



PRESS RELEASE

Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water

12 November 2022 – 23 April 2023



Eric Ravilious, *Chalk Paths*, 1935, watercolour on paper private collection. © Bridgeman Images

Pallant House Gallery is pleased to announce ‘Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water’, the first major exhibition to consider Sussex as a geographical and conceptual site of inspiration for artists from the 18th century to the present day. Featuring over 100 works, including paintings, drawings, photography, and sculpture by over 50 artists, the exhibition will reassess the rich lives and work of artists connected with the Sussex landscape. The exhibition will provide a new history of British landscape art through the prism of this distinctive area, spanning from Constable and Turner to contemporary artists such as Tania Kovats and Wolfgang Tillmans.

Perhaps more often than any other region, Sussex has long been considered to evoke an

idea of the English countryside. The iconic chalk-cliff coastline and the rolling expanse of the South Downs lend a unique sense of place, and of Englishness, that has been explored by artists and writers across the centuries. The exhibition will chart the ways in which Sussex has served as a site of exploration, retreat, and alternative lifestyles. Most notably, the 20th century saw Sussex become home to numerous leading artists and writers, including Eric Ravilious, Bloomsbury Group artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, Surrealists Lee Miller, Edward Burra and Paul Nash, and abstract artists such as Ivon Hitchens.

The exhibition will begin with key 19th-century responses to the Sussex landscape by William Blake, J.M.W. Turner and John Constable, each of whom were hugely influential on the important 20th-century artists who later worked in Sussex. Blake lived from 1800 to 1803 in the coastal village of Felpham, a period which inspired episodes of *Milton: A Poem* and his wood-engraved Illustrations to Robert John Thornton’s *The Pastorals of Virgil* (c.1821) featuring landscape vignettes. Constable visited Brighton in the 1820s, in the hope of improving the health of his wife Maria, who suffered from tuberculosis. His *Seascape Study: Brighton Beach looking west* (c. 1824-28) will be included in the exhibition and captures the vastness of the sea sky with the addition of two windswept figures looking out to the horizon. Turner regularly visited Petworth House in West Sussex where he was given a room to use as his studio. During one of his visits, he painted the atmospheric *Chichester Canal* (c. 1828), which will return to the city for the first time for this exhibition to coincide with the bicentenary of Chichester Canal.

At the turn of the 20th century, Sussex became the site of artistic experimentation as British artists applied the bold colours of continental Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Cubism to quintessentially English rural subjects in the South Downs. The ‘Camden Town’ group artists Robert Bevan

and Lucien Pissarro, who were known for their urban scenes, made forays into Sussex to depict country cottages and farms, such as Pissarro's *'Cottage at Storrington'* (1911) rendered with pointillist dabs of paint. Edward Wadsworth used the landscape as a vehicle for abstraction in his Vