linked Exhibition Schemes**

In addition to its own exhibitions, the C.A.S. was also involved in other independent and central government-funded exhibition schemes, as part of the Society's aim to increase public knowledge and promote private and institutional patronage of contemporary British art in the provinces. These were wartime exhibitions, and postwar those under the auspices of the Arts Council, Tate Gallery and Whitechapel Art Gallery. This cultural linkage involved the loan of art works; the co-curation of exhibitions; the provision of purchase grants to provincial art galleries and museums; and the C.A.S.'s own purchases from these exhibitions.

### **8.5.1. Wartime Exhibitions**

From 1936 until the outbreak of war, the C.A.S. lent works to the exhibitions organized by the British Institute of Adult Education. These exhibitions were intended to stimulate an awareness and interest in contemporary British art among a largely non-art gallery visiting public. During the Second World War, the C.A.S.'s exhibitions

became part of a general presentation of contemporary British culture. A significant development, in terms of the C.A.S.'s cultural authority and the status of contemporary British art, was the use of the C.A.S.'s collection for exhibitions held at the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery throughout the War. These contemporary British works, therefore, took on the status of national assets which were an intrinsic part of civilized cultural life then under threat. The C.A.S. worked in close co-operation with quasi-governmental agencies, such as the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (C.E.M.A.), the British Institute of Adult Education and The British Council; during the years 1940-44, the C.A.S. was also federated with the Central Institute of Art and Design and its touring exhibition programme. These associations both extended the number and type of venues where the C.A.S.'s acquisitions could be seen by diverse audiences and enhanced the C.A.S.'s geographical exposure. From 1942-43, for example, C.E.M.A. toured C.A.S. exhibitions to Shrewsbury, Gateshead, South Shields, Middlesbrough, Derby, Bedford and Huntingdon; C.A.S. loans were also combined with works from several sources to form exhibitions sent to Colchester, Southend, Mansfield, Bristol, Plymouth, Liskeard, Todmorden and Chesterfield.

### **8.5.2. C.A.S. and Arts Council Exhibitions**

When the Arts Council of Great Britain was created, in 1946, as a central government-funded body, it possessed only a handful of art works; these had belonged to its forerunner C.E.M.A. Under its Royal Charter of 1946, the Arts Council was created to promote:

a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the Fine Arts, exclusively, and in particular to increase the accessibility of the Fine Arts to the public throughout Our Realm, to improve the standard of execution of the Fine Arts and to advise and co-operate with Our Government Departments, local authorities and other bodies on any matters concerned directly or indirectly with those objects.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> H.M. Treasury, *Government and the Arts in Britain*, H.M.S.O., London, 1958,

In order to carry out its dual remit to educate artists and the public in general and to make art accessible, the Arts Council assumed responsibility for the touring of C.A.S. exhibitions of major acquisitions to provincial art galleries and museums. Through this association the C.A.S., in turn, sustained and enhanced its own cultural role and authority. From 1946, the Arts Council provided the administrative machinery and the financial support necessary for C.A.S.'s postwar touring exhibitions. In 1951, for example, the Arts Council toured 50 paintings recently acquired by the C.A.S. to Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Wolsey Art Gallery in Ipswich, Lowestoft Museum, Castle Museum in Norwich, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Southampton City Art Gallery and York City Art Gallery. The C.A.S. also frequently lent works to exhibitions curated and provincially toured by the Arts Council during the 1950s and 1960s; in addition, C.A.S. loans were made to exhibitions organized by the Arts Council of Wales and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The cultural links between the Arts Council and the C.A.S. were further reinforced, in 1959, when the C.A.S. held the first of a series of 'Distribution Exhibitions' at the Arts Council Gallery in London.

#### **8.5.2.1. 'Sixty Paintings for '51' 1951**

The postwar exhibition scene in Britain, as has been noted earlier, was characterized by a plethora of anthology exhibitions devoted to Twentieth-Century British Art. In terms of curation, scale and provincial influence, the touring exhibitions organized by the Arts Council were by far the most influential. The first of these was 'Sixty Paintings for '51' which was organized to coincide with the Festival of Britain in 1951, and toured to 12 provincial art galleries and museums, from 1951-52; the venues were Manchester City Art Gallery (followed by its London showing at the R.B.A. Galleries), Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Norwich, Plymouth City Museum and

Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, York City Art Gallery, and Harris Museum and Art Gallery. As part of the nation-wide celebrations of 1951, the Arts Council also encouraged provincial art galleries and museums to stage their own exhibitions, displays and related activities. The Arts Council for Wales organized its own independent exhibition entitled 'Festival Exhibition of Contemporary Welsh Painting', in 1951, which toured to the National Museum of Wales, Newport Art Gallery, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery and the University College of North Wales.<sup>323</sup> Despite its regional identity, this exhibition was selected by the English artists John Piper and Carel Weight, and David Bell (c.1915-59), Curator of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, in Swansea, from 1951-59. Bell was also the Arts Council Assistant Director for Wales, from 1946-51, and a painter who had trained at the Royal College of Art. In 1953, a further complementary exhibition, entitled 'Contemporary Welsh Painting and Sculpture', was toured throughout Wales by the Arts Council for Wales.

The exhibition 'Sixty Paintings for '51' was conceived under the egalitarian working title 'Painting Competition '51' by the Art Panel of the Arts Council in 1949. In common with the Festival of Britain, 'Sixty Paintings for '51' celebrated the survival of Britain and its cultural life, and aimed to be inclusive and democratic, thus replicating the function of more forward-looking local authority art galleries and museums of the interwar period, such as Leeds City Art Gallery under the directorship of Philip Hendy. The members of the Art Panel were Philip James, Director of Art at the Arts Council and formerly C.E.M.A., from 1942-58; William Emrys Williams (1896-1977), the educationalist, who was Secretary-General of the Arts Council, from 1951-63, the former Secretary of the British Institute of Adult Education, from 1934-40, and Chief Editor of Penguin Books, from 1935-65; Kenneth Clark; John Rothenstein; the artists, Edward le Bas and Henry Moore; Philip Hendy; Eric Newton, then the art critic of

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<sup>323</sup> Regrettably all Arts Council records for Wales are closed to researchers.

*The Sunday Times*, from 1937-51; Lilian Somerville (1905-85), a former formidable secretary who had risen to the distinguished post of Director of Fine Art at The British Council; Herbert Read, who had become an influential writer and popularizer of art and design and its educational role; Edward Musgrave (1901-57), Director of Leeds City Art Gallery, from 1946-57; Sir Colin Anderson; Leigh Ashton (1897-1983), Director of the V. & A. Museum, from 1945-55; Miss G. V. Barnard, Fine Art Curator at the Castle Museum, Norwich, from 1937-51; Oliver Brown (1885-1966), Director of the London art dealers, The Leicester Galleries, which had been the leading commercial venue for contemporary British art during the interwar years; Percy Jowett, Principal of the Royal College of Art; and the designer and craftsman, Gordon Russell (1892-1980), who since 1947 had been Director of the Council of Industrial Design. This Panel compiled an extensive list of names which included both artists who were born in Great Britain and those with naturalized status.<sup>324</sup> An exhibition sub-committee was then formed to finalize the selection of artists, whose members were Philip James, Kenneth Clark, Colin Anderson, Edward Le Bas and Herbert Read. A separate panel of judges was also appointed to select works for purchase by the Arts Council: they were Jonkheer W. Sandberg, Director of the Municipal Museums in Amsterdam, Vice-President of the Dutch Arts Council and a trained typographer; Alan Clutton-Brock, art critic of *The Times*, and A. J. L. McDonnell, purchaser for the Felton Bequest, National Gallery of Victoria, in Melbourne.<sup>325</sup>

The large-scale nature of the art works, their date of execution and first-time exhibition status sought to guarantee a particular new crowd-pulling contemporary character for the exhibition; the paintings were to be not less than 45 inches by 60

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<sup>324</sup> Correspondence Files '60 Paintings for '51': Arts Council Exhibition Department Records, 'Sixty Paintings for '51', box, South Bank Centre Records.

<sup>325</sup> Acquisitions File for '60 Paintings for '51': Arts Council Exhibition Department Records, 'Sixty Paintings for '51', box, South Bank Centre Records.

inches, or 18½ square feet and executed after 1st. January 1949. In order to encourage the participation of artists, the Arts Council provided free stretchers and paint materials, and offered five prizes of £500 in the form of a 'limited competition for paintings to be purchased by the Arts Council'.<sup>326</sup> The specification that the subject matter was the artist's own choice aimed to encourage participating artists to pursue their own individual ideas and techniques.

In terms of patronage, these works were aimed at art galleries and museums, and industrial corporations as 'a lively cross section of contemporary British painting' which would act as a dynamic catalyst to a dormant contemporary commercial art market.<sup>327</sup> The Arts Council, in pursuit of this idea of collective patronage, approached the C.A.S. who agreed to allocate £1,000 for purchases from the exhibition; in the event, the C.A.S. spent £2,400. Circular letters were also sent by the Arts Council to art galleries and museums, and a special private view for gallery directors and other public bodies was organized at the London venue.<sup>328</sup> To give validity to the whole enterprise, the circular letter announced the Arts Council's commitment to purchase five works at £500 each from the exhibition; at that time, it was intended that these works would be part of the Arts Council's nascent art collection. These purchase prize works were, however, subsequently presented by the Arts Council to local authority art galleries and the Slade School of Art in 1952; see List 8.7.

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<sup>326</sup> Press Release: December 1949: Arts Council Exhibition Department Records, 'Sixty Paintings for '51', box, South Bank Centre Records.

<sup>327</sup> 'Foreword' by Philip James to *Sixty Paintings for '51*, Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1951, u.p.

<sup>328</sup> Circular Letter: Arts Council Exhibition Department Records, 'Sixty Painters for '51', box, South Bank Centre Records.



**List 8.7. Arts Council Purchases from 'Sixty Paintings for '51' 1951<sup>329</sup>**

William Gear 'Autumn Landscape', presented to the Laing Art Gallery

Lucian Freud 'Interior Near Paddington', presented to the Walker Art Gallery

Robert Medley 'Bicyclists Against a Blue Background' 1951, presented to York City Art Gallery

Claude Rogers 'Miss Lynn', presented to Southampton City Art Gallery

Ivon Hitchens 'Aquarian Nativity-Child of this Age', presented to the Slade School of Art

While the exhibition publicly celebrated and promoted contemporary British culture and its practitioners, its main aim was to encapsulate and define Twentieth-Century British Art which offered long-term cultural validity 'in the hope of handing down to posterity from our present age something tangible and of permanent value'.<sup>330</sup> In so doing, the exhibition promoted and defined a particular form of international contemporary art practice which was large non-domestic scale painting; an approach which subsequently informed the C.A.S.'s own three thematic exhibitions of the 1950s. These large-scale works could, in physical terms, be linked to earlier examples of Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Art found in local authority art galleries and museums, the whole entity representing an overview of British art. With this in mind, William Emrys Williams, the Secretary-General of the Arts Council, from 1946-65, and Chairman of the Art Panel, wrote that:

The kind of painting specified, it should be remembered, is unfortunately out of fashion nowadays - the large canvas of not less than 5 by 4 - and in deciding upon this category the Arts Council hopes

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<sup>329</sup> See Accessions List: Arts Council Exhibitions Department Records, 'Sixty Painters for '51', box, South Bank Centre Records. Two other works were also considered for purchase: Prunella Clough's 'Lowestoft Harbour' £120 and Victor Pasmore's 'The Snowstorm' £450.

<sup>330</sup> 'Foreword' by Philip James to *Sixty Paintings for '51*, Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1951, u.p..

to encourage the purchase of good, large pictures for display in national and civic buildings.<sup>331</sup>

The exhibition covered the older and younger generations of established and rising twentieth-century British artists; the Royal Academician, Henry Lamb, born in 1883, was the oldest artist, while the youngest artist represented was Patrick Heron, born in 1920. Several established and older generation artists, however, had declined to participate in the exhibition, such as the Royal Academicians Philip Connard, Stanley Spencer and Augustus John, and Barnett Freedman and David Jones.<sup>332</sup> As a result, despite the exhibition's title, the final number of exhibiting painters was 54. Philip James had also sought to exclude lesser-known younger artists from the exhibition, while only two well-established Scottish artists, William Gillies and John Maxwell, were included; the Scottish Committee of the Arts Council had submitted a list of several Scottish artists who were James Cowie, William Crosbie, Joan Eardley, Ian Fleming, William Gillies, John Maxwell and Robert Sivell.<sup>333</sup> Wales, Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland were represented by a handful of artists which included Ceri Richards, Merlyn Evans and Louis Le Brocqy. Despite the non-participation of some British artists and the exclusion of others, the Arts Council promoted the exhibition as a representative expression of the zenith of British visual culture; 12 sculptors were also commissioned to create works to complement the London showing.<sup>334</sup>

The C.A.S. purchases from 'Sixty Paintings for '51' were wide-ranging in their coverage and included Martin Bloch's 'Down from Bethesda Quarry', an example of an émigré artist; Peter Lanyon's 'Porthleven', a leading artist of the contemporary St. Ives

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<sup>331</sup> William Emrys Williams (Chairman, Art Panel of the Arts Council), 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 8th February, 1950.

<sup>332</sup> 'Painting Competition '51', file: Arts Council Exhibition Department Records, South Bank Centre Records.

<sup>333</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> See the 'Foreword' by Philip James to *Sixty Paintings for '51*, Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1951, u.p.

School; Ceri Richards' 'Trafalgar Square, London', the major contemporary Welsh artist; and Carel Weight's 'As I wend to the shores I know not ...', an established older-generation artist.<sup>335</sup> The Contemporary Art Society for Wales also purchased a single but more conservative work which was Ruskin Spear's 'The River in Winter'. A major work, Ben Nicholson's 'Still-Life', was bought jointly by the C.A.S. and a body of local subscribers for Manchester City Art Gallery. The C.A.S. also tried unsuccessfully to present works which were declined as gifts by provincial art galleries and museums, and as a result were not purchased. These included John Tunnard's 'Return' which was declined by Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Cheltenham Art Gallery and Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. Despite the combined efforts of the Arts Council and the C.A.S., only one independent purchase was made by a local authority art gallery from the exhibition. This was Leicester Museum and Art Gallery which bought L. S. Lowry's 'Industrial Landscape: River Scene' in 1952; a painting distinctly contemporary in its urban realism. Contemporary rural life was also captured in Keith Baynes' 'Hop-Picking, Rye' which the artist presented to the Cecil Higgins Museum, a trustee-status institution; Baynes had initially offered his painting to Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery and subsequently to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, both of which had declined the offer. The Tate Gallery, through the Chantrey Bequest, bought the most expensive work which was Rodrigo Moynihan's 'Portrait Group' 1951 at £1,000. This painting depicted the Faculty of the Royal College of Art and was, therefore, an icon of its time.

### **8.5.3. C.A.S., Tate Gallery and Whitechapel Art Gallery Exhibitions**

#### **8.5.3.1. 'British Painting in the '60s' 1963**

The cultural authority of the C.A.S. and its contribution to patronage and Britain's heritage was significantly enhanced by the staging of its anniversary exhibition 'The

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<sup>335</sup> Carel Weight's work was presented to Oldham Art Gallery. The current whereabouts of the works by Bloch, Lanyon and Richards are unknown.

First Fifty Years' at the Tate Gallery, in 1960, and its subsequent provincial tour to Ferens Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery and Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. This was followed, in 1961, by a show of recent C.A.S. acquisitions at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. These collaborations culminated in the major two-part exhibition 'British Painting in the '60s', which was organized by the C.A.S. and exhibited in 1963, and 'British Sculpture in the Sixties' shown in 1965. The staging of these exhibitions coincided with a rapidly expanding London-based art market for contemporary British art and a simultaneous increase in purchase funds available to local authority art galleries and museums from sources such as the V. & A Purchase Grant Fund and the Gulbenkian Foundation's grant-making schemes. This was part of a more general economically buoyant outlook heralded by the then Conservative Government's 1964 slogan 'a dash for growth'. In the same year, the C.A.S. further highlighted its own cultural role by presenting over 100 works to its provincial subscribing art galleries and museums.

Members of the C.A.S. Executive Committee acted as the exhibition sub-committee for 'British Painting in the '60s'. These were John Sainsbury, as Chairman; Bryan Robertson, who as Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery had established an innovative exhibition programme; Alan Bowness (b.1928), then Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art and a member of the C.A.S.'s Executive Committee, from 1961-69; and Michael Henry Glendower Page Croft, the 2nd Baron (Lord) Croft (1916-97), a member of the C.A.S. Executive, from 1960-81. This sub-committee compiled a list of painters who were encouraged to self-select 'what they consider their best or most characteristic work of the sixties'.<sup>336</sup> Not surprisingly, the selection of artists was dominated by those whose work had previously been purchased by the

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<sup>336</sup> 'Introduction' by John Sainsbury, Bryan Robertson, Alan Bowness and Lord Croft to *British Painting in the '60s*, Contemporary Art Society, Tate Gallery and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1963, u.p.

C.A.S.: 54 of the 67 participating artists to be precise. Each of these was represented by several works, a presentation which mirrored the sales activities of London art dealers. Despite the linguistic confusion between 'British painting today' and 'English Art', the exhibition aimed to be 'a representative selection'.<sup>337</sup> Several non-English artists were also included in the exhibition: Alan Davie (Scottish); Merlyn Evans (Welsh); Louis Le Brocqy (Irish); Arthur Boyd, Brett Whiteley and Sidney Nolan (Australian); and R. B. Kitaj (Anglo-American). The exhibition was, however, dominated by London-based artists, who were represented by postwar contemporary art dealers such as Gimpel Fils, the Hanover Gallery, Kasmin Ltd., Marlborough Fine Art, Waddington Galleries and the Robert Fraser Gallery. As several constructions were included as paintings, the exhibition's title was also an anomaly.

The exhibition featured 186 works which were shown concurrently at the Whitechapel Art Gallery and the Tate Gallery; a selection of 83 paintings from both venues was then toured to Manchester City Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Ferens Art Gallery. At the Tate Gallery, 41 artists were represented the majority of whom were older-generation artists, while the Whitechapel Art Gallery displayed 26 artists most of whom were younger-generation artists.<sup>338</sup> The involvement of the national institution,

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<sup>337</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> The artists who exhibited at the Tate Gallery venue were Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon, Sandra Blow, Arthur Boyd, Edward Burra, William Coldstream, Alan Davie, Merlyn Evans, Paul Feiler, Lucian Freud, Terry Frost, Anthony Fry, Derrick Greaves, Adrian Heath, Josef Herman, Patrick Heron, Roger Hilton, Ivon Hitchens, Henry Inlander, Peter Kinley, Stefan Knapp, Leon Kossoff, Peter Lanyon, Louis Le Brocqy, L. S. Lowry, Robert Medley, Edward Middleditch, Rodrigo Moynihan, Henry Mundy, Ben Nicholson, Sidney Nolan, Victor Pasmore, John Piper, Ceri Richards, William Scott, Jack Smith, Graham Sutherland, Philip Sutton, Keith Vaughan, Karl Weschke and Bryan Wynter. The artists who exhibited at the Whitechapel Art Gallery were Michael Andrews, Gillian Ayres, Trevor Bell, Peter Blake, Bernard Cohen, Harold Cohen, William Crozier, Robyn Denny, Sheila Fell, Michael Fussell, Derek Hirst, David Hockney, Howard Hodgkin, John Hoyland, John Hubbard, Gwyther Irwin, Allen Jones, R.B. Kitaj, Peter Phillips, John Plumb, Richard Smith, Ian Stephenson, Joe Tilson, Alexander Weatherson, Brett Whiteley and Brian Young.

the Tate Gallery, gave historical validity to the enterprise, while contemporaneity was assured by the Whitechapel Art Gallery due to its growing reputation for exhibitions of progressive contemporary art. This simultaneous involvement of the Whitechapel Art Gallery and the Tate Gallery also blurred the distinction between a temporary exhibition space, and its associations with exploratory presentations of contemporary art, and a national art gallery's concern with high-quality aesthetics, permanence and cultural value. The association of two distinct sizeable exhibitions on painting also functioned as a representative and authoritative account, as it removed contemporary art from the small-scale speculative commercial arena. In addition, the exhibition catalogue entries drew attention to both significant exhibitions, and public and private collections in which the artists were already represented; for example, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery lent Paul Feiler's 'Summer Coast' 1960, the Tate Gallery lent Victor Pasmore's 'Black Abstract - Growing Form' 1962-3, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery lent Bryan Wynter's 'Sandspoor 4' 1962, and the Gulbenkian Foundation Collection lent Michael Andrews' 'The Family in the Garden' 1962 and Brian Young's 'Kennings' 1962. The artists represented were therefore those whose works could be bought with confidence by local authority art galleries and museums. To facilitate this process, the C.A.S. publicized its own commitment both to purchase works available for sale from the exhibition for presentation to provincial art galleries and museums, by the use of a special fund of £3,000, and to provide special purchase grants to its subscribing provincial art galleries and museums.

The C.A.S. purchased 13 paintings from the exhibition and was able to secure between 10% to 30% reductions for the purchase prices; see List 8.8. Despite the financial and cultural incentives to make purchases, Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery was the only recorded local authority institution which purchased works from this exhibition with a grant from the C.A.S.; the Gallery was advised by Dr. Dennis Farr, then an Assistant Keeper at the Tate Gallery and an authority on Twentieth-Century British Art. These acquisitions were Allen Jones' 'Sun Plane' which secured a 40% grant from

the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and Sheila Fell's 'Snowscape' which received a 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>% grant from the C.A.S.<sup>339</sup> Jones, a leading figure in Britain's Pop-Art movement, was already represented in the Tate Gallery's collection, while Fell was an under-rated Cumbrian-based artist, who could be classed as a northern regional artist by Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery.

**List 8.8. C.A.S. Purchases from 'British Painting in the '60s' 1963**

Richard Smith 'Penny 1960', presented to Belfast Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum) in 1964

Phillip Sutton 'Heather in Orange Hat', presented to Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in 1964

Peter Blake 'The Letterman', presented to Ferens Art Gallery in 1964

Henry Mundy 'Tambour', presented to the trustee-status museum Abbott Hall in 1964

Howard Hodgkin 'Staff Meeting', presented to the Alfred East Gallery (Kettering) in 1964

Frank Auerbach 'Maples Demolition, Easton Road', presented to Leeds City Art Gallery in 1964

Victor Pasmore 'Projective Painting in White, Black and Ochre', a construction presented to Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1964

Gwyther Irwin 'Lazalo', a collage presented to Usher Art Gallery

Jack Smith 'Shimmer, Red, Orange', presented to Manchester City Art Gallery in 1964

Sandra Blow 'Painting: Black, White and Brown', presented to Castle Museum (Norwich) in 1964

Peter Phillips 'Gravy for the Navy', a construction presented to Oldham Art Gallery in 1964

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<sup>339</sup> Letter: C.A.S. to Sunderland County Museum and Art Gallery, 2nd December, 1963: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.5.2.19, Tate Gallery Archive.

David Hockney 'The Marriage of Styles No.2', presented to an overseas public collection in 1964

Alexander Weatherson 'Resting', current whereabouts unknown.<sup>340</sup>

### 8.5.3.2. 'British Sculpture in the Sixties' 1965

The C.A.S. initially intended that the exhibition 'British Painting in the '60s' would be followed by an exhibition of sculpture constructions and graphic work.<sup>341</sup> The subsequent exhibition was, however, restricted to sculpture, by then a major component of British artistic expression. In 1965, the C.A.S., in conjunction with the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation and the Tate Gallery, organized 'British Sculpture in the Sixties'.<sup>342</sup> The members of the exhibition sub-committee were James Melvin, as Chairman, Bryan Robertson and Alan Bowness, who had just published his notable study entitled 'Modern Sculpture'. 'British Sculpture in the Sixties' consisted of 103 works by 30 'established British sculptors' and was held at the Tate Gallery as the first comprehensive exhibition of modern British sculpture. In tracing the rise and development of postwar British sculpture, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore were identified as the progenitors. This was followed by the inclusion of British sculptors who had shown at the 'Venice Biennale' in 1952, and were associated with Herbert Read's emotive category, the 'Geometry of Fear'. A third identifiable grouping were those sculptors who had worked as Henry Moore's assistants; these included Anthony Caro, who had so radically broken away from Moore's artistic practices and formal concerns. The 30 sculptors and constructivists who were invited to take part in the exhibition were Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Michael Ayrton, Ralph Brown, Reg Butler, Anthony Caro, Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke, Robert Clatworthy,

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<sup>340</sup> List of works purchased from 'British Painting in the '60s': Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.5.2.19, Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>341</sup> See Contemporary Art Society, *British Painting in the '60s*, Tate Gallery and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1963.

<sup>342</sup> For an examination of the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation's subsequent role in promoting contemporary British art see Vol.II, Chapter 11, pp.62-69.



Hubert Dalwood, John Ernest (Anglo-American), Elizabeth Frink, George Fullard, Barbara Hepworth, Anthony Hill, John Hoskin, Bryan Kneale, Kenneth Martin, Mary Martin, F. E. MacWilliam, Bernard Meadows, Henry Moore, Eduardo Paolozzi, Oliffe Richmond (Anglo-New Zealand), Matt Rugg, Peter Startup, William Turnbull, Brian Wall, Gillian Wise and Austin Wright. With the exception of Ernest, Fullard, Richmond, Wall and Austin, all these sculptors were already represented in the Tate Gallery collection, a factor which further reinforced the cultural authority behind the exhibition as a representation of contemporary British sculpture.

The C.A.S. allocated £3,000 for its own purchases and purchase grants for works from 'British Sculpture in the Sixties'. Sculpture, however, was a costly form of contemporary art and surviving C.A.S. records suggest that no purchases were made by local authority art galleries and museums. The C.A.S. bought seven works whose current whereabouts are unknown. These were Robert Adams' construction 'Circular Form and Bar'; Geoffrey Clarke's aluminium 'Two Troughs and Flat Bar'; Anthony Hill's 'Relief Construction'; Bryan Kneale's steel 'Sidewinder'; Kenneth Martin's bronze 'Oscillation'; Brian Wall's steel 'Untitled Sculpture' and Gillian Wise's construction 'Construction with Double Cube and Prism'.

#### **8.5.4. 'Visual Arts U.K.' 1996**

The launch of 'Visual Arts U.K.', in 1996, was an expansion of the C.A.S.'s earlier initiatives based on ideas of co-operation, collaboration and partnership. The creation of the provincial multi-venue 'Visual Arts U.K.' was indicative of the closer working relationship between central government-funded and independent bodies, and local authority and national institutions in relation to provincial collection development. It also signalled recognition that national institutions, such as the Tate Gallery, needed to be more provincially visible and active, in forms distinct from satellite art galleries, such as the Tate Gallery Liverpool which had opened in 1988; following tentative discussions concerning the city of Norwich, the latter was a policy discontinued largely

on financial grounds. 'Visual Arts U.K.' consisted of British contemporary art loans from the Tate Gallery, Arts Council and C.A.S which were shown in the north-east of England at venues which included the Laing Art Gallery and Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>343</sup> The 'Tate on the Tyne' exhibition, held at the Laing Art Gallery as part of 'Visual Arts U.K.', was deliberately structured as an authoritative historical survey which covered the decade 1985-95.<sup>344</sup> By combining the two authoritative national collections in this field with the C.A.S.'s own contemporary British art acquisitions, the total displays gave extraordinary coverage and publicity to a largely metropolitan view of contemporary British art. The C.A.S.'s involvement marked a further development in the Society's cultural role. It also served to blur the boundaries between independent and public bodies and thus enhanced the professional status of the C.A.S. and its activities.

#### **8.6. Local Authority Art Gallery and Museum Subscribing Members**<sup>345</sup>

In pursuance of the C.A.S.'s dual founding concerns, which were the patronage of contemporary British artists and the representation of contemporary British art in public collections, its promotion of art gallery and museum membership also sought to educate those associated with these institutions. While the placing of local authority art galleries and museums under the administrative structure of libraries ensured their educational purpose, this arrangement offered no guarantee of informed or sympathetic artistic judgement. The Contemporary Art Society therefore presented itself as an informed source. The early subscriptions made by local authority art

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<sup>343</sup> The Arts Council has undergone a series of changes. In April 1994, the Arts Council of Great Britain was relaunched as the Arts Council of England. Under this new structure there were ten independent Regional Arts Boards which were eventually merged in April 2002 with the Arts Council of England office in London. This now single development organization for the arts in England was relaunched in February 2003, as the Arts Council England with a national London office and nine offices outside the metropolis which match central government's regional boundaries.

<sup>344</sup> Sheila McGregor, 'Spring Collections', *Artists Newsletter*, May 1996, pp.26-28.

<sup>345</sup> See Vol. III, Appendix A.1.

galleries and museums to the C.A.S. were un-related to subsequent subscription-linked distribution schemes. The first of these were paid by Belfast Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery and Manchester City Art Gallery, in 1911, followed by York City Art Gallery, in 1914. Belfast Art Gallery, for example, agreed to subscribe to the C.A.S. in return for which Charles Aitken acted as an art advisor to the Gallery, on behalf of the C.A.S.<sup>346</sup> As early as 1912, therefore, Roger Fry's idea of a common perceptual experience, which combined aesthetic standards and a chronology of art, were put into practice by Arthur Deane (1875-?), the Curator of Fine Art at Belfast Art Gallery, from 1905-42, where the objectives were 'popular instruction' and the raising of 'the aesthetic sense of the people' allied to the notion of 'good taste'.<sup>347</sup> The art galleries and museums of Leicester, Manchester and York became subscribing members in direct response to the C.A.S.'s first programme of touring provincial exhibitions. It was only following the first distribution of works by the C.A.S. to 30 local authority art galleries and museums, from 1923-24, that the C.A.S. established a link between subscriptions and gifts of works.

The loan of works by the C.A.S. was pursued as another strategy, in an effort to increase the number of provincial art galleries and museums as subscribing members. Local authority restrictions on expenditure, particularly in response to the 1930s economic slump, resulted in the suspension of several subscriptions; see Appendix A.1. Financial stringencies, however, also encouraged the belief, particularly among smaller northern art galleries, that the C.A.S. would function as a source of heavily subsidized contemporary British art. Prior to 1939, the C.A.S. had permitted subscriptions to vary in size according to the financial status and size of the art gallery; for example, in 1936, the highest subscriber was Leeds City Art Gallery with a

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<sup>346</sup> See Bound Minutes 1911: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.2.2.1, Tate Gallery Archive, and Letter: Charles Aitken to William Rothenstein, 13th December, 1911: William Rothenstein Papers, Harvard University Library, U.S.A.

<sup>347</sup> R.F. Scharff, *Belfast Public Art Gallery and Museum: The Aims and Scope of a Provincial Museum*, Belfast Art Gallery, 1912, p.10.

subscription of 18 guineas, whereas a comparable institution Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery paid £2.2s and Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, in Leamington Spa, paid £1.1s.

After the C.A.S.'s second distribution of art works, in 1927, greater financial commitment towards the C.A.S. was sought from local authority art galleries and museums, with the argument that a single more valuable work would be presented to these institutions. This policy took the form of a higher subscription rate of 10 guineas; subsequently reduced during the economic Depression of the 1930s. In 1928, the C.A.S. proposed that provincial art galleries and museums should establish friends groups which in turn could subscribe, or make an annual donation to the C.A.S., in order to offset limited local authority expenditure.<sup>348</sup> A friends group was set up at York City Art Gallery, as a result, which received the Algernon Newton painting 'In Kensington' from the C.A.S. Independent subscriptions were also taken out by the friends groups at Kings Lynn Museum and Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery and Salford Museum and Art Gallery, while the friends groups subscribed in conjunction with the local authority art gallery at Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield; see Appendix A.1. The association of friends groups with the C.A.S. was a significant measure in terms of countering local authority powers to veto purchases and gifts; however, under this arrangement, the ownership of the art works presented via friends groups remained with the C.A.S.. After 1945 these joint subscriptions were more widely taken-up by the friends groups of Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Wolsey Art Gallery (now Ipswich Museum), King's Lynn Museum, Laing Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art and Wakefield Art Gallery; see Appendix A.1. Prior to 1945, the C.A.S. also actively encouraged donations from minor art galleries and museums with nascent art collections of Twentieth-Century

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<sup>348</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1929*, C.A.S., London, 1929, p.4.

British Art. In 1938, for example, donations were received from Dudley Art Gallery, Kidderminster Art Gallery, Mansfield Art Gallery and Northampton Art Gallery.

During and immediately after the Second World War, several mainly minor art galleries and museums suspended their subscriptions to the C.A.S; see Appendix A.1. Until 1945, levels of subscriptions continued to vary from, for example, two guineas paid by Cheltenham Art Gallery to fifteen guineas paid by Manchester City Art Gallery and Salford Museum and Art Gallery. This flexible financial arrangement, which amounted to a form of "mean's testing", was specifically introduced to secure the membership of every provincial art gallery and museum in the U.K.; no consideration was then made by the C.A.S. as to the long-term implications of such a policy which would ultimately over-burden its own finite financial and staffing resources. By 1945, only 48 provincial local authority art galleries and museums were recorded as subscribing members of the C.A.S.<sup>349</sup> Postwar, therefore, the C.A.S. decided to promote the idea that higher subscriptions would secure more and superior works, although no structure or system was introduced to ensure its methodical and equitable application.

The Walker Art Gallery, for example, had switched its purchasing policy to pre-1900 art and European art in general, post-1945, and as a result, the acquisition of Twentieth-Century British Art, in an international and regional context, ceased to be a primary aim of the Gallery.<sup>350</sup> The Gallery had, therefore, for instance, no sculpture by Henry Moore and even its local twentieth-century artists, such as Bernard Meninsky, were neglected. By the 1950s, the Walker Art Gallery, then one of the largest and pre-eminent local authority institutions in the U.K. and with an international status,

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<sup>349</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1944-45*, C.A.S., London, 1945.

<sup>350</sup> Author's own first-hand knowledge of the Walker Art Gallery's history, as a former Assistant Keeper.

addressed a series of complaints to the C.A.S. as to the low quality of works offered to the Gallery. In 1953, the Walker Art Gallery cited the spasmodic gifts it had hitherto acquired from the C.A.S. and noted that the last time it had received a major work was in 1947, when the C.A.S. presented the Paul Nash painting 'Landscape of the Moon's Last Phase'. The C.A.S.'s distribution of the Edward Marsh Bequest caused Hugh Scrutton (1917-91), Director of the Walker Art Gallery, from 1952-70, to raise the subject again, in the following year, arguing that 'we are after all one of the leading art galleries in the country' and that 'our modern collections badly need strengthening'.<sup>351</sup> In 1956, the Walker Art Gallery complained about the lack of 'substantial help' from the C.A.S. towards the Gallery's attempts to represent contemporary British art in its collection.<sup>352</sup> Of the 15 works requested by the Walker Art Gallery in that year, 14 of the artists were unrepresented in the Gallery's collection; this selection included major names such as John Bratby, J. D. Fergusson, Josef Herman, Henry Moore and William Scott. In the event, the C.A.S. only allocated two paintings to the Walker Art Gallery which were 'Motif in Indian Red and Mustard' by Victor Pasmore, the only artist already represented in the Gallery's collection, and 'The Bathers' by Bernard Meninsky, a local artist. The Walker Art Gallery regarded its enhanced subscription to the C.A.S. as the main mechanism by which to secure appropriate examples of Twentieth-Century British Art. The C.A.S., however, was resistant to the idea that it should be perceived as an alternative source of art or funding, particularly in relation to large and more prosperous local authority art galleries and museums. By 1969, the Walker Art Gallery had received 23 works from the C.A.S. compared with the small art gallery, Cheltenham Art Gallery, which had received some 48 works!

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<sup>351</sup> Letter: Hugh Scrutton to C.A.S., 15th July, 1954: Contemporary Art Society Archives, Contemporary Art Society Allocations U.K. (A-K) 9215.4.7.2., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>352</sup> Letter (extract): Hugh Scrutton to C.A.S., 1956: Contemporary Art Society Archives, Contemporary Art Society Allocations 9215.4.7.6., Tate Gallery Archive.

In response to its own financial crisis of 1973, the C.A.S. introduced a scale of subscription rates, whereby a minimum payment of £30 secured a drawing on paper, and a minimum of £60 secured an oil painting. Until then, as has been noted above, the number and quality of art works had not been directly related to the financial contribution made by an art gallery or museum. From the 1970s, escalating art market prices encouraged local authority art galleries and museums either to become new members, or sustain the level of their subscriptions. Another notable development was the joining of several Scottish local authority art galleries: Kirkcaldy Art Gallery, in 1974, followed by Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Paisley Museum and Art Gallery and Perth Museum and Art Gallery in 1979. The C.A.S, for its part, increasingly found that it could not continue to purchase major art works on a significant scale. By 1983, the C.A.S. was spending more than £55,000 on purchases and, in an attempt to offset this financial commitment, the subscription rates for art galleries and museums were again increased.

In 1989, the C.A.S. conducted a questionnaire survey of all its 96 subscribing institutions which revealed a curatorial demand for more major and, therefore, more costly works. So as to feasibly respond to this curatorial climate of opinion, the Fine Art C.A.S. buyers were given £60,000 to spend on purchases, in 1991, and from 1992 the C.A.S. reduced the number of provincial subscribing art galleries and museums to 50, while simultaneously increasing subscriptions from £200 to £500. This marked a decisive change to the C.A.S.'s role, as it shifted from a broadly-based initiator and general distributor of modern British art to a more focused arena of public collecting. Removed from the subscription scheme were collections which requested Scottish as opposed to British art; central government-funded institutions, The British Council, British Museum and the V. & A. Museum; and all university collections. Under this new arrangement the focus, therefore, became local authority collections and the two national collections of Twentieth-Century British Art in Scotland and Wales: the National Museum of Wales and Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. The C.A.S.

also asked art galleries and museums to resign due to their close geographical proximity to large and major art collections, or due to their lack of a clear commitment to contemporary art collecting. These resignations included Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery and Astley Cheetham Art Gallery, in Stalybridge, all of which had shown a notable past commitment to contemporary art collecting. The C.A.S. combined this revised distribution scheme with the idea that allocations from the C.A.S. should be made freely available for loan on an inter-regional basis to public art galleries and museums which could not afford to be C.A.S. members. The scheme, therefore, identified the key art gallery or museum collection of modern British art for each region. Following a further policy review, in 1994, the number of subscribing art galleries and museums was reduced to 40; for a complete list of art galleries see Appendix A.3. Henceforth, art gallery and museum membership became the subject of an annual C.A.S. review which evaluated each institution's commitment to contemporary British art under the following categories: exhibitions, commissions and acquisitions, new curatorial staff, changes to collecting policies, local audiences and geographical proximity to other collections. By introducing these fundamental changes, the C.A.S. had, in effect, established its own designation process for local authority art collections of Twentieth-Century British Art.

## **8.7. C.A.S. Gifts to Local Authority Art Galleries and Museums** <sup>353</sup>

### **8.7.1. Status of Gifts**

Although the principle of the "permanent loan", as has been noted, was a legal oxymoron, it was nevertheless incorporated into the C.A.S.'s distribution of works. Under this arrangement, private gifts made through or by the C.A.S. remained its property and gave no moral rights of ownership, or powers of sale to local authority art galleries and museums. Following the Batley-Bacon episode, in 1979, the C.A.S.

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<sup>353</sup> See Vol. III, Appendix A.1.



requested confirmation in writing as to this arrangement, from all past and current recipient art galleries and museums; in addition, institutions were reminded that any attempt to sell C.A.S. gifts or bequests would cause these works to be reclaimed by the C.A.S.<sup>354</sup>

### 8.7.2. Gifts and Gap-filling

The C.A.S. defined its role in relation to the 'inexcusable gap in our public museums and galleries' which was the paucity of progressive contemporary British art in public collections.<sup>355</sup> As has been noted earlier, due to its pre-eminent status, the Tate Gallery, as the national collection of British art, was initially the main focus of gifts and bequests from the C.A.S. The first C.A.S. gift to the Tate Gallery was the pastel drawing 'Madame Rodin' 1914 by Henry Tonks which was presented in 1915.<sup>356</sup> Tonks was a formidable and influential teacher at the Slade School of Art, the Royal Academy's then main rival teaching institute, and many of the C.A.S.'s pre-1939 acquisitions favoured artists trained there. Due to C.A.S. gifts, the Tate Gallery was subsequently able to represent many key twentieth-century British artists such as Duncan Grant, Jacob Epstein, Augustus and Gwen John, C.R.W. Nevinson, William Nicholson and Walter Sickert in 1917; Paul Nash in 1924; Stanley Spencer in 1925; Christopher Wood in 1930; and Henry Moore in 1939. In 1919, the C.A.S. established a second independent fund to purchase works on paper for the exclusive benefit of another national institution, the British Museum, which was then prohibited from using its central government purchase grant for the acquisition of contemporary British art. A consequence of these relationships was that what were then perceived to

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<sup>354</sup> 'C.A.S. Executive Meeting, 10th September, 1979', typescript: Contemporary Art Society Records.

<sup>355</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1910-12*, typescript, C.A.S., London, 1913, p.2.

<sup>356</sup> See 'Appendix A' in *Contemporary Art Society Report (with Illustrations) For the Years 1914-1919*, C.A.S., London, 1920. The distribution date is incorrectly stated as 1917 in the *Concise Catalogue of the Tate Gallery Collection*, Tate Gallery Publications, London, 1991, p.386.

be secondary works, or works by lesser and young artists, tended to be offered by the C.A.S. to provincial art galleries and museums, during the period 1915-39.

In the postwar era, provincial art galleries and museums were encouraged to emulate the practice of gap-filling where possible and as part of this process to draw on outside art advisers. In 1953, for example, Southampton City Art Gallery used the gap-filling concept as the basis for its request of works from the major Edward Marsh Bequest. In making its request to the C.A.S., the Gallery attached a note which stated that:

the gallery is known for its interest in contemporary art, and has steadily made purchases in this direction. Important gaps remain, as the gallery has only been effectively purchasing since the end of the war (it was opened in 1939). The Marsh Bequest pictures would exactly fill many of these gaps.<sup>357</sup>

### **8.7.3. C.A.S. Distribution of Works 1915-45** <sup>358</sup>

In 1915, the C.A.S. made its first gift to a provincial local authority institution which was the Kingston-upon-Thames Museum. This work was a painting by Ian de Clerk which was presented by the C.A.S. following a donation of £10 made by the Museum; as has been previously noted, initially gifts made by the C.A.S. were not dependent on an art gallery or museum subscribing to the Society, but were intended to secure subscriptions from these institutions. In July 1923, the C.A.S. appointed a small sub-committee to select works for loan or gift to provincial art galleries; the members of this committee were Charles Aitken, Edward Marsh and Ernest Marsh. The C.A.S.'s first main distribution of works to 29 local authority art galleries and museums in England, Wales and Scotland took place from 1923-24;<sup>359</sup> of these art galleries and

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<sup>357</sup> 'Allocations U.K. (A-K)', file: C.A.S. Archives 9215.4.7.2., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>358</sup> The distribution of art works, gifts and bequests by the C.A.S. has always taken place on a periodic basis, ranging from one to four years, with the exception of the periods 1927-38, 1945-49, and 1979-83; see Appendix A.4.

<sup>359</sup> For a complete list see Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Report (with Illustrations) for the years 1919 to June 1924*, C.A.S., London, 1924.

museums, eight received more than a single work. This distribution was publicly attacked by the Art Lover's League, an organization established by Frank L. Emmanuel (1865-1948). Emmanuel had trained as an artist in Paris and at the Slade School of Art, and frequently exhibited at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions; he was also an art instructor, writer and lecturer. The League was a reactionary rival group to the activities of the C.A.S. whose membership included a broad public and Royal Academicians. They were deeply hostile to Roger Fry's championing of "foreign art" and its influences on British art from Augustus John onwards. One of the League's main aims was to oppose public acquisitions, which did not accord with its own interpretation of public taste, by combining 'artists and public in the support of sane, healthy and truly progressive art, and to prevent the encouragement of degenerate and incompetent work!'<sup>360</sup> In 1924, Ebenezer Wake Cook (1843-1926), a member of the League, published 'Retrogression in Art and the Suicide of the Royal Academy' which was a blistering attack on the changes taking place in both public collecting and exhibitions devoted to contemporary British art which the C.A.S. was actively promoting. Cook was an Anglo-Austrian watercolourist, who had settled in London, in 1873, regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy and was fiercely opposed to French influences on British art, from Manet onwards; ironically, he gave one of the Bloomsbury artists, Vanessa Bell, her early art tuition. Referring to these recent trends, Cook declared that:

For a long time past there has been a growing rage against the way the public has been fooled, and the degradation brought on our Public Galleries by mistaken Directors who are turning them, especially the Tate Gallery, into asylums for freak art!<sup>361</sup>

The C.A.S.'s second distribution to 25 local authority art galleries and museums in England, Scotland and Wales took place in 1927, and aimed to both benefit existing

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<sup>360</sup> *The Connoisseur*, 'Current Art Notes', *The Connoisseur*, Vol. lxxix, May 1924, p. 49.

<sup>361</sup> E. Wake Cook, *Retrogression in Art and the Suicide of the Royal Academy*, Hutchinson & Company, London, 1924, p. vi.

subscribing institutions and extend provincial art gallery and museum membership of the C.A.S.<sup>362</sup> As a result, in 1928, several large key local authority art galleries became members: these were Aberdeen Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Sheffield City Art Galleries, and in addition Derby Art Gallery. The distribution had been given added impetus by the pronouncements of the President of the Museums Association, J. A. Charlton Deas, in 1927. At the annual Museums Association Conference, Charlton Deas declared that 'many provincial art galleries contain pictures which have long since had their day'.<sup>363</sup> He also noted that far from lack of purchase funds, it was hasty expenditure without informed judgement which was restricting the representation of contemporary British art in provincial art galleries and museums, observing that:

How often does one come across such subjects as that of a stormy sea beating around a geological inexactitude which appears to have vaulted or slipped from peaceful churchyard surroundings, to a boisterous life in the ocean waves!

By some equally strange circumstance there clings to it a beautiful lady in perfectly dry and diaphanous night attire over which flows long and equally water-free hair of the permanently-waved type.<sup>364</sup>

The C.A.S.'s presentation of 32 paintings and drawings to 24 municipal art galleries and museums, and a concurrent increase in loan exhibitions, during the period 1926-

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<sup>362</sup> These recipient institutions were Aberdeen Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Grundy Art Gallery, Bootle Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Towneley Hall Art Gallery, in Burnley, National Museum of Wales (now the National Museum and Gallery Cardiff), Derby Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Harrogate Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Cord Art Gallery, in Merthyr Tydfil, Laing Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Galleries, Hanley Art Gallery, in Stoke-on-Trent, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Cornwall County Museum and Art Gallery, in Truro, and York City Art Gallery. For a complete list of local authority art gallery and museum memberships and first gifts from the C.A.S., see Vol. III, Appendix 1.

<sup>363</sup> J. A. Charlton Deas quoted in 'Critic of Provincial Art Galleries', *Telegraph and Argus* [Bradford], 4th July, 1927.

<sup>364</sup> *ibid.*

31, represented a substantial alternative representation of contemporary British art.<sup>365</sup> Despite the C.A.S.'s large-scale allocations, in 1931 it was recorded that over 60 oil paintings were still retained by the C.A.S. for future presentation to public art galleries and museums.<sup>366</sup> These included works by living artists such as Frank Dobson, Mark Gertler, Duncan Grant, Ivon Hitchens, David Jones, Cedric Morris, Paul Nash, Winifred Nicholson, William Roberts and Jack Yeats, and deceased artists such as Harold Gilman, F. Leverton Harris, Fred Mayor, Louise Pickard and Christopher Wood. The retention of art works, as has been noted earlier, was part of the C.A.S.'s evaluative approach to collecting, whereby works were retained for presentation or sale on the art market after several years. This approach also ensured the survival of the C.A.S., as its loan collection could be used as a financial asset.

In 1932, the C.A.S. launched its formal distribution scheme. It was a deliberately calculated gesture which aimed to simultaneously restart contemporary patronage and benefit public art galleries and museums nation-wide. From 1933, only subscribing art galleries and museums, or those prepared to make donations could receive works as gifts from the C.A.S. A public and specifically local financial commitment was, therefore, required on the part of municipal collecting. Recognition of the C.A.S.'s

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<sup>365</sup> During this period, the C.A.S. presented works to Aberdeen Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Grundy Art Gallery, Bootle Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Towneley Hall Art Gallery, Derby Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Harrogate Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Cord Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Hanley Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Galleries, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Cornwall County Museum and Art Gallery and York City Art Gallery. The C.A.S. also lent works to Edinburgh City Council, Hanley Art Gallery, Bury Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Victoria Art Gallery, in Bath, Bootle Art Gallery, Belfast Art Gallery (now Ulster Museum), Williamson Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Burton-on-Trent Art Gallery, Bury Art Gallery, Derby Art Gallery, Harrogate Art Gallery, Hove Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, Usher Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and Rochdale Art Gallery.

<sup>366</sup> See the list of works in *Exhibition of the Contemporary Art Society's Paintings and Drawings*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1931.

cultural role came from influential and pioneering local authority art curators. The Deputy Director of the Walker Art Gallery, Charles Carter, promoted the idea in the *Museums Journal* that all provincial art galleries should subscribe to the C.A.S., as both the only reliable source of knowledge on contemporary British art and a valuable link with private collections, and possible loans and gifts.<sup>367</sup> In pursuance of an enhanced institutional membership, the C.A.S. distributed a further 29 paintings and works on paper to 25 local authority art galleries and museums, from 1934-35.<sup>368</sup> This fusion of public and private concerns and responsibilities was highlighted by Francis Watson in his now little known book *Art Lies Bleeding*, published in 1939. Watson was the first writer to explore, in detail, the plight of contemporary twentieth-century British artists and the state of British patronage which required an informed, but nonetheless society of amateurs (the C.A.S.) to be:

engaged upon the curiously English mission of promoting efficiency in state and municipal service by offering to national and provincial galleries the work of contemporary artists which those institutions are too thrifty or too timid to buy, but not always too proud to accept.<sup>369</sup>

Leading curators, such as John Rothenstein, with his first-hand experience of Leeds City Art Gallery and Sheffield City Art Galleries (Mappin Art Gallery and the Graves Art Gallery), sustained this belief that the collecting of more progressive examples of contemporary British art, by local authority institutions, was wholly dependent upon

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<sup>367</sup> Charles Carter, 'The Policy of the Provincial Art Gallery', *Museums Journal*, Vol. xxxiii, May 1933, pp.44-48.

<sup>368</sup> These were Aberdeen Art Gallery, Belfast Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum), Bootle Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Derby Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Harrogate Art Gallery, Hove Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Usher Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and the Rutherford Loan Collection, at Manchester, Cord Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Oldham Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Galleries, Hanley Art Gallery, Wakefield Art Gallery and York City Art Gallery.

<sup>369</sup> Francis Watson, *Art Lies Bleeding*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1939, p. 78.

the activities of the C.A.S. In his autobiography, Rothenstein, with reference to pre-1939 local authority collections observed that:

Visitors to most municipal galleries could hardly fail to note that the only works by serious modern artists to be seen on their depressing walls [of local authority art galleries] were those presented by the Society [C.A.S.]. The Buyers (in effect the committee in rotation), like all buyers, were susceptible to error, but how brilliantly their purchases stood out in the drab company which in those unregenerate days they were compelled to keep!<sup>370</sup>

While the C.A.S. undoubtedly introduced new and often progressive British artists into collections, both large and small, Rothenstein's statement is not entirely accurate. Prior to 1939, provincial art galleries and museums were already independently actively engaged in the display and purchase of progressive British art.<sup>371</sup> Prosperous northern cities were also generating considerable local collectors. These included Thomas Vint, Asa Lingard and Cyril Reddihough at Bradford, Michael Sadler at Leeds and Charles Rutherston (part of the Bradford-based Rothenstein dynasty) at Manchester.

During the Second World War, the sustainment of the C.A.S.'s distribution activity was an act of preservation, and one that could be easily associated with more general and current ideas of Britain and the protection of its heritage. Despite the closure or requisition for war purposes of many local authority art galleries and museums, the C.A.S. continued to distribute gifts. A selection of works, however, were removed for safe keeping to the caves of North Wales alongside works from national collections, and no allocations of works by the C.A.S. were made in 1939 and 1940; the bombing of London may have precipitated the C.A.S.'s hurried distribution of 58 works to 26

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<sup>370</sup> John Rothenstein, *Time's Thievish Progress*, [Autobiography] Vol.iii, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1966, p.156.

<sup>371</sup> See Angela Summerfield, 'Regional Collections of 20th-Century British Art' in *Art Treasures of England: The Regional Collections*, (ed.) Giles Waterfield, Royal Academy of Arts and Merrell Holberton, London, 1998, pp.74-77.

local authority art galleries and museums in 1940.<sup>372</sup> During the years 1942-43 and in 1945, the C.A.S. presented paintings and drawings to 32 local authority art galleries and museums throughout the U.K.<sup>373</sup> These works included a range of home-front wartime images: for example, shelter drawings by Henry Moore, presented to Bankfield Museum and Wakefield Art Gallery; C.R.W. Nevinson's painting 'War Profiteers' presented to Russell Coates Art Gallery, in Bournemouth; L.S. Lowry's painting 'Mission Room' presented to Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, in Leamington Spa; John Piper's watercolour 'Dead Resort' presented to Leeds City Art Gallery and the 'The Ruined House of Commons' presented to the Walker Art Gallery; and A.R. Middleton Todd's painting 'Rita the Refugee' presented to Newport Museum and Art Gallery. Established artists, such as Vanessa Bell, Jacob Epstein, Duncan Grant, Glyn Philpot and Philip Wilson Steer were also included in the wartime distribution, but by far the greatest number were young and women artists,

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<sup>372</sup> These recipient institutions were geographical widely spread. They were Victoria Art Gallery, Williamson Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Russell Coates Museum, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Bankfield Museum, in Halifax, Harrogate Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, in Leamington Spa, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and Platt Hall, Manchester, Laing Art Gallery, Newport Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Hanley Art Gallery, Wakefield Art Gallery and Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

<sup>373</sup> The recipients were Aberdeen Art Gallery, Victoria Art Gallery, Belfast Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum), Williamson Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Bottle Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Edward Pease Museum and Art Gallery, in Darlington, Derby Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Bankfield Museum, Harrogate Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Usher Art Gallery, Walker Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Cord Art Gallery, Newark-on-Trent Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Newport Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Hanley Art Gallery, Wakefield Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery and York City Art Gallery.



some of whom faded from view, such as Eleanor Best, Ursula McCannell and Mary Rodd.

#### **8.7.4. C.A.S. Distribution of Works 1946-92**

In 1946, as has been noted, the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain brought into being a new collection of contemporary British art, with a national professional status and an annual central government purchase grant; during the Second World, the C.A.S. had presented William Nicholson's painting 'Sunfish' to the Art Department of C.E.M.A., the forerunner of the Arts Council. In response to the creation of an Arts Council collection of modern British art, the C.A.S. decided that it should now give priority to allocation requests from provincial as opposed to national art galleries and museums.<sup>374</sup> The introduction of a central government annual purchase grant for the Tate Gallery, in 1946, also temporarily reduced the demands placed on the C.A.S. for priority allocations; other nationals, such as the National Museum of Wales and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, however, became postwar C.A.S. subscribers. In 1946, the C.A.S. made its first large-scale distribution of 105 paintings and drawings to 38 local authority art galleries and museums.<sup>375</sup> This

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<sup>374</sup> Letter: Kenneth Clark to Denis Matthews, 24th May, 1946: Clark Archive, Contemporary Art Society 1946-52, 5/1 C-D, National Gallery Archives.

<sup>375</sup> These were Aberdeen Art Gallery, Victoria Art Gallery, Belfast Art Gallery (now the Ulster Museum), Williamson Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Bootle Art Gallery, Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Brighton Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Cheltenham Art Gallery, Edward Pease Museum and Art Gallery, in Darlington, Derby Art Gallery, Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Harrogate Art Gallery, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery, Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Usher Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and the Rutherford Loan Collection, Cord Art Gallery, Middlesbrough Art Gallery, Newark-on-Trent Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery, Newport Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Oldham Art Gallery, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Rochdale Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Galleries, Astley Cheetham Art Gallery, in Stalybridge, Hanley Art Gallery, Wakefield Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Worksop Art Gallery and Museum and York City Art Gallery.

was followed by a further major distribution of works on paper, in 1948, from the C.A.S. Prints and Drawings Fund.<sup>376</sup>

In 1949, the C.A.S. re-evaluated its allocation system and criteria were introduced by which art works would be presented to specific art galleries and museums. As part of this process, the C.A.S. attempted to overhaul its records of gifts to all art galleries and museums in the U.K., in order that future gifts would be made with reference to previous allocations and would have local interest, or offer subject matter relevant to the existing collection. Until the 1950s, the C.A.S. continued to retain works for long periods which provided a retrospective modern as oppose to contemporary selection of works; this supported the collecting process of gap-filling by provincial art galleries and museums. In 1956, for example, J.D. Fergusson's painting 'Joan', a Scottish work which the C.A.S. had acquired in 1928, was presented to Dundee Art Gallery. After this date, however, the C.A.S. distributed all works generally within four years of acquisition, a change brought about by practical (a lack of storage and administrative pressure) rather than theoretical reasons. This had significant ramifications, as the C.A.S. ceased to act as a filtering process for long-term cultural value and assumed a more prescient role for contemporary British art and its immediate representation in public collections. This postwar change coincided with two developments in the curatorial field. These were the increasing employment of specialist Fine Art curators by local authorities and the use of informed key art advisers receptive towards more progressive contemporary art at such institutions as Belfast Art Gallery, Carlisle Art Gallery (now Tullie House), Alfred East Gallery, Middlesbrough Art Gallery and Southampton City Art Gallery. These art advisers were either artists or senior curators, and were used both for short and extensive periods of collecting. At Southampton City Art Gallery, for example, a series of senior National Gallery

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<sup>376</sup> See pp. 231-235.

curators, and subsequently Tate Gallery curators, advised on purchases from the Gallery's inception.

From the late 1950s onwards, many local authority art galleries and museums started to refocus on collecting contemporary British art. This development aimed both to fuse contemporary British art with the past to form a public presentation of art history, and to introduce dramatic and dynamic new elements, or focal points to a collection. The Castle Museum, in Norwich, for example, decided to focus its future twentieth-century collection development and exhibition programme on contemporary British landscape painting which would mirror its existing pre-1900 collection of British landscape watercolours. The request records of the C.A.S., from the 1950s, reveal that a wide range of applications were received for the Francis Bacon paintings which the C.A.S. had acquired. The appeal of his work to provincial public collections was that they represented strong profile-raising, if controversial, opportunities for collection enhancement. The 'Pope: Study After Velasquez', for example, was unsuccessfully requested by Victoria Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Cheltenham Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery and Wakefield Art Gallery.<sup>377</sup> Smaller institutions, such as Huddersfield Art Gallery and Hereford Art Gallery did, however, continue to express difficulty in acquiring more progressive examples of art in the face of local opposition.<sup>378</sup> The C.A.S. noted that:

Huddersfield Permanent Collection has very few works representing contemporary painting... None of these...represent the movements that have been extant in England since the war. The committee consisting as it does of hard-headed councillors, tender of their reputation as guardians of public money, are reluctant to purchase any painting which they feel they cannot justify on the grounds of personal admiration.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> 'Allocations and Requests 1956': Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.4.7.6., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>378</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *ibid.*

Postwar, the C.A.S. continued its policy of supporting nascent collections through gifts of works. In 1952, for example, it began to present works to Coventry Council in advance of the establishment of the Herbert Art Gallery; the construction of the Gallery had been prevented by the outbreak of war and was only completed and opened to the public in 1962. In 1968, however, the C.A.S. decided to review its allocation of works, particularly to smaller art galleries and museums, in an attempt to make the distribution process more systematic. The submission of a preference list of works was replaced by the need to specify the local or collection relevance of a work, and art galleries and museums whose subscription was less than 15 guineas were only to be allocated works on paper.<sup>380</sup>

By the mid-1970s, many local authority art galleries and museums were using the C.A.S. allocation to fill gaps in their collections. Wakefield Art Gallery, for example, which had actively collected Twentieth-Century British Art from the 1930s to the early 1960s, was seeking to consolidate its holdings of artists with regional Yorkshire associations: these included Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Alan Davie, a Gregory Fellow at Leeds University, from 1957-59. Other institutions were also seeking to strengthen the representation of locally-linked artists who had established national and international reputations. In 1975, for example, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, in Swansea, successfully requested from the C.A.S. the painting 'Hark, I Trumpet the Place' by Ceri Richards, a leading Welsh artist with a national reputation; Richards had been born in South Wales and trained at Swansea School of Art.

### **8.8. C.A.S. Purchase Grants**

A previously unexplored aspect of the C.A.S.'s cultural role was its provision of several types of purchase grants. As early as 1912, the C.A.S. made its first one-off

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<sup>380</sup> Nancy Balfour, 'The Contemporary Art Society: What it is and What it does', *Museums Journal*, Vol. lxxviii, December 1978, pp.134-136.

grant to Belfast Art Gallery; this was in response to a wider collection development programme at the institution. The provision of purchase grants was not formerly part of the C.A.S.'s policy. In 1939, for example, the C.A.S. rejected Wakefield Art Gallery's request for a grant towards the purchase of the sculpture 'Reclining Figure' by Henry Moore; this was a key work by the artist whose 'Recumbent Figure' had just been presented by the C.A.S. to the Tate Gallery as its first sculpture by Moore. The sculpture was eventually purchased by Wakefield Art Gallery, in 1942, using combined funds from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the private collector, Eric C. Gregory, a member of the C.A.S.'s Executive Committee, and the Gallery's friends group, the Wakefield Permanent Art Fund.

In 1951, as has been previously noted, the 'Festival of Britain' inspired many exhibitions throughout the U.K. which featured British art and encouraged provincial art galleries and museums to refocus on the public presentation of Twentieth-Century British Art. This decade was also marked by very necessary postwar local authority restrictions on expenditure. Provincial local authority art galleries and museums, therefore, turned to alternative sources of possible purchase funding, such as the C.A.S. In response to this financial situation, the C.A.S. formally introduced one-off purchase grants, in the 1950s, which were based upon two existing central government-funded schemes. These were the one-off special grants for major purchases, usually Old Master and other heritage items, made to national and local authority art galleries, and the annual purchase grants allocated to national museums and galleries which were known as grant-in-aid. By utilizing the same terminology, 'special grants' and 'grant-in-aid', the C.A.S. assumed a quasi-public funding function and status.<sup>381</sup> By adopting these designations, the C.A.S. also appropriated their associative heritage value for modern British art. The provision of grants, for works

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<sup>381</sup> For the C.A.S. purchase grants referred to as 'grant-in-aid' and 'special grants' see Contemporary Art Society Archives, C.A.S. Ledger, 9215.3.2.2, Tate Gallery Archive.

selected by curator's themselves, laid valuable foundations for a developing dialogue between the C.A.S. and the future collection needs of individual institutions.

Following the principle of support for major heritage art established by the central government special grant schemes, the C.A.S.'s own special grants were directed towards the purchase of major Twentieth-Century British artists; these grants ranged from 20% to 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>% of the purchase price. In 1950, the C.A.S. made its first special grants which were towards the purchase of Ben Nicholson's paintings 'Still Life with Guitar' 1933, acquired by Leeds City Art Gallery, and 'Still Life' 1950, acquired by Manchester City Art Gallery; Nicholson had by then established an international reputation as Britain's leading abstract artist.<sup>382</sup> These special grants gave cultural authority to purchases opposed by local authority councils. This had happened at Manchester City Art Gallery where the Nicholson had been shown in the exhibition 'Sixty Paintings for '51'.<sup>383</sup> The C.A.S. purchase grant was used in conjunction with a local subscription from private individuals 'in view of the clash of public opinion in the Manchester district about this purchase'.<sup>384</sup>

The postwar C.A.S. was also viewed by local authority curators as a source of cultural authority which would sustain and reinforce a collecting policy. Richard Seddon, as Director of Sheffield City Art Galleries, had introduced a postwar collecting policy the main focus of which was Twentieth-Century British Art; the intention was to display these works at both the Mappin Art Gallery and Graves Art Gallery, despite substantial war damage to the buildings.<sup>385</sup> In support of this policy, the C.A.S. gave a grant towards the purchase of Matthew Smith's painting 'Tulips' by Graves Art

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<sup>382</sup> Leeds City Art Gallery and Manchester City Art Gallery accessioned these works in 1951.

<sup>383</sup> See pp.164-170.

<sup>384</sup> Contemporary Art Society Minutes, 28th November, 1951: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.2.2.4., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>385</sup> Richard Seddon, 'Nation's Treasures: The Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield', *The Studio Magazine*, Vol. cxliii, January 1952, pp.489-490.

Gallery, in 1953. According to surviving C.A.S. records, Seddon briefly acted as the provincial curatorial adviser to the C.A.S. and in this role noted that:

I hope we convinced your friends and yourself how valuable we find the weight of your support [i.e. the C.A.S.'s] not only in financial aspects, but principally as confirmation of our own recommendations to our committees.<sup>386</sup>

From 1957-58, the C.A.S. made small grants towards retrospective gap-filling purchases by local authority art galleries and museums. These were made to Cheltenham Art Gallery for Stanley Spencer's painting 'Village Life, Gloucestershire'; Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery for Wyndham Lewis' painting 'Mexican Shawl: A Portrait of Mrs. Lewis Reclining on a Couch' 1938; and to Wakefield Art Gallery's friends group, the Wakefield Permanent Art Fund, which had renewed its lapsed C.A.S. membership, for the purchase of Alan Davie's painting 'Interior: Exterior' 1950. After this period, the C.A.S. sought to discourage future purchase grant applications, primarily because the Society wanted to be seen as a facilitator and enabler, rather than as a source of funding, and it wished to retain its decision-making role over the selection of works. The C.A.S. did, however, continue to make purchase grants where there was the strong argument that its involvement would secure local support. In 1958, for example, Richard Seddon requested a 25% grant towards the purchase of the painting 'Still Life' by Jack Smith, a local Yorkshire artist with a growing national reputation:

because, as I explained personally to a meeting of your [C.A.S.] Council at the Tate Gallery a year or two ago, a grant in aid from your Society would be a powerful form of moral persuasion upon one's Committees or Trustees in acquiring a painting which otherwise they may not personally understand.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Letter: Richard Seddon to Raymond Mortimer, Chairman of the C.A.S., 7th March 1953: Contemporary Art Society Archives 9215.4.8., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>387</sup> Letter: City of Sheffield Art Galleries to Pauline Vogelpoel, 2nd October, 1958: Contemporary Art Society Archives, 'Purchases: Special Grants 1957-67', 9215.4.3.1., Tate Gallery Archive.

Occasionally, the C.A.S. made 100% purchase grants to secure previously blocked contentious contemporary art purchases. This happened in 1962 when the C.A.S. presented Keith Vaughan's painting 'The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian' to Cartwright Hall Art Gallery; the Gallery had previously tried to purchase this painting for £100 from the 'Bradford Spring Exhibition', an annual open exhibition held at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery. By 1965, however, these C.A.S. grants had been reduced to 20% of the total purchase price. The C.A.S.'s provision of £75 towards Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery's purchase of 'an advanced type of picture', Robert Medley's painting 'Figures in Landscape', was an exception.<sup>388</sup> The C.A.S. was not, however, prepared to provide grants for long-term collection schemes and rejected requests from Leeds City Art Gallery and the Castle Museum, in Norwich, to fund the development of education-focused print collection loan schemes in 1965.<sup>389</sup>

The provision of special grants was also a response to the significant international status of British twentieth-century sculpture, and in particular its contemporary aspect. Following the eventual presentation of the Francis Bacon painting to a public art gallery, Batley Art Gallery, the C.A.S. decided to further publicize its cultural authority by embroiling itself in another controversial test case. In 1952, the local authority art gallery committee of Manchester City Art Gallery had approved the purchase of the contemporary Henry Moore sculpture 'Draped Torso'. This was a life-size torso inspired by the Elgin Marbles and had been interestingly conceived as a museum object to be displayed in the manner of an archaeological artefact.<sup>390</sup> Despite these museological credentials, and the artist's offer of a 10% reduction in the purchase price to £760, Manchester's local authority blocked the purchase of this

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<sup>388</sup> Letter: Peter Meyer, C.A.S., to C.A.S. Committee Members, 4th February, 1965: Contemporary Art Society Archives, 'Purchases: Special Grants 1957-67', 9215.4.3.1., Tate Gallery Archive.

<sup>389</sup> The Gulbenkian Foundation provided the initial funding for the Leeds scheme in 1960: see Vol. II, p.132.

<sup>390</sup> 'Mr Moore's New bronzes: An Experimental Phase' [exhibition review: The Leicester Galleries] *The Times*, 15th February, 1954.



sculpture.<sup>391</sup> In April 1954, the C.A.S. offered a grant of £100 to any public art gallery in the Great Britain which wanted to purchase this sculpture 'as a symbol of their [C.A.S.] appreciation of this work'.<sup>392</sup> Salford Museum and Art Gallery and Wakefield Art Gallery were then actively seeking to develop collections of contemporary British sculpture;<sup>393</sup> however, the purchase price of this sculpture proved too high, a factor which had in fact contributed to the local opposition at Manchester. In response to the C.A.S.'s offer of a purchase grant, the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery proposed to buy the Henry Moore 'Draped Torso' for presentation to Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery; the local authority art gallery committee, however, refused to support its purchase.

To counter this unsuccessful campaign, the C.A.S. announced its general intention to support the future development of contemporary British sculpture collections at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Galleries and Wakefield Art Gallery. In the event, however, only Wakefield Art Gallery and Sheffield City Art Galleries subsequently received examples of sculpture from the C.A.S: these were Bernard Meadows' bronze sculpture 'Spring "Seasons" Cock' 1956, presented to Wakefield Art Gallery, in 1959, and his 'Running Bird Totem' presented to Sheffield City Art Galleries, in 1961. It was a situation indicative of the scale of financial resources lacked by the C.A.S. to sustain major grants. The demise of the C.A.S.'s grants towards sculpture also coincided with the previously discussed introduction of the oil painting category for the V. & A. Purchase

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<sup>391</sup> 'Two Votes on Work by Henry Moore: Manchester Council Divided', *The Times*, 4th March, 1954.

<sup>392</sup> Letter: Standard Letter from the C.A.S. to subscribing art galleries and museums, 1st June, 1954: British Museum Print Room Letter Book, 'Letters Received: 1949-56', British Museum Records.

<sup>393</sup> The Contemporary Art Society presented its first sculpture, Henry Moore's bronze 'Open Work Head No.2' 1950, to Wakefield Art Gallery in 1952. Salford Museum and Art Gallery did not receive its first piece of sculpture from the C.A.S. until 1968, which was Kenneth Martin's bronze 'Oscillation'.

Grant Fund. A consequence of the broadening of this Fund's remit was that grant applications for contemporary sculpture fared particularly badly. Municipal collections, therefore, in seeking to represent key modern British sculptors, had to rely on occasional loans from public collections such as the V. & A. Museum, Arts Council and The British Council.

### **8.9. The C.A.S. Special Purchase Scheme 1979-84**

A further development in the C.A.S.'s professionalization of its activities came in 1979, when it introduced a pilot one-off grant-making Special Purchase Scheme. The C.A.S. Special Purchase Scheme was created in response to a C.A.S. questionnaire sent to subscribing provincial art galleries and museums, and was structured to work in conjunction with the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.<sup>394</sup> C.A.S. subscribing provincial art galleries and museums were invited to purchase examples of contemporary British art, from designated exhibitions, up to a maximum price of £500 towards which the C.A.S. provided a 25% grant. The designated exhibitions were curated shows which the C.A.S. identified as valid sources of knowledge and high-quality art works. So as to enhance this policy, the C.A.S. attempted to cover provincial touring displays of contemporary British art, which included works for sale, alongside exhibitions in London. This arrangement eventually developed into a formal pilot scheme for long-term purchase funding at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery. It was run in conjunction with the Arts Council's Art Development Strategy which was launched in 1985.<sup>395</sup>

The first designated exhibitions were chosen, in 1979, because they were contemporary art exhibitions curated by C.A.S. Executive Members: these were 'The Craft of Art', a Peter Moore's 'Project V' for young artists, and 'The British Art

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<sup>394</sup> The Author in conversation with Nancy Balfour, 1995.

<sup>395</sup> See p.205.

Show', an Arts Council exhibition shown at the Mappin Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery and the Arnolfini Art Gallery, in Bristol. Art galleries and museums, which wished to make purchases from these exhibitions with C.A.S. grants, were given one calendar year in which to raise the necessary additional funds. Purchases with C.A.S. grants were made from the 'The British Art Show' by the Ferens Art Gallery, which bought John Loker's painting 'Vertical Arrow' and John Bellany's painting 'Bounteous Sea', and by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery which purchased Allan Jones' painting 'Elsa van Brabant'.

Under the C.A.S. Special Purchase Scheme 1979-84, a wide range of competition-exhibitions and curated shows were proposed by provincial curators, as possible sources of contemporary art purchases. They constituted an alternative source of contemporary British art which had been filtered by a selection process distinct from the activities of art dealers. Several of these exhibitions, however, such as the competition-exhibition the 'Tolly Cobbold-Eastern Arts Exhibition', and those shows held in London at the Serpentine Art Gallery and the Hayward Art Gallery, received Arts Council exhibition grants and were, therefore, particularly subject to the demands of a consensus culture. The selection of designated exhibitions covered a broad geographical area throughout England and Scotland: these were the 'John Moores' 1980-81 at the Walker Art Gallery; 'Summer Exhibition' 1981 and 1982 at the Serpentine Art Gallery; the 'Hayward Annual' 1980 and 1982 at the Hayward Art Gallery; the 'Tolly Cobbold-Eastern Arts Exhibition 3', 1980-1 which toured to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Christchurch Mansion, in Ipswich, Castle Museum, in Norwich, and Mappin Art Gallery; 'The Subjective Eye' 1982 which toured to non-public art gallery venues (with the exception of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh) in Nottingham, Bracknell, Bristol, London and Edinburgh; the 'Peter Moores Project VI' 1982 which was held at the Walker Art Gallery and toured to Edinburgh; and the 'Whitechapel Open' 1982 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. The C.A.S. was not involved in the administration or selection process for these

exhibitions and the Society, therefore, decided that proposed purchases should be vetted by a member of the C.A.S. Executive Committee. Art advisers had been used by local authority art galleries and museums prior to 1945, but here their use was to assess the quality of the works, rather than the collection development needs of a particular art gallery or museum. Additional financial and symbolic support towards the C.A.S. Special Purchase Scheme was made by the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund which gave several additional 50% grants towards acquisitions.

Several local authority art galleries and museums received C.A.S. purchase grants towards purchases from the 'Tolly Cobbold-Eastern Arts Exhibition 3'. Under this arrangement Herbert Art Gallery purchased Anthony Green's painting 'The Broken Kylin'; Wakefield Art Gallery bought Terry Setch's painting 'Monet's Carpet Is Nature's Floor, Study I'; Rochdale Art Gallery acquired Frank Auerbach's painting 'H.A.'; and Wolsey Art Gallery purchased Maggi Hambling's painting 'Teddie Wolfe and Blackie'. Institutions in the north-west of England applied for purchase grants towards acquisitions from the 'John Moores' 1980-81.<sup>396</sup> These were the Walker Art Gallery itself, which bought Christopher Le Brun's painting 'Untitled 1979', and the nearby local authority art gallery, Williamson Art Gallery, in Birkenhead, which purchased Keith McGinn's painting 'England'. London venues, however, were not entirely neglected and, in 1981, Sheffield City Art Galleries purchased Alexandra Leadbeater's mixed media work on paper 'Hay Rake' from the Serpentine Art Gallery's 'Summer Exhibition'.

The C.A.S.'s Scheme of purchase grants linked to designated exhibitions was subsequently extended, due to a reluctance on the part of some art galleries and museums to purchase from competition-exhibitions of contemporary art. In order to encourage future purchases, provincial curators were invited to suggest additional

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<sup>396</sup> See Vol. II, Chapter 12, pp.82-83.

exhibitions, but monographic and student exhibitions were excluded from the Scheme. In 1983, Sheffield City Art Galleries purchased Ken Oliver's painting 'Visit' from the 'Peter Moores Project VII', an exhibition for young artists held at the Walker Art Gallery, and Maggi Hambling's painting 'Encounter' from the National Portrait Gallery's annual portrait competition; Oliver was a local artist as he had been born in Yorkshire and trained at Sheffield College of Art. The final recorded purchase made under the C.A.S.'s Special Purchase Scheme was in 1985, when the Castle Museum, in Norwich, purchased Bridget Riley's painting 'Edge of Day' from the Rowan Art Gallery in London. This acquisition highlighted the financial limitations of the Scheme, as the Museum had to draw on several public, independent and private sources in order to fund this purchase. These additional funding sources were the Norwich Contemporary Art Society, Eastern Arts Association, Friends of Norwich Castle Museum, V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, and the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Charitable Trust; the C.A.S. had advised participating local authority art galleries and museums to apply for additional grants from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.<sup>397</sup> Co-operative, additive or pooled forms of funding, however, also suggested a future productive pattern by which to generate sustained and large amounts of purchase funding. This was particularly important given the political climate in Britain at that time which promoted public and private partnership funding in general.

## **8.10. The Pilot Purchase Scheme: Harris Museum and Art Gallery 1985-97**

### **8.10.1. Origins**

The Harris Museum and Art Gallery had been established, in 1895, as an elegant purpose-built museum and art gallery which received a substantial local authority annual purchase fund of £2,000. In 1924, it had received its first gift of a work from the C.A.S. and, in 1927, the Gallery joined the C.A.S. as an institutional member.

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<sup>397</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to Joanna Drew, 16th November, 1984: Contemporary Art Society Records.

Despite this early commitment, the Gallery's purchasing, as late as 1959, continued to focus on the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibitions. A notable exception to this policy had been the far-sighted purchase, in 1952, of Lucian Freud's painting 'Still Life with an Urchin' 1949. During the 1970s, the removal of the Gallery's local authority purchase grant led to few examples of contemporary British art being purchased. As a consequence, the friends group was revived, but this local independent source tended to support the purchase of historical works and conservation. The Harris Museum and Art Gallery, therefore, relied heavily on temporary exhibitions, in order to represent contemporary British art.

In 1984, the Arts Council published the policy document *Glory of the Garden* which resulted in the introduction of the Art Development Strategy (A.D.S.) for public provincial art galleries. The aim of the A.D.S. was to 'encourage regional galleries to promote more actively contemporary art and to support developments improving access and education for a wider section of the public'.<sup>398</sup> This cultural programme included the funding of temporary exhibition organizer posts, in order to promote the visibility of collections and contemporary British art at provincial art gallery venues. The Arts Council also agreed to fund a five-year development programme for the years 1985-90, which covered exhibitions, education, acquisitions and the refurbishment of art gallery buildings. The matched-funding required by this Scheme, however, meant that few institutions could participate. Only ten provincial art galleries and museums applied to be part of the Pilot Purchase Scheme and of these, only the submissions of the Harris Museum and Art Gallery and the Castle Museum, in Nottingham, included a strong commitment to purchase contemporary art.

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<sup>398</sup> 'Arts Council of Great Britain Appraisal Document 1989', Arts Council, unpublished, u.p.: Harris Museum and Art Gallery Records.

Concurrent with the Arts Council's policy was the C.A.S.'s wish to counter an increasing tendency of local authority art galleries and museums to rely heavily on loan exhibitions of contemporary British art, rather than encompassing this material within collections. With the aim to reinvigorate the active collecting of contemporary British art, the C.A.S. pursued several measures. In 1984, the C.A.S. allocated 95% of its recent purchases to local authority art galleries and museums, as oppose to its other institutional members. It also applied for an enhanced purchase grant from the Arts Council (a provision first made in the 1970s to alleviate the C.A.S.'s financial problems), by stressing the Society's past important dual cultural role as a source of knowledge and purchase grant funds for art galleries and museums. Plans were also drawn-up for a new type of collection scheme for which additional substantial outside funding would be needed. In April 1984, the Chair of the C.A.S., Caryl Hubbard, wrote to the Arts Council seeking their support:

We would like to start a scheme whereby we select a gallery each year, one already committed to an active contemporary art programme, and would buy for them a group of works which would significantly increase their holding of a single artist or of a school or movement. I feel that all too often galleries outside London tend to have rather haphazard across the board type of collections and that it would be very valuable to assist some of them to build up a stronger representation in a field which interests them. This project would be over and above our normal buying and will be dependent on raising new funds. I think it might be something we could interest a corporate sponsor in, and I only mention it to give an indication of our future hopes.<sup>399</sup>

By the late 1980s, the combined funding from subscriptions, donations and commercial activities provided the C.A.S. with annual purchase funds of between £20,000 and £30,000; these were used to buy on average ten to twelve works each year. In 1989, the C.A.S. noted that it was increasingly difficult to find high-quality art works below £3,000 and that about 30% of works which it purchased were not

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<sup>399</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to Joanna Drew, Arts Council of Great Britain, 16th April, 1984: Contemporary Art Society Records.

requested by art galleries and museums as gifts. This indicated a disparity between the C.A.S.'s approach to purchasing and the structured planned collecting policies which were required by the M.G.C.'s newly introduced Registration Scheme. The C.A.S., therefore, needed to fuse its involvement in contemporary art with the collection development structure of local authority art galleries and museums.

### **8.10.2. Aims**

The C.A.S.'s distribution of works, as has been noted earlier, depended on individual choices made by private collectors, art critics and the occasional national curator. Its impact could not be easily assimilated within a long-term art gallery and museum collecting policy which incorporated specific collection needs and "wants lists" of artists. The C.A.S. Pilot Purchase Scheme, therefore, aimed to provide guaranteed funds for long-term collection development and sought to encourage the active role of the curator in the selection and purchase process. Unlike the previous C.A.S. grant-making schemes, the art gallery or museum was not restricted to purchases from identified sources, but selections were still subject to a vetting process controlled by the C.A.S. Potentially, however, an institution could purchase local and regional contemporary British art as part of this Scheme which the C.A.S. concluded would not easily attract grants from other sources, such as the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.

The launch of the Pilot Purchase Scheme for long-term and systematic purchasing directed at one institution, the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, encouraged a collaborative process to develop which was based on the defined collecting needs of a single institution and its collections; alongside the Pilot Purchase Scheme, the C.A.S. continued to endorse publicly its own purchasing process, using individual buyers who, in the manner of a private collector, largely followed their own private preferences and interests when selecting works for acquisition. In 1986, for example, William Packer, the art journalist, described his selection method which was 'to look either to artists whose work had never been bought by the Society before, or to those



who had been overlooked for some considerable time'.<sup>400</sup> This then was a self-referential purchase process quite independent of structured forms of institutional collection development, as the 'important qualities' defined by Packer were:

the freedom to act, and the informed independence of the judgement; and while the scholar, the curator and the critic must build up their elaborate edifices of validation, to explain and justify to themselves what it is they do, and so establish schools and movements, trends and phases, the inspired collections come together elsewhere.<sup>401</sup>

The C.A.S. Pilot Purchase Scheme was tripartite-funded by the C.A.S., Arts Council and Preston Local Authority. Under the Scheme funds raised by the C.A.S. and Preston local authority were matched by the Arts Council which created a total budget of £200,000, of which Preston local authority provided £30,000. The Arts Council, under its constitution, was prohibited from funding directly purchases made by local authority art galleries and museums, but could provide matched-funding through the C.A.S.<sup>402</sup> This Scheme was originally intended to run for a five-year period, but the regular allocation of additional purchase grants from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, and funding from private trusts, such as the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust which gave £2,000, in 1987, resulted in the continuance of purchasing until 1997. Under the Scheme, the Gallery also received additional grants from the Henry Moore Foundation, Granada Foundation, the N.A.C.F., and through the C.A.S. funds from the Moorgate Trust Fund and Glaxo. All financial support was placed in a fund administered by the C.A.S., and under this arrangement the local authority lost its legal right to block purchases. In 1985, the Harris Museum and Art Gallery also provided the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund with a copy of the Gallery's collecting policy with the implicit understanding that the Scheme would attract grants from the V. & A.

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<sup>400</sup> William Packer, 'The C.A.S. and Art in the 80s' in *The Contemporary Art Society 1910-1985*, Contemporary Art Society, London, 1986, p.32.

<sup>401</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>402</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to Joanna Drew, 16th November, 1984: Contemporary Art Society Records.

Purchase Grant Fund.<sup>403</sup> A multiple system of pooled-funding was, therefore, created, but one in which the combined cultural roles of the C.A.S. and the Arts Council were interpreted by the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund as an authoritative filtering process worthy of support.

The aims of the Pilot Purchase Scheme were to 'acquire a significant and cohesive collection of contemporary art', the support of contemporary artists and the promotion of 'an awareness and understanding of contemporary work'.<sup>404</sup> It therefore sought to combine ideas of structured collecting, institutional patronage and a broad educational remit. Under the Scheme, the C.A.S. functioned as the 'purchasing agent' for the Harris Museum and Art Gallery and provided the necessary 'adviser' expertise for the purchase of contemporary art work.<sup>405</sup> In implementing the Scheme, the C.A.S. revived its belief in thematic collecting which, as previously noted, it had promoted through exhibitions in the 1950s. This structured form of collecting was seen as a viable alternative to collecting as a form of art history which attempted to replicate the survey-like gap-filling of national institutions.

In 1985, the C.A.S. drew up a list of possible thematic collecting groups which were landscape, portraiture, still life, interiors, narrative and social realism. The significance of these categories is that they had a strong historical basis in British art which at the same time could be linked to European and American art represented in public art galleries and museums. A list of 35 possible artists was also compiled by the C.A.S., following a practice used by both the Arts Council and the Tate Gallery (since the 1950s, introduced under John Rothenstein's directorship), and was used by the Harris

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<sup>403</sup> The Author in conversation with Stephen Whittle, Curator, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, 1995.

<sup>404</sup> 'A Joint Purchase Scheme: Preston Borough Council and The Contemporary Art Society 1985', Contemporary Art Society, unpublished: Harris Museum and Art Gallery Records.

<sup>405</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to Joanna Drew, 16th November, 1984: Contemporary Art Society Records.

Museum and Art Gallery as a guide to purchases. The artists on this list, subsequently purchased by the Gallery, were Frank Auerbach, Jeffrey Camp, Maggi Hambling, Ken Kiff, Ian McKeever, Therese Oulton, Deanna Petherbridge, Michael Sandle and Norman Stevens. They were key figures in contemporary British art whose work was already represented in either the Tate Gallery or Arts Council collections. There was a noticeable absence of the Arts Council's advocacy for so-called "cutting-edge art" and issue-based art which was "difficult" and often confrontational; this aspect was noted in the Arts Council's A.D.S. *Appraisal Document* in 1989.<sup>406</sup> Subsequent acquisitions made by the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, as part of the C.A.S. Pilot Purchase Scheme, therefore included works by Afro-Caribbean and Asian artists, and incorporated a commitment to purchase a balanced number of works by women artists. This approach related to both an art world-oriented critical debate and the new emphasis in the museum world on audience-oriented policies, as opposed to the broad patronage-base assumed by the C.A.S.. While the Arts Council found itself obliged to support the purchase of provincial artists of merit under the Scheme, in accordance with the concept of ethnicity, the Arts Council nevertheless saw this representation of artists as a subsidiary activity to the primary 'national and international profile of the Gallery'.<sup>407</sup> The Arts Council, therefore, aligned itself with a national and international form of curatorship and critical debate associated with the activities of the Tate Gallery, rather than the needs of provincial local authority art galleries and museums, and their audiences. This Arts Council-Tate Gallery axis was essentially antipathetic towards provincial contemporary British art. By contrast, the C.A.S. saw the Scheme as providing support to artists with local, regional or national reputations.

The C.A.S. had envisaged that 'a long-term financial commitment would be more attractive to other potential national and local private and public funding bodies', as it

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<sup>406</sup> 'Arts Council of Great Britain Appraisal Document 1989', Arts Council, unpublished, u.p.: Harris Museum and Art Gallery Records.

<sup>407</sup> *ibid.*

suggested a 'wider rationale' than a one-off application for a grant.<sup>408</sup> Through the extensive and consistent allocation of grants from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the Harris Museum and Art Gallery was able to extend the period of the Pilot Purchase Scheme from five to eventually twelve years; only three of the ninety-four purchases did not receive a V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. These purchases included paintings, prints, drawings, watercolours, gouaches, sculpture, photographs and ceramics, and represented artists from the 1960s to the present day; for a complete list of recorded purchases under this Scheme see Appendix A.5. The selection also included prominent women artists, such as Maggi Hambling, Bridget Riley and Kate Whiteford, and artists from the ethnic minorities, such as Dhruva Mistry and Lubania Himid. In addition, artists purchased under the Scheme, for example, Ana Maria Pacheco, made additional gifts and offered works at "special prices" to the Gallery.

The Pilot Purchase Scheme produced several immediate and long-term cultural and financial benefits for the Harris Museum and Art Gallery's collection status and activities. Long-term working relationships with artists and London-based commercial art galleries were established which enabled 'several exhibitions contextualizing individual purchases with works borrowed at little or no cost' to be curated by the Harris Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>409</sup> Over a comparatively short period an 'impressive collection of work' was established which offered a new context in which to place existing works from the collection.<sup>410</sup> Additional financial support from the C.A.S. also allowed the Harris Museum and Art Gallery to commission a large-scale sculpture by Ian Hamilton Finlay for its new entrance area; the Henry Moore Foundation contributed a grant towards this commission. Under the Scheme at Preston, therefore, contemporary British art became both physically and metaphorically more accessible

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<sup>408</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> Letter: Alexandra Walker, Museum and Arts Officer, Harris Museum and Art Gallery to the Author, November 1998.

<sup>410</sup> Letter: Vivienne Bennett, Harris Museum and Art Gallery, to the Contemporary Art Society, 22nd February, 1990: Contemporary Art Society Records.

for provincial audiences. The Pilot Purchase Scheme 1985-97 at the Harris Museum and Art Gallery had attempted to fuse three different key issues of concern to the respective funding bodies. The C.A.S. maintained its primary interest in the patronage of artists, while the Arts Council saw its involvement as an opportunity to bring progressive trends (often referred to as "cutting-edge art" and associated with a national or international context) into local authority collections. Conversely, local authorities continued to be concerned with the local and regional needs of a broad public. The C.A.S. Special Scheme 1992-97, which resulted from the Pilot Purchase Scheme's success, retained the Pilot Purchase Scheme's funding structure while emphasizing a more collections-based approach to collecting. A highly productive result of the Pilot Purchase Scheme was the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund's involvement which subsequently became a regular factor of the C.A.S.'s long-term funding schemes.

## **8.11. C.A.S. Special Scheme 1992-97**

### **8.11.1. Origins**

In 1989, the C.A.S. commissioned a survey questionnaire of all its subscribing art galleries and museums.<sup>411</sup> Among the proposals which emerged were collection development initiatives which responded to the needs of individual institutions and the introduction of a consultation process; the term "needs" was seen as both incorporating the idea of gap-filling and the development of new collecting areas. The questionnaire also sought current information on funding and expenditure for British art acquisitions. Despite widespread claims of purchase funding shortfalls, only 25% of responding national, local authority, university and trustee-status art galleries and museums held budgetary records which identified separate areas of expenditure, such as "modern" and more specifically "contemporary" art purchases, and "old masters".

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<sup>411</sup> 'Contemporary Art Society Survey 1989: Report by Jeremy Rees', unpublished: Contemporary Art Society Records.

Specific budgetary allocation policies at public art galleries and museums, with the exception of the national art galleries and museums, appeared to be dependent upon collection schemes, such as the C.A.S. Pilot Purchase Scheme at Preston, and the defined scope of private trust funds.

In response to these findings, the C.A.S. decided to extend its previous Pilot Purchase Scheme. The C.A.S. hoped that local sources would extend beyond local authority funds to include local businesses, individuals and trusts, and that a pool of matched-funding would be created which involved a combination of public, private and independent sources, both local and national. In January 1991, the C.A.S. sent all its 98 subscribing art galleries and museums a further questionnaire requesting applications for the new C.A.S. Special Scheme. The institutions which initially responded with interest to this initiative were Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, Ferens Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Southampton City Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery; the Scottish art galleries, Maclaurin Gallery, in Ayr, and Paisley Art Gallery; and the university collections and trustee-status collections at Glasgow, Manchester and Kendal. Local authority financial cut-backs at Birmingham, Manchester and Southampton, however, subsequently prevented these institutions with important collections of Twentieth-Century British Art from taking part in the Scheme. Scottish and university collections were also unable to participate, as the Arts Council was precluded from providing financial help to these institutions. Two institutions, the Ferens Art Gallery and Wolverhampton Art Gallery, however, were able to guarantee local authority financial support immediately.

In May 1992, the C.A.S. Special Scheme was launched to run for an initial three year-period. It was intended to be more museologically-orientated, as distinct from the Harris Museum and Art Gallery Scheme which placed an overriding emphasis on the representation of contemporary art as an entity. The C.A.S. therefore sought to

establish links between planned collection development and the nature of an institution's existing collection. The idea was that the C.A.S. and the individual institution's curator would work in a collaborative partnership, both in terms of funding and cultural judgement.<sup>412</sup> This involved a process whereby:

At the outset of the scheme an agreed list of artists whose works would be appropriate for purchase within the context of the existing collection is written up jointly by the C.A.S. and the Curator of each Gallery. Once artists have been targeted then studio visits, visits to dealers and shows can be arranged with the C.A.S. advising and collaborating with the curators and in close liaison with the Arts Council whose expertise is also available.<sup>413</sup>

At the same time, however, the C.A.S. still retained the view that local authority curators needed the advice of an outside professional, as an art adviser, who would assist in formulating a collecting policy of contemporary British art. In support of this provision, the C.A.S. cited the highly successful role of the Tate Gallery's curator, David Brown, who had advised Southampton City Art Gallery over the use of its local purchase trust funds.<sup>414</sup>

In formulating the Special Scheme, the C.A.S. studied the financial structure of the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund.<sup>415</sup> This was now divided into four separate funds for a range of staggered purchase prices, with a ceiling limit of £60,000 for any one institution. Following consultation with provincial art galleries and museums, in 1988, the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund had been restructured to allow for grant payments on a weekly and monthly basis throughout the year. Grants, therefore, became available at all times and this freed institutions from a wholly art market-driven response to acquisitions which, with its scramble for grants, had an uncertain outcome.

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<sup>412</sup> Author in conversation with Nancy Balfour, 1995.

<sup>413</sup> Letter: Brendan Flynn, Curator, Wolverhampton Art Gallery to the Author, February 1993.

<sup>414</sup> 'Contemporary Art Society Special Scheme', typed notes, u.d. but c.1992: Contemporary Art Society Records.

<sup>415</sup> Author in conversation with Nancy Balfour, 1995.

Local authority art galleries and museums could, therefore, set aside funds in advance as part of a projected financially-planned programme of acquisitions. The M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund required the submission of a photograph of the work and a written explanation, in order to establish the significance of the proposed purchase within the context of the collection concerned. In implementing its Special Scheme, the C.A.S. concluded that, in common with the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, all applying institutions should be registered under the M.G.C. Registration Scheme, in order to be eligible for consideration under the C.A.S. Special Scheme.

The Special Scheme was launched for an initial three-year period and was, following the Pilot Scheme at Preston, tripartite-funded by the C.A.S., Arts Council and the local authority. This funding provided £90,000 to each participating art gallery. There was, however, also the expectation of additional funding from the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, as under the Pilot Purchase Scheme. Each of the three participating local authority art galleries, in the event, had an annual purchase source of £97,500, the scale and significance of which, in relation to contemporary British collecting, is highlighted when compared with the £92,151 allocated for contemporary painting acquisitions to 26 institutions by the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund in 1991.<sup>416</sup> The C.A.S.'s funding for its own participation in the Scheme came from the Arts Council, private trusts, foundations and industry.<sup>417</sup> In December 1990, the Arts Council made an Incentive Fund Award to the C.A.S., and in 1992 part of this Award of £18,000 was applied to the new C.A.S. Special Scheme.

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<sup>416</sup> Letter: Janet Davies, Purchase Grant Fund Officer, V. & A. Museum to the Author, May 1995.

<sup>417</sup> The Baring Foundation (£30,000), Douglas Heath Eves Charitable Trust (£100), Garfield Weston Foundation (£2,500), Glaxo (£1,000), Ellerman (£5,000), Rayne Foundation (£500) and Sir Andrew Carnwarth's Charitable Trust (£200) together provided a total sum of £39,300.



Three local authority art galleries were selected to participate in the C.A.S.'s Special Scheme on the basis that each of these institutions were medium-scale and had a history of Twentieth-Century British Art collecting: these were the Ferens Art Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum. Due to initial problems in securing guaranteed local funding from the local authority and additional local sources, the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, the smallest of the institutions, did not participate at the outset.<sup>418</sup> The C.A.S. intended that the C.A.S. Special Scheme would be concluded by a major national touring exhibition based on acquisitions funded by the Scheme, with the aim to promote both the potential of cross-funding collection development and the issue of purchase funding available for collecting contemporary British art by local authority institutions. All three art galleries which participated in the C.A.S. Special Scheme viewed this initiative as having long-term and wide-ranging cultural and financial benefits, that would raise the profile and status of the institution within a regional, national and international context. The Scheme's provision of long-term financial resources aimed to establish rapid focused forms of collecting which would also create close working relationships between the curatorial profession, art dealers and experts in the contemporary art field. It was also intended that long-term, the prestige of the Scheme would counter local authority opposition to purchases and reinforce the argument for 'consistent and planned acquisitions'.<sup>419</sup>

### **8.11.2. Wolverhampton Art Gallery**

The construction of the purpose-built Wolverhampton Art Gallery was funded by the local business man, Philip Horsman, and the Gallery opened in 1884; an adjoining school of art was subsequently built by the local authority. This initiative coincided

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<sup>418</sup> Author in conversation with Pamela Johnson, Curator, Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, 1995.

<sup>419</sup> Letter: Brendan Flynn, Curator, Wolverhampton Art Gallery to Contemporary Art Society, 7th October, 1991: Wolverhampton Art Gallery Records.

with the launching of the Fine Arts and Industrial Exhibition for Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire which promoted the union of art and design to local manufacturing industries. Horsman also bequeathed his private art collection to the municipality, in 1886, and this was followed by the Cartwright Bequest of over 280 pictures in 1887. As a result, the Gallery's collection covered Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century British Art and emphasis was given, at the outset, to the further acquisition of British art, a policy which was maintained during the interwar-period. In 1938, Wolverhampton Art Gallery joined the C.A.S. and this subscription initiated the development of a collection of Twentieth-Century British Art at the Gallery; Wolverhampton received its first loan from the C.A.S. in 1936 and its first gift of a work in 1940 which was the painting 'Flowers' by Fairlie Harmar.

In 1970, David Rodgers was appointed the first specialist Fine Art curator at the Gallery, and he wrote the Gallery's first collecting policy. The major trends and developments of contemporary British and American art became the focus of development, and Wolverhampton Art Gallery began quickly to establish a unique local authority collection of British Pop Art and associated examples of American art; by 1975, this collection included the artists Graham Arnold, Peter Blake, Richard Hamilton, David Hepher, Knighton Hosking, John Judkins, Michael Pennie, Tom Phillips and John Walker. At the same time, the Gallery sought to establish itself as a centre for contemporary art, through a temporary exhibitions programme.

In 1989, Wolverhampton Art Gallery produced a revised written collecting policy, as a requirement of the M.G.C. Registration Scheme (Phase1). This policy focused on three Fine Art collecting areas which were Scottish Painting, British Figuration, and British artists of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin. These areas were chosen as identifiable forms of contemporary British art which, as has been previously noted, were then attracting national critical debate, either in terms of their national and international prominence, or a perceived neglect. These themes were selected by the

specialist Fine Art curator, Brendan Flynn, as a further development of the collecting policy adopted in the 1970s, whereby collecting focused on major progressive trends, rather than attempting a survey-like coverage. Building on the idea of distinct areas of collecting, it was envisaged that the Gallery would establish the first national collection of Black Art in Britain. This collection aimed to address two contemporary issues which were contemporary women artists and the nature of regional art. As an example of institutional collecting, it was a response to the shift that was taking place in curatorial practice towards more audience-driven, as opposed to purely scholarship or more generally a London art world-driven, form of collecting; Wolverhampton had by then a sizeable ethnic minority population and its collecting policy aimed to engage this local audience. The collecting policy also sought to support particularly young artists in the West Midlands and these purchases were to be linked with an educational programme of workshops and schools' placements.

The 1989 collecting policy unusually included a "wants list" of artists divided into several categories; M.G.C. Registration did not require such detailed responses, as it was introduced primarily to establish minimum standards of art gallery and museum practice in the U.K. Under the category 'Scottish Art', the artists were Stephen Campbell, Ken Currie, Peter Howson and Bruce Mclean; by 1989, Wolverhampton Art Gallery had already acquired works by John Bellany, Callum Colvin, Jock McFayden, Kate Whiteford and Adrian Wiszniewski. The group of artists under 'British Figuration' were diverse: the overtly political Terry Atkinson and Michael Sandle; the Royal Academician, Stephen McKenna; and the highly-autobiographical Eileen Cooper, Andrzej Jackowski (Welsh), Ken Kiff, R.B. Kitaj (Anglo-American) and Paula Reago. A 'Black Art' "wants list" included the artists Rasheed Araeen, Saleem Areef, Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers, Lubania Himid, Tam Joseph and Keith Piper. Despite limited storage space, Wolverhampton Art Gallery also wanted to include three-dimensional material, in the form of sculpture, by the artists John Davies, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Barry Flanagan and Dhruva Mistry, and documentary two-

dimensional works by the artists Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long. The Gallery also sought to incorporate new forms of art, as part of its overall approach to contemporary collecting. This included a proposed video reference collection which would 'concentrate on productions dealing with culture and society and recent productions carried out in the West Midlands Region with [the] emphasis on non-broadcast[ed] material'.<sup>420</sup> Linked to this was a planned photography collection which would aim to 'mirror the region and the multi-cultural nature of Wolverhampton';<sup>421</sup> a cultural objective which had its precedent in the Mass Observation photographic collection held by Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. The collecting of all art forms was to be guided by the idea of representing an artist by sets and groups of works, so that the focus was an artist's career progression, and in terms of photography this was defined as 'coherent collections of prints rather than individual photographs'.<sup>422</sup>

Substantial gifts of modern British art to Wolverhampton Art Gallery encouraged the Gallery to use its local purchase funds as part of the C.A.S. collection development scheme for contemporary British art. In 1991, for example, Wolverhampton Art Gallery received the Twentymen Collection under central government's Acceptance-in-Lieu tax legislation; a related archive was also received by the local authority central library. This Collection contained a major group of works from the 1940s: artists represented included prominent landscapists such as John Nash, John Piper, Graham Sutherland; the St. Ives painters Christopher Wood, Frances Hodgkins and Wilhemena Barnes-Graham; and the Surrealist artist, Augustus Lunn. The acceptance of the Twentymen Collection offered another future theme for collection development which was postwar British Romantic painting.

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<sup>420</sup> 'Acquisitions Policy for Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museums Service 1989', unpublished, p.6: Museums and Galleries Commission Registration Records, M.G.C.

<sup>421</sup> *ibid*, p.3.

<sup>422</sup> *ibid*, p.6.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery was able to participate in the C.A.S. Special Scheme immediately, as the Gallery's annual purchase grant in 1991 was already £10,000; there was also an additional reserve fund of £20,000 available for purchases. The C.A.S. encouraged a themed approach which would relate to a specific aspect of the existing collection, and the Gallery's curator, Brendan Flynn, suggested three possible areas which were Romanticism in British Art since 1980, Artists in Context, and Black Art in Britain.<sup>423</sup> After consultation, the combined theme 'Contemporary Art and Society' was adopted, and Wolverhampton Art Gallery purchased 32 works under the C.A.S. Special Scheme, from 1993-97. The scale and significance of this expansion is highlighted when compared with the 23 works presented by the C.A.S. as gifts to the Gallery, during the period 1940-91. Under the C.A.S. Special Scheme, oil paintings, prints, photographs and a sculpture were purchased, and this selection included several women artists. For the purchases made from 1994-97, the Wolverhampton Art Gallery also secured grants from the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and this enabled the extension of the Scheme beyond its initial three-year period; for a complete list of art works bought see Appendix A.6.

The implementation of the C.A.S. Scheme aimed to fulfil both local and national collecting objectives which would benefit artists and audiences. These were to place contemporary art within the context of existing collection strengths (1960s Pop Art and 1970s Photo Realism),<sup>424</sup> present a collection of contemporary art focused on 'contemporary social and political issues' and establish the art collection as 'a major resource and centre of excellence'.<sup>425</sup> These aims were highlighted by the exhibition 'Something to Say...' held at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, in 1998, which included

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<sup>423</sup> Letter: Brendan Flynn, Curator, Wolverhampton Art Gallery to the Contemporary Art Society, 7th October, 1991: Wolverhampton Art Gallery Records.

<sup>424</sup> Letter: Marguerite Nugent, Senior Curator, Wolverhampton Art Gallery to the Author, November 1998.

<sup>425</sup> 'Introduction' to *Something to Say: Contemporary Art Collection*, [exhibition leaflet], Wolverhampton Art Gallery, 1998, u.p.

works bought under the C.A.S. Special Scheme. Long-term, the Scheme had financial and cultural benefits for the Gallery, while the regional cultural relevance and status of the institution was assured by making 'contemporary art accessible to our visitors who would usually have to go to London to see collections of this kind of quality'.<sup>426</sup>

### **8.11.3. Ferens Art Gallery**

The local industrialist, Thomas Robinson Ferens, provided construction funds and an endowment purchase fund of around £20,000 for a new purpose-built art gallery for Hull, which opened in 1927. In 1930, the Ferens Art Gallery joined the C.A.S. and through this subscription the Gallery's collection received its first progressive examples of art, from 1931. These gifts included works by Matthew Smith, Ivon Hitchens, Edward Wadsworth, Carel Weight, Victor Pasmore, Henry Moore, Alan Davie, Peter Blake, Jack Smith and Leon Kossoff. The Twentieth-Century British Art collection was developed from the 1960s onwards, initially under the Director, from 1960-65, Michael Compton (b.1927), the Courtauld Institute-trained art historian; Compton was previously Keeper of the Foreign Schools at the Walker Art Gallery, from 1957-59, and Assistant to the Director, at Leeds City Art Gallery, from 1954-57. Under Compton, the Ferens Art Gallery's representation of Twentieth-Century British Art was significantly extended to cover contemporary developments, such as Pop and Op Art, and sculptors such as Kenneth Armitage, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Eduardo Paolozzi. Subsequently, as Assistant Keeper of the Modern Collection at the Tate Gallery, Compton published the important studies 'Optical and Kinetic Art' in 1967 and 'Pop Art' in 1970.

In 1988, the Ferens Art Gallery introduced a written collecting policy which aimed to continue to develop 'as comprehensive a view of British art as possible' by including

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<sup>426</sup> Letter: Marguerite Nugent, Senior Curator, Wolverhampton Art Gallery to the Author, November 1998.

'examples of major European artistic developments which have been important in forming British taste and culture'.<sup>427</sup> The collecting of modern British art was, therefore, resituated within a comparative international context. Local and regional art was also incorporated alongside national and international examples, in the form of marine paintings, as Hull was formerly a significant port. Like Wolverhampton, this policy also responded to the needs of a broad audience by seeking to combine an international perspective (an aspect of collecting associated with national collecting institutions) with works by local and regional artists. Following discussions between the C.A.S. and the Ferens Art Gallery's Curator of Gallery, Museums and Art Services, from 1974-92, John Bradshaw (1930-2001), and subsequently Louise Karlsen, Curator of Ferens Art Gallery, it was decided that collection development under the C.A.S. Scheme should take the form of a combined response to the locality's long association with the sea. A dual thematic approach was selected which was 'Figure as Subject', a notable phenomenon of postwar art, and 'The Sea' because of both its links with the region's history and its importance as an art historical category (usually referred to as Marine Painting).

Under the C.A.S. Scheme, Ferens Art Gallery sought to encompass experimental art forms which combined the use of new technology, elements of light, sound and movement, recycled material, performance and installation art. An approach made feasible through the opening of additional exhibition areas for Live Art and three additional exhibition galleries, as a result of financial collaboration between Hull's local authority and private developers. As examples of contemporary British art, these works could, in terms of audience needs and the status of the Gallery, function on a local, regional, national and international level.

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<sup>427</sup> 'Ferens Art Gallery Acquisitions Policy 1988', typescript, unpublished, u.p.: Ferens Art Gallery Records.

Since its inception, the Ferens Art Gallery had heavily relied on the Ferens Endowment Fund for purchases and as a result, the local authority made a negligible contribution towards the C.A.S. Special Scheme; in 1991, the Fund provided £25,000 towards the Gallery's participation in the C.A.S. Special Scheme with a further contribution of £5,000 from the local friends group. Although Ferens Art Gallery purchased 12 works under the C.A.S. Special Scheme, in comparison with the 38 works which the Gallery had received from the C.A.S. during the period 1931-91, this small number of works acquired reflected the Gallery's policy to buy major and therefore more expensive art, where a single major purchase cost £25,000; for a complete list of works bought under the C.A.S. Special Scheme by Ferens Art Gallery see Appendix A.7. The majority of the Ferens Art Gallery's purchases under the C.A.S. Special Scheme secured additional grants from the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and this facilitated the Gallery's decision to concentrate on the purchase of more major art works; a development otherwise beyond the reach of the Gallery's local resources. The Scheme also attracted an additional gift from the participating artist, Rita Donagh, who presented the laser print 'Mirror and Screen' in 1995. Examples of oil paintings and sculpture were purchased, but a particular emphasis was given to modern photography, a new area of contemporary collecting for non-national art galleries and museums. The local authority had previously been resistant to British art of a more progressive nature and the funding structure of the Special Scheme enabled the Ferens Art Gallery to purchase potentially unpopular works, such as Nina Saunders' sculpture 'Untitled', made of tubular steel chairs and leather, which was bought after her exhibition at the Gallery in 1995.<sup>428</sup> Long-term, the Special Scheme enhanced the Gallery's previous links with London's commercial art galleries, such as Marlborough Fine Art and the Frith Street Gallery, from which the majority of C.A.S.'s purchases were made.

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<sup>428</sup> Author in conversation with Louise Karlsen, Curator, Ferens Art Gallery, March 1995.



#### 8.11.4. Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum<sup>429</sup>

In 1920, the Alderman John Chisholm Towner bequeathed 20 Victorian pictures from his private collection to Eastbourne and £6,000 'to be applied towards the building of an art gallery', but a purpose-built art gallery never materialized. The collection was first displayed at the local Municipal School of Art and subsequently the Towner Room of the local Technical Institute. In 1922, the local authority purchased a private-dwelling, The Manor House and its grounds, so that an art gallery combined with a parkland area for recreational purposes could be created, and in 1923 the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum finally opened to the public. The local authority wanted the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum's collections and exhibitions to have a predominantly local focus, and therefore a founding-collection of 'Pictures of Sussex' was launched. It was not until the appointment of the non-figurative artist, William Gear, as Curator, from 1958-64, that the Towner Art Gallery developed a collection of progressive contemporary British art based upon the geographically-accessible London commercial art galleries. This collecting policy was assisted by the Gulbenkian Foundation's collection development schemes.<sup>430</sup> In 1954, the Gallery received its first gift of a work from the C.A.S., and following the Gallery's subscription to the C.A.S., in around 1958, further gifts from the C.A.S. were received.<sup>431</sup>

By 1990, the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum had developed a collection of over 2,000 largely nineteenth and twentieth-century British works. There was a strong emphasis on art with local connections; for example, the artist Eric Ravilious, who had died during the Second World War, was represented by a body of works. Artists who had lived or worked in Sussex, Kent or Surrey were purchased under an arrangement between the local authority and the Arts Council's Regional Arts Association, South

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<sup>429</sup> For a complete list of works bought under the C.A.S. Special Scheme by Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum see Appendix A.8.

<sup>430</sup> See Vol. II, Chapter 13: 'England', 'Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum', pp.113-117.

<sup>431</sup> *ibid.*, p.113.

East Arts. The South East Arts own collections of Fine and Applied Art were also deposited on "permanent loan" at the Gallery, and included a wide range of works by artists such as Jeffrey Camp, Eileen Cooper, Andrej Jackowski and Estelle Thompson. In terms of non-local contemporary art, however, the Gallery relied on in-house or Arts Council loans.

Given the over-riding local character of the Gallery, external collection development schemes proved crucial in extending the nature of the Towner Art Gallery's collection. The C.A.S. for example, since 1954, had presented works by notable artists such as John Bellany, David Bomberg, Stephen Farthing, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Ivon Hitchens and Keith Vaughan. The Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, as has been previously noted, was the smallest institution which participated in the C.A.S. Special Scheme, and the Curator, Penny Johnson, saw the Scheme as an opportunity to raise the public profile and prestige of the Gallery which would in turn attract future exhibition sponsorship and gifts of art works.<sup>432</sup> Despite the local authority's limited financial support of the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, the C.A.S. decided to support the Gallery's application, in order to give the Scheme a broader geographical coverage and create a new provincial centre of contemporary art in south-east England which would counterbalance a predominance of major local authority institutions in the north of England. Initially, therefore, the friends group and local businesses had to guarantee the local authority's contribution to the Scheme; the friends group guaranteed £4,500 of the required £5,000 for a three-year period.

Under the C.A.S. Special Scheme, the theme 'Landscape' was chosen to unite both the holdings of Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Art in the Towner Art Gallery's collection and to provide a context in which future collecting could be successfully integrated; contemporary art acquisitions would show 'how the notion of landscape

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<sup>432</sup> Author in conversation with Penny Johnson, 1995.

has been developed and explored in recent years'.<sup>433</sup> The collection had only a few examples of contemporary sculpture (such as Elisabeth Frink's 'Harbinger Bird III' and Chris Drury's 'Crow Sitting on a Fence') and the Curator saw the Scheme as an opportunity both to purchase in a new area and to site sculpture in the surrounding gardens. The display of what was Public Art adjacent to the Gallery extended the audience for contemporary British art and aimed to secure support from the local authority, by establishing a creative environment for visitors to experience as part of a leisure activity. The purchase and installation of the sculptures by Chris Drury and David Nash also united two collecting objectives: namely the themed collecting of landscape art, which had contemporary relevance, and the expansion of the Gallery's sculpture holdings. Oil paintings and drawings, expressive of the natural scenery, were purchased together with more experimental media, in the form of film-video and installation works; in 1997, for example, Mariele Neudecker's 'The Sea Ice', a mixed media work of glass, water, salt, food dye, water, plastic and m.d.f. was purchased. The C.A.S. Special Scheme, unlike the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, also allowed the Gallery to commission works; these were the photograph 'Continental Shift: The English Channel' by Thomas Joshua Cooper, an Anglo-American artist, and David Nash's sculpture 'Eighteen Thousand Tides'. The combined role of the C.A.S. and the Arts Council enabled the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum both to purchase more progressive works and to buy from London's commercial art galleries, such as the Frith Street Gallery, and London-based artists. Provincial artists, however, were not excluded from the benefits of the Scheme, and two sculptures were purchased from the Lewes-based artist Chris Drury. From 1995-97, a total of 17 works were acquired for the collection under the C.A.S. Special Scheme, as opposed to the 16 works that the Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum had received as gifts

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<sup>433</sup> 'Contemporary Art Society Collection Scheme 1992-94', typescript, unpublished, u.p.: Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum Records.

from the C.A.S. during the years 1954-91; for a complete list of works acquired by the Gallery under the C.A.S. Special Scheme see Appendix A.8.

### **8.12. The C.A.S. Special Collection Scheme 1997-2004**

In 1994, the M.G.C. produced the policy document *Towards a Government Policy for Museums* which criticized the short-term basis of hitherto central and local government funding and recommended that money from the National Lottery should be used to create endowment purchase funds as:

the funding structure - national, local authority, university, M.O.D. or independent - is too often a question of accident or history, and takes little account of the intrinsic importance of the collections, or the significance of the museum's role in the community.<sup>434</sup>

A major source of central government funding had been established through the creation of the Heritage Lottery Fund (funded by the National Lottery) but this, as has been previously discussed, was even in its revised form limited to the purchase of art works created at least 20 years before the date of proposed purchase. The Pilot Purchase Scheme (1985-97) and the Special Scheme (1992-97) marked a decisive change to the character of the C.A.S. From its earlier informed amateur status it now, through its established links with local authority institutions and the Arts Council, took on a consciously professional and quasi-official profile, through its involvement in partnership funding. In 1996, the C.A.S. successfully challenged the date restrictions on National Lottery-assisted purchases with the intention that:

A national strategy for collection funding should be established with a particular emphasis on the purchase of contemporary art... Young British artists sell widely overseas, to public and private collections. Our successes should be reflected in British museum collections.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Museums and Galleries Commission, *Towards a Government Policy for Museums*, Museums and Galleries Commission, London, 1994, p.27.

<sup>435</sup> See Martin Bailey, 'The Future for Britain's Museums: This is what we want', *Art Newspaper*, May 1996.

The C.A.S.'s Special Collection Scheme was launched, in 1997, initially as a major five-year scheme to fund collecting in the areas of contemporary art and craft. The 13 local authority art galleries selected in England to participate were Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Towner Art Gallery and Local Museum, Ferens Art Gallery, Leeds City Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, the planned new M.I.M.A. at Middlesbrough, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Southampton City Art Gallery, South London Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent City Art Gallery (formerly Hanley Art Gallery), New Art Gallery, in Walsall, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, and Worcester Museum and Art Gallery; two university institutions, Whitworth Art Gallery and the Mead Gallery, at Warwick, were also included. The Scheme was structured to operate in three phases. The first, from 1997-2002, covered Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Manchester City Art Gallery, Southampton City Art Gallery, New Art Gallery, in Walsall, and the university collection, Mead Gallery; phase two was planned for the period 1998-2003, and phase three for 1999-2004. When the Scheme ceased, in 2004, it had covered a seven-year collecting period involving 15 art galleries and museums and 18 collections: 610 Fine Art and Craft works by 313 artists and craft-makers had been acquired.<sup>436</sup>

Under the Special Collection Scheme, the Arts Council Lottery Fund provided a total grant of £2,500,000 which was 75% of the total project finance of £3,300,000 while the remainder was funded by a local source, such as the relevant local authority, a friends group, or the Crafts Council.<sup>437</sup> These combined funds had two inter-related functions which were to acquire works and support related research; almost £3,000,000 was eventually spent on the purchase of works. Each participating art gallery spent £30,000 annually on acquisitions, and an additional £2,500 on curatorial

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<sup>436</sup> Val Millington, *Contemporary Art Society Special Collection Scheme: Evaluation Report: Executive Summary Only*, September 2005, u.p.

<sup>437</sup> Letter: Virginia Tandy, Director, Manchester City Art Galleries to the Author, October 1998.

research and travel. As part of the partnership funding, each art gallery provided 25% of the acquisition and travel costs. The C.A.S. extended the definition of local support to include any local source, so as to encourage a combination of public and private funds which also permitted art galleries and museums to draw on existing local sources, such as an accumulated art fund.<sup>438</sup> At Manchester, for instance, the Patrons of Manchester City Art Galleries, a provincial trust established in 1977, provided £22,000 as part of a Contemporary Art Fund for the Scheme.<sup>439</sup>

Central to the Special Collection Scheme 1997-2004 was the creation of a 'new national policy' for contemporary British art collecting by provincial art galleries and museums;<sup>440</sup> although, in the event, this policy was extended to generate the collecting of international contemporary art. The aim was to develop 'distinct and innovative collections' which were directed at both local and national audiences and whose art works covered both 'new and traditional media';<sup>441</sup> a policy which paralleled the M.G.C.-sponsored general programme of designated non-national collections initiated in 1996, and the regional disbursement of indigenous contemporary art by the central government in France. To facilitate this development, the C.A.S. assumed the role of an educational mentor, whereby art advisors drawn from artists, senior (where possible national) curators and writers on art, were used to aid 'the revival of skills necessary to create public collections for the whole country' and to include the 'element of professional development in the scheme'.<sup>442</sup> In addition, the C.A.S. arranged discussions concerning contemporary British art, and individual curatorial visits to studios, exhibitions and collections, both in the U.K. and abroad. The Scheme's fundamental objectives were therefore to leave a lasting legacy of new skills

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<sup>438</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> Letter: Joanna Francis, Development Officer, Manchester City Art Galleries to the Author, January 1999.

<sup>440</sup> 'C.A.S. Press Release 1998', unpublished: Contemporary Art Society Records.

<sup>441</sup> 'C.A.S. Press Release 1998', unpublished: Contemporary Art Society Records.

<sup>442</sup> Author in conversation with Sheila MacGregor, Senior Curator, New Art Gallery, Walsall, December 1998.

and knowledge for non-national curators, the foundations for twenty-first-century collecting and potentially enhanced provincial sources for funding.

The principal reason for the involvement of institutions in the C.A.S.'s final twentieth-century scheme was the potential to purchase major works and thereby sustain collection development and the reputation of a particular institution's collection.<sup>443</sup> It also offered the possibility for institutions to embark on new areas of collecting, an approach otherwise difficult to justify to grant-making sources, such as the M.G.C./V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund. Southampton City Art Gallery, for example, planned to purchase contemporary wall drawings, and film and video art from 1970s to the present day. The aim of the Special Collection Scheme was to encourage focused and intensive collection development by combining the funding and shared expertise of the C.A.S., the Arts Council and an increasingly distinct Fine Art curatorial profession. Despite this arrangement, the Scheme's implementation was delayed until 1999, due to two areas of disagreement; a detailed examination of this Scheme's acquisitions, impact and recommendations, therefore, lies beyond the time-scale of this thesis. These issues were the ownership of works purchased and the function of the works bought. Under the Scheme, the C.A.S. wished to continue its principle of sole ownership, a factor which ran contrary to the use of local authority funds and the legal status of lottery grants which, at that point, prohibited the transfer of ownership. The C.A.S. also wanted all acquisitions to be part of a themed collecting policy which would be distinct from internal activities such as exhibition programming. This was at variance with some of the participating institution's objectives which included the purchase of works directly related to planned exhibitions and the wish to commission works. The C.A.S., however, was resistant to what they perceived as short-term objectives and insisted that the collecting and curating of contemporary British art

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<sup>443</sup> Author in conversation with Godfrey Woresdale, Gallery Manager (Senior Curator), Southampton City Art Gallery, December 1998.

were two distinct activities within a public art gallery and museum. The current legal status of works acquired through the Scheme is that under the Lottery's stipulation, the C.A.S. retains title until 2014, after which, ownership transfers to the relevant local authority.

### **8.13. C.A.S. and the Collecting of Specific Art Forms and Categories**

A previously unexplored avenue of the C.A.S.'s cultural role is its contribution made towards the collecting of specific art forms at key historical periods. Prior to 1945, the C.A.S. actively promoted the collecting of works on paper, while in the 1970s the collecting of sculpture gained its support. The C.A.S.'s early acquisition of prints and drawings coincided with other organization's initiatives in this field, while the promotion of sculpture required additional substantial financial involvement from other sources.

#### **8.13.1. Prints and Drawings Fund**

In 1919, the C.A.S. created the Prints and Drawings Fund for the exclusive benefit of the Prints and Drawings Department of the British Museum. The Fund enabled the Museum to purchase contemporary and primarily British art works on paper, as the Museum was prohibited from using its central government purchase grant for this purpose. Mainland European prints and drawings, however, were also collected from the outset, and French art became a more dominant aspect, in the 1920s, due to the private collecting interests of Campbell Dodgson and collectors associated with the Fund, such as the francophile Samuel Courtauld. The initial selection of works was carried out by the British Museum's Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings, Campbell Dodgson and subsequently A.M. Hind, and as such, involved a collecting process by proxy which was an expression of Campbell Dodgson's 'collecting proclivities' of 'a cautiously modernist nature'.<sup>444</sup> In its subsidiary role, as a separate

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<sup>444</sup> Frances Carey, 'Curatorial Collecting in the 20th Century' in *Landmarks in Print*



C.A.S. loan collection, the Fund also promoted the idea of collecting affordable contemporary art in the form of works on paper; for example, in 1922, the Fund purchased 11 drawings and 150 prints, which were predominantly contemporary British, for £348.15s.

The Prints and Drawings Fund was established as a distinct entity within the C.A.S. and had its own accounts, and individual and institutional subscribers. Private individual subscribers included prominent art collectors, such as Samuel Courtauld, Michael Sadler and Charles Rutherston, who collectively, in terms of geographic influence, covered London, Leeds, Oxford, Bradford and Manchester. Artists, such as Eric Gill and Edward Wadsworth, supported the Fund by presenting works and, in 1927, Robert Austin allowed the C.A.S. to purchase an almost complete collection of his etchings and engravings for a nominal sum; 70 of these works were presented to the British Museum. London art dealers, who specialized in prints and drawings, such as William S. Marchant, P. & D. Colnaghi & Obach and the recently established Redfern Gallery subscribed, while established art dealers, such as Agnew's, and Ernest Brown and Cecil Phillips of The Leicester Galleries, encouraged their provincial art gallery and museum clients to join the Fund.<sup>445</sup> Subscription rates were in accordance with the relatively modest cost of works on paper, and ranged between two and five guineas. Despite this, few provincial art galleries became subscribers to the Fund, as the works on paper were offered to these art galleries and museums as temporary loans rather than as gifts. The local authority art galleries which did subscribe to the Prints and Drawings Fund were the Graves Art Gallery in 1922, Carlisle Art Gallery in 1934, Grundy Art Gallery in 1935, and the Hanley Art Gallery in 1938; the friends group, the Sheffield Art Collections Fund, also took out a subscription in 1940. In

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*Collecting*, (ed.) Antony Griffiths, British Museum, 1996, p.242.

<sup>445</sup> See Frances Spalding, 'The Contemporary Art Society: Development and Recognition 1920-1940' in *Contemporary Art Society, British Contemporary Art 1910-1990: 80 Years of Collecting by the Contemporary Art Society*, Contemporary Art Society, C.A.S. and The Herbert Press, 1991, p.68.

addition, donations to the C.A.S. Prints and Drawings Fund were made by the Williamson Art Gallery in 1922 and by the Bankfield Museum in 1926. By 1945, only Hanley Art Gallery, the Sheffield Art Collections Fund and Graves Art Gallery remained subscribers to the Fund.

During the years 1922-33, acquisitions made by the Prints and Drawings Fund were displayed at 22 Montague Square, London, the home of Campbell Dodgson, before presentation to the British Museum; if these works were declined, they were then offered to a provincial art gallery or museum, although this seldom took place. Loan exhibitions based on the Fund's collection had, however, been organized by the C.A.S. prior to this, for example, in 1920, when the 'Exhibition of Modern Prints and Drawings Kindly Lent by the C.A.S.' was shown at Derby Art Gallery. This included 73 works by French, Belgium, Italian and Dutch artists, and encouraged indigenous art practice to be seen, compared and collected in a wider international context; this selection reflected Campbell Dodgson's own private collecting interests in the field of modern and contemporary French art. This was followed by the major exhibition '76 Modern Prints and Drawings' which was held at the Mappin Art Gallery from 1920-21 and at the Williamson Art Gallery in 1922. Loan exhibitions were also shown at the Bankfield Museum from 1924-25 and Astley Hall Museum and Art Gallery, in Chorley, from 1926-27. When not on loan, new acquisitions were stored at the British Museum in a special C.A.S.-dedicated cupboard, thereby circumventing loan restrictions covering the British Museum's own collections.

In the spring of 1928, the C.A.S. launched its Circulating Exhibition Scheme for Prints and Drawings. Exhibitions of a four-week duration were toured to provincial local authority art galleries and museums under the auspices of the Art Exhibitions Bureau. This Scheme, as its title suggests, was closely modelled on the provincial loan scheme of the V. & A. Museum's Circulation Department, as discussed in Chapter 4. During the years 1928-45, the Art Exhibitions Bureau toured sizeable exhibitions on

behalf of the C.A.S.'s Scheme which often involved an extensive geographical coverage. The first of these, for example, was an exhibition of 150 works on paper, which toured to Derby, Plymouth, Burton-on-Trent, Lincoln, Blackpool, Salisbury, Leeds, Bury and Newcastle (as part of the 'North-East Coast Exhibition' held at the Palace of Arts), from 1928-29. In common with the C.A.S. exhibitions devoted to paintings and sculpture, the Fund's exhibitions were lent both to subscribing and non-subscribing art galleries and museums, with the idea of encouraging primarily institutional membership of the C.A.S. and the purchase of affordable contemporary British art which could also be easily stored and displayed. The tour of 1928-29, however, resulted in no additional private or local authority C.A.S. subscriptions, despite favourable press reviews!<sup>446</sup>

During the economic Depression of the 1930s, a 'circulation collection' was created entitled 'Modern Prints and Drawings: 133 Modern Etchings, Engravings, Drypoints, Lithographs, Woodcuts, Wood Engravings, Mezzotints, Aquatints, Collotypes, Drawings, Colour Prints' which toured to Bootle, Derby, Leeds, Reading, Oldham, Sheffield, Blackpool, Halifax, Burton-on-Trent, Belfast, Manchester, Barnard Castle (Bowes Museum) and Birkenhead,<sup>447</sup> a small collection of 80 recently acquired prints was also lent to Carlisle Art Gallery in 1932. As the C.A.S. aimed to promote institutionalized patronage, it was hoped that these provincial loans would revive and sustain the earlier boom and interest in British print-making and private collecting of the 1920s. The C.A.S. also promoted the formation of collections of works on paper as an educational tool, which could form the basis of a loan display for a school or art college, or function as an in-situ study collection. In 1934, for example, the C.A.S. lent about 100 prints and drawings to the art schools and local authority art galleries of

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<sup>446</sup> See Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1929*, C.A.S., London, 1930.

<sup>447</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Annual Report (Print Fund) 1930-31*, C.A.S., London, 1931, p.29.

Carlisle, Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle. Exhibitions on a reduced scale continued throughout the Second World War, as they offered easily transportable and displayed examples of contemporary British art. In 1940, for example, a loan exhibition of 26 prints and drawings was shown at the Graves Art Gallery, in Sheffield, and Luton Public Museum. Following the end of the Second World War, the 89 drawings and 254 prints which had been retained by the C.A.S. for the war-time provincial touring exhibitions were presented to the British Museum, in 1945.

Following the retirement of Campbell Dodgson, in 1934, the C.A.S. was at last able to present gifts from the Prints and Drawings Fund to provincial art galleries and museums, and to other National collections; Dodgson had insisted on the Fund's exclusive presentation of works to the British Museum. The distribution of works on paper, however, was restricted to 25% of the annual total number of acquisitions. In 1935, the first gifts were made to Wakefield Art Gallery and this was followed by regular distributions to other local authority art galleries and museums, during the years 1936-45.<sup>448</sup> In 1948, the first large-scale distribution by the Fund to provincial art galleries and museums took place, and some 150 works on paper were presented to 30 local authority institutions, the majority of which subscribed to the C.A.S. General Fund.

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<sup>448</sup> Presentations were made to Leicester Museum and Art Gallery and Leeds City Art Gallery in 1936; the National Museum of Wales (now the National Museum and Gallery Cardiff) and Carlisle Art Gallery (now Tullie House) in 1938; Leeds City Art Gallery, Bankfield Museum, Hanley Art Gallery and Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1939; Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Graves Art Gallery and Hanley Art Gallery in 1940; Leeds City Art Gallery, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, Graves Art Gallery and Hanley Art Gallery in 1941; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Graves Art Gallery and Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1942; Leeds City Art Gallery, Graves Art Gallery and Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1943. Leeds City Art Gallery, Graves Art Gallery, Castle Museum, in Nottingham, and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in 1944; and Graves Art Gallery, Carlisle Art Gallery and Huddersfield Art Gallery in 1945.

### **8.13.2.Sculpture**

As early as April 1913, works of sculpture by Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill and Charles Ricketts had been acquired by the C.A.S. Sculpture, however, was not specified as a type of acquisition by the C.A.S. until 1932, as even in the form of carving, sculpture was still an expensive art form compared with paintings. Sculpture was also less easily transportable and therefore could not play a significant role in the C.A.S.'s primary pre-1945 activity which was the provincial loan of works. Despite the restrictions of cost, storage and display, the revival of direct-carving in Britain meant that the C.A.S. had to respond to this major development in early Twentieth-Century British Art by making occasional acquisitions. During the period 1932-39, the C.A.S. acquired works by a wide range of artists who were Frank Dobson and his pupil Elizabeth Muntz, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Maurice Lambert, Henry Moore, Glyn Philpot, S. Rabinovitch, Lady Patricia Ramsay, John Skeaping and his pupil Elizabeth Spurr, and Trevor Tennant.

The effects of the economic Depression of the 1930s on contemporary patronage and the art market encouraged the C.A.S. to distribute sculpture, in an attempt to instil institutional and private patronage in this field, and key seemingly wealthy cities were targeted. The first sculpture presented by the C.A.S. to a local authority art gallery was Jacob Epstein's bronze 'Seated Nude' which was given to Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in 1929. This was followed by the presentation of Maurice Lambert's bronze 'Birds in Flight' to Manchester City Art Gallery in 1930. From 1932-33, the first group presentation of sculpture to provincial local authority art galleries and museums took place when the C.A.S. presented John Skeaping's marble 'Seated Torso' to Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Frank Dobson's bronze 'Madame Lopokova' to the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Elizabeth Muntz's 'Erda' to Manchester City Art Gallery and Lady Patricia Ramsay's beeswax sculpture 'In the Tropics' to York City Art Gallery; after this period, no further sculpture was distributed by the C.A.S. to provincial art galleries and museums until the 1950s.

Prior to 1946, the C.A.S. also acquired drawings as an alternative and more cost-effective means by which to represent progressive sculptors, such as Henry Moore, in local authority collections. Only in 1949, with the purchase of F.E. McWilliam's concrete 'Man and Wife' and plastic wood 'The Stag', did the C.A.S. begin actively to acquire contemporary examples of British sculpture on a significant scale. This was followed, in 1951, by the purchase of Lynn Chadwick's iron mobile 'Dragonfly' and F. E. McWilliam's plastic wood 'Cain and Abel'. In 1956, the first major sculpture gifts by the C.A.S. were made to local authority art galleries and museums. These were Bernard Meadows' bronze 'Reliefs on a Cock' presented to the Williamson Art Gallery, Henry Moore's bronze 'Woman in Ladderback Chair' presented to the Ferens Art Gallery and Eduardo Paolozzi's bronze 'Head' presented to Astley Cheetham Art Gallery. The C.A.S. also both purchased three bronze sculptures from 'The Seasons' exhibition which it organized in 1956 and offered related purchase grants.<sup>449</sup>

The sheer cost of large-scale life-size sculpture, in relation to painting, meant that this art could only be bought by major local authority institutions. Even these, however, faced problems in persuading their sub-committees to purchase contemporary British sculpture. In 1956, for example, Leeds City Art Gallery requested a recent Henry Moore bronze sculpture from the C.A.S.'s allocation of works, as despite the national and international prominence of several Yorkshire sculptors, most notably Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, the Leeds City Art Gallery Sub-Committee then favoured modern paintings rather than sculpture as acquisitions. From the late 1950s, other provincial local authority art galleries and museums had also begun to seek ways by which contemporary British sculptors, with rising international reputations, could be represented in their collections. The emergence of the 'New Generation' sculptors, in the 1960s, broadened this collecting remit. In 1968, Doncaster Art Gallery, Ferens Art Gallery and the Walker Art Gallery were all actively developing modern sculpture

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<sup>449</sup> See pp.159-160.

collections, while more modest-scale institutions, such as Salford Museum and Art Gallery and Huddersfield Art Gallery, were seeking to include examples through the C.A.S.'s distribution scheme.

The C.A.S. continued with its pump-priming policy of encouraging art galleries to collect in new areas, such as sculpture, into the 1970s. In 1975, for example, Cheltenham Art Gallery, with a negligible collection of Twentieth-Century British Art, was able to receive its first choice from the C.A.S.'s distribution scheme: Kenneth Armitage's bronze sculpture 'Both Arms'. By 1979, there was a general demand from the local authority art galleries and museums, which subscribed to the C.A.S., for more sculpture to be included in the nation-wide allocation of works. In 1983, therefore, the C.A.S. approached the Henry Moore Foundation, a national art charity, for an initial three-year grant to purchase works by young sculptors for distribution in 1985.<sup>450</sup> The Henry Moore Foundation agreed to long-term support of this collection development policy, and during the period 1983-98, the Foundation allocated £335,000 to the C.A.S., in order to fund the Society's sculpture purchases.<sup>451</sup>

### 8.13.3. "National" Art

Despite the C.A.S.'s national remit, the C.A.S.'s acquisitional activities were, until comparatively late in the twentieth century, largely London-based. The C.A.S.'s main focus throughout the twentieth century remained England, and this was in part due to logistics and a response to key areas of indigenous wealth generated by commerce and industry. The C.A.S.'s encouragement of "national" art was channelled through two

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<sup>450</sup> Letter: Caryl Hubbard to Henry Moore, 6th June, 1983: Contemporary Art Society Records. For a brief discussion of this scheme see Chapter 9, pp.256-257.

<sup>451</sup> The Henry Moore Foundation grants to the C.A.S were: 1983 £5,000, 1984 £5,000, 1985 £10,000, 1986 £10,000, 1987 £10,000, 1988 £20,000, 1989 £20,000, 1990 £40,000, 1991 £40,000, 1992 £25,000, 1993 £ 25,000, 1994 £25,000, 1995 £25,000, 1996 £25,000, 1997 £25,000 and 1998 £25,000. Complete lists of works bought with these grants are included in the relevant *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report*.

independent organizations modelled on the C.A.S. and the N.A.C.F.: the Scottish Modern Arts Association and the Contemporary Art Society for Wales discussed in Chapter 9. The C.A.S.'s representation of Scottish and Welsh Art was limited to artists who lived, worked or exhibited in London during their careers. In terms of Scottish art, during the years 1909-20, only pictures by D.Y. Cameron, James McBey, Ambrose McEvoy, James McEvoy and W.Y. MacGregor were purchased by the C.A.S. In 1925, the C.A.S. lent a selection of its general acquisitions to the Society of Scottish Artists, in Edinburgh, but made no purchasing sorties to Scotland's exhibition venues and artists' studios. The representation of contemporary Scottish art in the C.A.S.'s collections, therefore, became dependent upon occasional London-based purchases and sporadic gifts by C.A.S. individual members. In 1925, Edward Marsh presented a drawing by John Currie and, in 1926, Sydney Schiff presented a further three pictures by the artist. This was followed, in 1928, by Lord Howard de Walden's gift of J.D. Fergusson's paintings 'Head' and 'Head of Girl'; Fergusson had studied and painted in Paris, and was one of the major Scottish Colourists. From 1932-34, the C.A.S. bought paintings by Graham Murray and Ian Campbell Gray, as part of its general commitment to sustain artists during the economic crisis. After 1936, however, Scottish art virtually ceased to be acquired by the C.A.S., either in the form of purchases or gifts.

Although the C.A.S. lent its exhibitions to Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1911 and 1934, Kelvingrove Art Gallery in 1915, and to Edinburgh City Council (institution not specified), Dunbar Art Gallery and Dunfermline Art Gallery in 1929, the C.A.S.'s limited patronage of contemporary Scottish art, coupled with the geographical distance between Scotland and London, meant that it was not until the 1970s that Scottish local authority art galleries and museums joined the C.A.S. on a significant scale; for the scope and dates of subscribing membership see Appendix A.1. Prior to this, only Aberdeen Art Gallery and the Kelvingrove Art Gallery had become subscribers, in 1928. This change was brought about by the Scottish Arts Council's



support which, from 1977-89, allocated a total of £38,900 as annual grants to the C.A.S., in order to encourage the representation of contemporary Scottish art in provincial public art collections throughout the U.K.<sup>452</sup> The C.A.S. also set aside subsidiary funds for this purpose and, in 1982, a separate 'Buyer for Scotland' was appointed by the C.A.S. The Scottish Arts Council grant enabled the C.A.S. annual buyer to undertake study trips to artists' studios and exhibitions in Scotland, as well as to purchase art works. This focused form of purchasing converged with a general commercial and critical interest in contemporary Scottish painting; the artists purchased by the C.A.S. included, for example, Steven Campbell, Ken Currie, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Gwen Hardie and Peter Howson. Works purchased under the Scottish Arts Council-supported purchase scheme were widely distributed by the C.A.S. to over 30 art galleries and museums throughout Scotland, England and Wales in 1982, 1983, 1986, 1988 and 1992, thus both establishing and enhancing the representation of contemporary Scottish art; see List 8.9. Examples of Scottish Craft were also purchased by the C.A.S. and presented to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Dudley Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery and Peterborough City Museum and Art Gallery.

#### **List 8.9. Distribution of Scottish Arts Council-supported C.A.S. Purchases**

##### **Scottish local authority art galleries and museums**

Dundee Art Gallery

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

Kelvingrove Art Gallery

Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery

Paisley Museum and Art Gallery

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<sup>452</sup> The Scottish Arts Council grants to the C.A.S. were: 1977 £1,150, 1978 £1,700, 1979 £2,250, 1980 £2,800, 1981 £3,000, 1982 £3,500, 1983 £3,500, 1984 £3,500, 1985 £3,500, 1986 £3,500, 1987 £3,500, 1988 £3,500, 1989 £3,500. Information abstracted from the *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report* for 1977-89 [series].

Peterhead Arbuthnot Museum

**English local authority art galleries and museums**

Bolton Museum and Art Gallery

Brighouse Art Gallery

Carlisle Art Gallery

Chelmsford and Essex Museum

Herbert Art Gallery (Coventry)

Darlington Museum and Art Gallery

Derby Art Gallery

Hove Art Gallery

Ferens Art Gallery (Hull)

Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum (now Leamington Spa Art Gallery)

Leeds City Art Gallery

Leicester Museum and Art Gallery

Manchester City Art Gallery

Middlesbrough Art Gallery

Laing Art Gallery (Newcastle)

Northampton Art Gallery

Castle Museum (Nottingham)

Harris Museum and Art Gallery (Preston)

Salford Museum and Art Gallery

Becroft Art Gallery (Southend)

Atkinson Art Gallery (Southport)

Astley Cheetham Art Gallery (Stalybridge)

Hanley Art Gallery (Stoke-on-Trent)

Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery

Swindon Art Gallery

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

## **Welsh local authority art galleries and museums**

Cyfartha Castle Museum (Merthyr Tydfil).

Newport Art Gallery

### **8.14. Impact of the Contemporary Art Society**

Like its sister society, the N.A.C.F., from which it grew out of, the C.A.S.'s starting point was cultural prestige. Where it differed, however, was in its two over-riding concerns with patronage and the representation of contemporary British art in public collections. The pre-1945 C.A.S. also represented a channel for Roger Fry's ideas on patronage, education and aesthetics, outlined in Chapter 2. Fry's belief in economic intervention, in order to sustain forms of progressive contemporary art, had led him both to establish the Omega Workshops, in 1913, and invite the involvement of the economist, John Maynard Keynes, in the C.A.S.'s activities. The idea of institutional patronage, pursued by the C.A.S., quickly evolved to include young artists and established names, a combination which served to further distinguish the C.A.S. from the N.A.C.F.'s heritage-orientated outlook. In pursuing these objectives, the C.A.S. became involved in a range of activities and evolving strategies which at certain historical periods led it to be linked with other organizations, or to share concurrent ideas. These encompassed the formation of a collection, art loans, exhibitions, gifts of art, purchase grants, art fairs, linked-cultural activities and partnership-funding with other independent and central government-funded art institutions and organizations.

The C.A.S.'s creation of a loan collection, through gifts and purchases, aimed to be a broadly based selection of works with an emphasis on more progressive, but not wholly inclusive forms of contemporary British art. By means of sales and distributions, the fluid rather than permanent nature of the C.A.S.'s collection ensured its contemporary profile. As a model of collecting it was emulated by the friends groups which were established nation-wide for the benefit of individual local authority art galleries and museums. The C.A.S. collection was created to be a persuasive

educational resource of visual knowledge which, in the form of provincial exhibitions accompanied by catalogues and lectures, and supplemented by loans from private individuals and public collections, consciously sought to exemplify sophisticated metropolitan aesthetics and establish benchmarks of collecting in terms of artists' names and the quality of works selected. In order to attract local authority art galleries and museums, as institutional patrons, key provincial centres of known prosperity were targeted with these early educational loans. These exhibitions were followed by the C.A.S.'s introduction of sales exhibitions which marked a further progression in the C.A.S.'s strategy. The C.A.S.'s postwar themed exhibitions, notable for promoting large-scale paintings with a strong subject basis, widened the C.A.S.'s concern with institutional patronage to include commercial organizations, while publicly endorsing a significant development in British painting.

Despite its original ambitions to cover the whole of the United Kingdom, the C.A.S.'s finite financial and staffing resources ultimately determined a largely London and southern private membership, Executive Committee and selection of annual individual buyers. Its acquisitions were similarly largely derived from the same geographical coverage and this focus continued until the 1970s. Within England, the C.A.S. successfully enhanced its institutional membership throughout the course of the twentieth century. By linking its involvement with other independent and central government-funded bodies and organizations, however, the C.A.S. was able to enhance its cultural contribution and the range of art forms it promoted, notably sculpture, and ultimately its own cultural authority. In London, its postwar involvement in large-scale major collaborative exhibitions with the Tate Gallery and the Whitechapel Art Gallery, furthered the cultural role of institutional collecting during a particularly dynamic period for contemporary British art. This support placed the C.A.S. within the developing consensus climate for collecting Twentieth-Century British Art, and in particular its contemporary aspect.

The allocation of gifts and the provision of distribution and grant-making schemes were seen by the C.A.S. as initially ensuring representation and then giving direction to local authority collecting, with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity. As a channel for gifts and bequests, the C.A.S. also reinforced a key feature of postwar public collecting, gap-filling, as an intrinsic part of art history-defined collections. Its postwar promotion of themed collecting, through exhibitions and specific collection schemes, however, suggested that contemporary art could be collected within specialist categories which cut across historical periods and were ultimately aimed at enhancing broader visitor interest in public collections, and stimulating a level of contemporary cultural interest in pre-1900 works. In the immediate postwar period, the C.A.S. defined its role as leading the resurgence in local authority collecting of contemporary British art and thereby sustaining the postwar relevance of local authority art galleries and museums as cultural institutions. Its strategy here, led the C.A.S. to be involved in the controversial acquisition of several paintings by Francis Bacon, which included the 'Study for the Magdalene' (now known as 'Figure Study II'), and the unsuccessful campaign to find a local authority purchaser for Henry Moore's sculpture, 'Draped Torso'.

The C.A.S.'s acquisition process also broadened throughout its history. Early purchasing direct from artists' studios and art dealers was extended to noteworthy exhibitions and contemporary art competitions, which included key provincial initiatives. After an initial trial, the C.A.S. dispensed with selection committees, so that acquisitions relied on the individual judgement, enthusiasm, and preferences of a medley of collectors, critics, and occasional curators. As such, selections were conducted largely in disregard to the collection-defined needs, policies and specializations of individual local authority art galleries and museums, which were subscribing members of the C.A.S., until the introduction of the Harris Museum and Art Gallery Pilot Scheme in 1985. The membership surveys carried out by the C.A.S., from the late 1980s onwards, revealed that the dichotomy between the two approaches

to collecting contemporary British art, private and public (the amateur and the professional) needed to be resolved. The C.A.S.'s involvement in subsequent tripartite long-term collecting schemes was part of this endeavour and marked a fundamental shift in the C.A.S.'s relationship with local authority collections; a change which encouraged a consultative process and dialogue with local authority curators. The introduction of the Special Collection Scheme 1997-2004 was promoted by the C.A.S. as a new national policy, a statement indicative of the C.A.S.'s increasingly quasi-official role and closer working relationship with central-government funded agencies, such as the Arts Council.

The creation of the C.A.S., as a complement to the N.A.C.F., drew on traditional ideas of connoisseurship often associated with heritage-type art and described in the C.A.S.'s first annual report as 'the exercise of discrimination'.<sup>453</sup> Through the C.A.S., an act of judgement which equated only heritage-type art with the idea of lasting high-quality aesthetics was gradually transferred to the collecting of Twentieth-Century British Art. The N.A.C.F.'s late twentieth-century schemes, for the representation of Twentieth-Century British Art in local authority collections, retained a belief in the "passage of time" as a cultural process by which to determine the artistic and financial value of a work of art. By contrast, the C.A.S. established itself as a filtering process and a knowledgeable conduit between two evolving twentieth-century worlds, the curatorial profession and the commercial art gallery specializing in contemporary British art. The C.A.S.'s contribution towards local authority collecting was, throughout the twentieth-century, also closely linked with its own transformation from a social membership body of amateurs to an advisory, semi-official, commercially-aware and ultimately professional organization.

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<sup>453</sup> Contemporary Art Society, *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report 1910-12*, C.A.S., London, 1913, p.2.

## **CHAPTER 9: OTHER NATIONAL INDEPENDENT ART SCHEMES**

### **9.1. Scottish Modern Arts Association**

When the Scottish Modern Arts Association was established, in 1907, its aims were to create a national collection of modern Scottish art and promote the patronage of contemporary Scottish artists; these plans, however, were subsequently modified to include the enhanced representation of non-Scottish art and the 'enriching [of] Scottish Art Galleries'.<sup>454</sup> Its founding President was Arthur Kay (1861-1939), who had studied art extensively all over Europe and was a prominent figure in the Scottish art world. He was the West of Scotland representative for the N.A.C.F. and was an adventurous collector of Old Masters and contemporary artists, many of whom were Scottish, such as S. J. Peploe, D Y. Cameron and Katherine Cameron, to whom Kay was married. The Association was created in response to the limited representation of contemporary Scottish art in public art galleries in Scotland and at the Tate Gallery in London. Following the N.A.C.F.'s example, it was formed as an individual membership organization, largely of artists, but its purchasing activities extended beyond its own membership and where possible, works were purchased direct from artists' studios. Purchases and acceptances of gifts from members were made by a Selection Committee of six members drawn from the Association's Executive Committee. The structure of the Association was also modelled on the N.A.C.F. which encouraged all its Scottish members to join the new organization. These included notably the 27th Earl of Crawford and 10th Earl of Balcarres, David Alexander Lindsay, himself a Scot, who was then Chairman of the N.A.C.F (and later a member of the C.A.S. Executive Committee); he joined the Scottish Modern Arts Association's Executive Committee. The Earl took a keen interest in public collection development and, in 1911, his article entitled 'Museums of Art', an early discussion on art and museology, was included in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The major Irish art collector, Hugh Lane (1875-1915), was also a founding subscriber of the Association, and in 1910

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<sup>454</sup> Salford Art Gallery, *Annual Report 1931-32*, Salford Museums, 1932, pp.12-13.

presented a contemporary Irish painting, 'The Derelict' by Nathaniel Hone. The Contemporary Art Society, too, actively encouraged the Association's similar concerns with the representation of contemporary art in public art galleries and patronage. In 1923, for example, the C.A.S. purchased Lucien Pissarro's painting 'Blackpool Valley' for £50 and presented it to the Association.

Under the Association's constitution, works of art in all media, which included the Applied and Decorative Arts, by Scottish and non-Scottish artists were eligible for purchase and acceptance as a gift or bequest. Following the example of the C.A.S., the Association created a collection which aimed to be a representative selection of twentieth-century Scottish painting. These works were available for loan either in the form of the Association's own loan exhibitions, or in support of other schemes which actively sought 'to secure the adequate representation of Scottish art in British National Collections'.<sup>455</sup> Early purchases were made from annual exhibitions, held at the Royal Scottish Academy and the Royal Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, and direct from artists' studios. Among these acquisitions were examples of "Academy Art", the Glasgow School and other more contemporary examples of progressive international tendencies. These works included F. C. B. Cadell's 'Lady with a Black Hat', James Cadenhead's 'Portrait of the Artist's Mother', D. Y. Cameron's 'Criffel', J. D. Fergusson's 'The Blue Lamp', E. A. Hornel's 'Seashore Pastures', James Paterson's 'Edinburgh's Playground', S. J. Peploe's 'Still Life' and William McTaggart's 'The Rescue'; later notable paintings purchased included William Crozier's 'From the Mound', W. G. Gillies' 'The Green Dish' and Anne Redpath's 'Black and White Check'. Comparative works by early francophile English artists were also acquired, such as George Clausen's 'Cucumbers and Tomatoes' and Philip Wilson Steer's 'Brill, Buckinghamshire'. The selection of sculpture was less distinguished and more limited,

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<sup>455</sup> A. Eddington, 'The Scottish Modern Arts Association', *The Studio*, Vol. xlv, July-December 1908, p.116.



although it did include Benno Schotz's bronze 'Lily'. Despite the limited funds available, mainly from subscriptions, by 1914 the Association had purchased some 60 works. In 1934, the Association accepted 40 works from the Stodart Walker Bequest, and by 1957 the Association's collection had greatly expanded to 349 works.

As part of its national collection objectives an arrangement was reached with the National Gallery of Scotland, in 1912, whereby two galleries, not required for exhibition purposes, were allocated for an eight-month display of the Association's acquisitions. For the remainder of the year, the works were loaned to public art galleries in Scotland; a similar arrangement was later used by Manchester City Art Gallery for the display of the Charles Rutherston Collection.<sup>456</sup> Following the C.A.S.'s example, during the Second World War the Association's collection was put at the disposal of the Scottish branch of C.E.M.A. which organized two touring exhibitions based on the Association's collection; these were the 'Scottish Modern Art Exhibition' and 'Glasgow School' which toured from 1944-45.

The Association's first loans outside Scotland were shown in London at the Summer Exhibition of The New Gallery, a commercial art gallery, in 1909, and this was followed by further loans to the metropolis, such as the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1912 and the Imperial Institute Gallery in 1927. By the 1920s, the Association was circulating exhibitions and loans to provincial English art galleries and museums, under the auspices of the Art Exhibitions Bureau, in order 'to enable the public of this country [England] to become familiar with Scottish painting of the last 25 years'.<sup>457</sup> These loans focused on the geographically accessible north of England, whose towns and cities offered potential patrons for Scottish art. The venues included the local authority art institutions, Laing Art Gallery in 1923, Carlisle Art Gallery in 1928, and

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<sup>456</sup> See Vol. II, Chapter 12, pp.75-76.

<sup>457</sup> Salford Art Gallery, *Annual Report 1931-32*, 1932, Salford Museums, pp.12-13.

Salford Museum and Art Gallery in 1931. The Association also regularly lent works to the still prestigious annual Autumn Exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery. The largest display of the Association's collection outside Scotland took place from 1932-33, when 83 pictures were toured to Stockport War Memorial and Art Gallery, Grundy Art Gallery, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, Bury Art Gallery, Warwick District Council Art Gallery and Museum, York City Art Gallery, Warrington Art Gallery and Museum, Rochdale Art Gallery, Williamson Art Gallery and Harrogate Art Gallery (now the Mercer Art Gallery); the exhibition was subsequently shown in Scotland at the art galleries of Aberdeen, Dundee and Dunfermline. This exhibition aimed both to promote 'living Scottish Artists of distinction' and the Association's general public profile;<sup>458</sup> the Contemporary Art Society's activities were, as previously noted, focused on England, the Colonies and the Dominions. As part of this policy, the Association described its own collection development as the 'nucleus of, and as a reminder calling for, the much needed "Tate Gallery" for Scotland'.<sup>459</sup> In 1939, the Association lent seven pictures to the Royal Academy's major 'Exhibition of Scottish Art', with the expectation that this exhibition would advance the idea of a permanent gallery of modern art in Edinburgh

Post-1945, the Association lent works to several Arts Council touring exhibitions, the last of which was the 'William McTaggart' monographic show in 1954. After the Second World War, the Association's collection began to be distributed as gifts. In 1946, the Association, following the C.A.S.'s example, presented approximately 70 works to public art galleries in the Dominions, via The Empire Art Loan Collection Society. The agreement by central government to fund the establishment of a new national art gallery, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, which opened in

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<sup>458</sup> 'Foreword' by Arthur Kay to *The Scottish Modern Arts Association Report*, 1932, p.3: The Scottish Modern Arts Association Archive, Edinburgh Council Records. Kay was the Chairman of the Association's Executive.

<sup>459</sup> Scottish Modern Arts Association, *Annual Report 1933*, p.7: The Scottish Modern Arts Association Archive, Edinburgh Council Records.

1960, brought about the simultaneous achievement of the Association's founding objective and its own demise. The new national art gallery, however, was only willing to accept a single painting from the Association, 'A Bloomsbury Family' 1907, which was by the Anglo-Irish artist William Orpen.<sup>460</sup> The remainder of the Association's collection, approximately 300 pictures, was declined as a gift and was subsequently presented to Edinburgh City Council which had recently received the Jean Watson Bequest to fund purchases of contemporary art;<sup>461</sup> the Stodart Walker Bequest of sketches was sold.

## **9.2. Contemporary Art Society for Wales**

The Contemporary Art Society for Wales (C.A.S.W.) was established in 1937 in response to the lack of patronage for contemporary Welsh art and the embryonic nature of public art gallery collections in Wales. It was closely modelled on the C.A.S., whose then President, Thomas Evelyn Scott-Ellis, 8th Baron (Lord) Howard de Walden, became the first Chairman of the C.A.S.W; in 1938 he was also appointed a Tate Gallery Trustee. De Walden was a patron of the arts, notably supporting Dylan Thomas, who was deeply committed to the affairs of Wales. He bought property there, learnt and promoted the study of the Welsh language, and wrote dramas and opera librettos with a Welsh theme. The original Executive Committee of the C.A.S.W. also included the Welsh artist Augustus John, then a Trustee of the Tate Gallery; James B. Manson (1879-1945), a founder member of both the Camden Town Group (where he was Secretary) and the London Group, a writer on art and Director of the Tate Gallery, from 1930-38; and Cyril Fox (1882-1967), the archaeologist and Director of the National Museum of Wales, from 1926-48. By February 1938, the C.A.S.W. had attracted 35 private subscribers who included Ivor Miles Windsor-Clive (1889-1943)

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<sup>460</sup> National Galleries of Scotland, *Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art: Concise Catalogue: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture*, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1977.

<sup>461</sup> Letter: James Dunbar-Nasmith to the Author, March 1995.

and the 2nd Earl of Plymouth, whose father, the 1st Earl, had had a prominent role in London art world.

The C.A.S.W.'s origins were linked, from the outset, with burgeoning political objectives to formulate a national identity in Wales.<sup>462</sup> Its activities were, therefore, more nationally defined than the Scottish Modern Arts Association, restricted as they were to establishing a Welsh audience for Twentieth-Century Welsh Art, and in particular its contemporary aspect. The C.A.S.W.'s main aim was to support contemporary Welsh artists through purchases, the organizing of exhibitions of contemporary Welsh art in Wales, and the presentation of works to the National Museum of Wales and other public art galleries in the principality; the acquisition of examples of contemporary non-Welsh art was, however, not excluded from the Society's objectives. Like the Scottish Modern Arts Association, a central long-term aim was the creation of a national collection of contemporary art; the ownership of distributed works, following the C.A.S.'s example, remained with the C.A.S.W.

### 9.2.1. Acquisitions

In order to achieve these aims, the C.A.S.W. was 'empowered to purchase works of contemporary art of accepted importance and to present these to Welsh public institutions'.<sup>463</sup> The reference to 'accepted importance' suggests an initial reliance on artists who had made their reputations in London, particularly given the membership of the C.A.S.W.'s Executive Committee. Unlike the C.A.S. and the Scottish Modern Arts Association, the C.A.S.W. was established for the acquisition and exhibition of Fine Art only; an arrangement which remains unchanged today. Following the example

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<sup>462</sup> See David Alston, 'Contemporary Wales, Society and Art' in *Contemporary Art Society for Wales: 60th Anniversary Exhibition*, Contemporary Art Society for Wales, Cardiff, 1997, p.8.

<sup>463</sup> Objectives stated at the first C.A.S.W. Executive Committee meeting held at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington on Friday, 16th April, 1937, quoted in Contemporary Art Society for Wales, *Contemporary Art Society for Wales: 60th Anniversary Exhibition*, Cardiff, 1997, p.6.

of the C.A.S., the C.A.S.W. established from the outset both a purchase fund and a reserve fund; the reserve fund was intended for the purchase of more costly works by established artists, the acquisition of which, was subject to the approval of the C.A.S.W. Executive Committee. The membership of the C.A.S.W. represented a broader social spectrum than that of the C.A.S., and its annual buyer was drawn from businessmen, teachers, artists, collectors and curators. Gifts of art were encouraged and received from private individual subscribing members, annual buyers, artists and their estates, and businesses with strong regional links, such as British Coal. These included, for example, 'Susanna and the Elders' a major painting by Frank Brangwyn, a Royal Academician and artist of Welsh-parentage, which was presented privately by Ralph Edwards (1894-1977); Edwards was Keeper of Furniture, from 1937-54, at the V. & A. Museum and a Welshman. In addition to purchases and gifts, the C.A.S.W. also generated its own art through several site-specific commissions, such as Thomas Rathmell's 'View from Christchurch Road, Newport' for Newport Museum and Art Gallery.

The first C.A.S.W. buyer was James B. Manson, for the period 1937-42, whose initial purchase was Edward Morland Lewis' painting 'Shandon Church'; Lewis was a London-trained artist who had joined the London Group, in 1931, and was a pupil and assistant of Walter Sickert. During the Second World War, the 8th Baron (Lord) Howard de Walden acted as the buyer, from 1942-43, followed by Ralph Edwards, from 1944-45. Postwar, the C.A.S.W. maintained a close working relationship with the National Museum of Wales which followed the model established by the C.A.S. and the Tate Gallery; the Keeper of Art of the National Museum of Wales, from 1952-77, Robert L. Charles (1916-77), acted as a C.A.S.W. buyer and the C.A.S.W. Executive Committee drew on members of the Council of the National Museum of Wales, the equivalent to a Board of Trustees. To sustain the C.A.S.W.'s postwar acquisitions programme, a regular grant was made by the Welsh Arts Council

(formerly the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council) for the period 1951-85; Charles became a member of this Council in 1976.

The C.A.S.W. was not constituted to offer purchase grants, but in 1964 the C.A.S.W. made an exception so that the National Museum of Wales could participate in the Gulbenkian Foundation's collection development schemes. Under these schemes, the C.A.S.W. made grants towards the purchase of Lynn Chadwick's construction 'Stranger VI', Jeffrey Steele's painting 'Hecuba' and Henri Hayden's painting 'Mollien'. Like the C.A.S., the C.A.S.W. responded to the expanding nature of art practice that took place from the 1960s. This included the purchase of non-figurative and large-scale works, constructions, sculpture, photographs and optical paintings. Apart from Welsh artists, works incorporating specifically Welsh imagery by established twentieth-century British artists, such as Robert Colquhoun, Josef Herman, Robert MacBryde and John Piper, were also included.

### **9.2.2. Distribution of Art Works**

In 1946, the C.A.S.W. made its first distribution of art works which was, following the example of the Tate Gallery, primarily instigated to benefit key national collections. Under the C.A.S.W.'s rules only national institutions, such as the Art Department of the National Museum of Wales, were permitted to receive works as outright gifts. Local authority Welsh art galleries and museums could only accept works on "permanent loan" to their collections: these institutions were Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Newport Museum and Art Gallery, and Glynn Vivian Art Gallery; works were also presented to the Welsh Arts Council Collection. The last C.A.S.W. acquisition-distribution exhibition was held in 1994 at the Turner House, in Penarth, a branch museum of the National Museum of Wales. By 1998, the C.A.S.W. had distributed over 700 art works by Welsh, English, Scottish and other European artists to national, local authority, university and school collections, and to businesses throughout Wales. The reconstitution of the National Museum of Wales, as the

National Museum and Gallery Cardiff in 1999, however, resulted in the transfer of some C.A.S.W. art works from Welsh public art gallery and museum collections to this National, with the aim of fulfilling the C.A.S.W.'s founding national collection objective; for example, Thomas Rathmell's painting 'View from Christchurch Road, Newport' was transferred from Newport Museum and Art Gallery to form part of the National Museum and Gallery Cardiff's restructured Fine Art collection.

### **9.2.3. Exhibitions**

The C.A.S.W.'s involvement in exhibitions was limited, due to the financial and administrative resources entailed. In order to highlight the C.A.S.W.'s specific cultural role, its first exhibition was held at the National Museum of Wales in 1938. This featured C.A.S.W. acquisitions alongside loans from private collectors, public art galleries in England and commercial art dealers in London. Lenders included Edward Le Bas, the francophile artist and prominent collector; Lucy Wertheim (1883-1971), the exuberant collector and commercial gallery owner, whose progressive 'Twenties Group' exhibitions promoted British artists under thirty years of age; the Tate Gallery; and the London art dealers, The Leicester Galleries and Arthur Tooth & Sons. The C.A.S.W.'s Chairman, the 8th Baron (Lord) Howard de Walden, also lent several art works to C.A.S.W. exhibitions. During the Second World War, the C.A.S.W. collaborated with C.E.M.A. in organizing touring art exhibitions in Wales. The creation of the Arts Council, and the death of the 8th Baron (Lord) Howard de Walden and James B. Manson, all in 1946, brought about a change in the C.A.S.W.'s activities. It ceased to organize touring exhibitions and focused on distribution exhibitions, held at the National Museum of Wales. In 1967, the Welsh Arts Council toured two exhibitions based on C.A.S.W.'s acquisitions.<sup>464</sup> Acquisitions made by the C.A.S.W. were no longer retained for up to three years, in partial emulation of the

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<sup>464</sup> Letter: Gareth Davis (former Secretary of the C.A.S.W.) to the Author, October 1998.

C.A.S., but where possible, were distributed within the year of purchase; by 1997, only 38 works remained undistributed by the C.A.S.W.<sup>465</sup>

### **9.3. Henry Moore Foundation**

The Gulbenkian Foundation's Provincial Galleries Sculpture Purchase Scheme, discussed in Vol.II, had revealed the need for substantial external purchase funding to support the future nation-wide public collecting of twentieth-century sculpture, and in particular its contemporary aspect. In 1977, the Henry Moore Foundation was created as an art charity to promote sculpture and was financed by the considerable estate of the artist, Henry Moore, and its commercial activities. The Henry Moore Foundation's founding aims were the encouragement of publications, research, exhibitions and the purchase of sculpture by local authority and university art galleries and museums. Occasional works were also lent to local authority art galleries and museums from the artist's estate, in order to promote institutional collecting; for example, in 1977, the Foundation lent Henry Moore's sculpture 'Mother and Child' 1949 on long-term loan to Sheffield City Art Galleries.

Appropriately, sustained purchase grants, from the Henry Moore Foundation, had a major impact on the scale and breadth of the representation of twentieth-century British sculptors at Leeds, a city with significant historical associations with the rise of twentieth-century British sculpture. During the years 1983-93, for example, the Henry Moore Foundation made substantial grants towards the purchase of 13 sculptures by Leeds City Art Gallery. These grants ranged from 25% of the total purchase price to the full funding of purchases, such as Henry Moore's 'Mother and Child' 1936-37 which was bought by Leeds City Art Gallery, in 1985, for £200,000. The Gallery's sculpture collection is linked to the adjacent Henry Moore Institute which houses the

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<sup>465</sup> Contemporary Art Society for Wales, *Contemporary Art Society for Wales: 60th Anniversary Exhibition*, Contemporary Art Society for Wales, Cardiff, 1997, p.21.



Henry Moore Study Centre, jointly established by the Foundation and Leeds City Council, and The Henry Moore Sculpture Trust which aims to promote the study and exhibition of sculpture. A consequence of this educational development, alongside an established local authority art gallery, is that Leeds has become the main provincial centre of twentieth-century British sculpture in Britain which offers exhibitions, general displays and study collections of maquettes and sculptors' drawings. In promoting the institutional patronage of contemporary sculpture, the Foundation also made grants towards the commission of new outdoor sculpture, the installation of which was adjacent to art galleries and museums. These projects included Ian Hamilton Finlay's 'sculpture entrance', from 1988-89, for the Harris Museum and Art Gallery and Dhruva Mistry's 'Guardians', from 1991-92, installed nearby to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

In 1983, the Foundation, as has been noted earlier, agreed to provide substantial financial support for purchases and collection schemes of the Contemporary Art Society. This initiative came from Caryl Hubbard, then Chairman of the C.A.S., and was in response to an increased interest in sculpture and accompanying rising market prices.<sup>466</sup> These grants were used to purchase single major pieces of sculpture, such as Richard Deacon's 'Mirror, Mirror' presented to Southampton City Art Gallery in 1983 and Jane Ackroyd's 'The Frozen Wind Crept on Above' presented to Ipswich Museum in 1986, and related works on paper, such as the group of 15 drawings by Stephen Cox purchased in 1988. The first major distribution of art works purchased by the C.A.S. with Henry Moore Foundation grants was made in 1988. These were Zadok Ben David's 'A Short Memory to a Long Tail II' presented to Cartwright Hall Art Gallery; Peter Randall-Page's 'Gasteropod's Dream' and an untitled drawing presented to the Usher Art Gallery; Michael Craig Martin's 'Glass of Water' presented to the Walker Art Gallery; Shirazeh Houshiary's 'Ki' presented to Southampton City Art

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<sup>466</sup> The Author in conversation with Nancy Balfour, November 1995.

Gallery; and Nigel Hall's 'Giving and Receiving' presented to York City Art Gallery. By the close of the twentieth century, more than 30 major and minor local authority art gallery and museum collections had benefited from this joint scheme.<sup>467</sup>

### **9.3.1. Impact of the Henry Moore Foundation**

Given the broad coverage of the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund, the creation of the Henry Moore Foundation ensured that the acquisition of sculpture did not become restricted to national institutions. The Foundation's grants also supported the fusion of so-called "museum-art" and Public Art, such as at Birmingham. Despite its considerable resources, the Henry Moore Foundation found, like its predecessors, that an open-ended all-inclusive approach towards grant requests was not sustainable. From 1983, rising prices and a greater demand for grants meant that the Foundation encouraged pooled-funding from local and national sources in support of applications, an approach which inevitably favoured larger and more established local authority art galleries and museums. At Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, for example, the friends group provided the additional local funding towards the purchase of Frank Dobson's 'Kneeling Female Nude' in 1983 and F.E McWilliam's 'Three Prongs' in 1987. This was followed, in 1991, by the Gallery's purchase of Eduardo Paolozzi's 'Figure with Mechanical Head' which involved a combination of local authority funding, a 50% grant from the V. & A. Purchase Grant Fund and only a £1,000 grant from the Henry Moore Foundation. By supporting the C.A.S.'s own cultural initiatives, the Henry Moore Foundation was, however, indirectly able to extend its support to encompass local authority art galleries and museums with a varied scale of purchase funds.

As a national charity, the Henry Moore Foundation was unique in being both funded by the success of one artist's lifetime achievements, and created for the benefit of a

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<sup>467</sup> For a complete list of drawings and sculptures purchased, see *Contemporary Art Society Annual Report*, from 1983 onwards.

particular art form, sculpture. Its main contribution has been to support, within a comparatively short period of time, the creation of a major regional centre for sculpture at Leeds, of which the local authority art gallery is a key component. At the same time, the Foundation's provisions of grants has ensured that the otherwise often vastly expensive area of contemporary British sculpture continues to be represented in local authority collections.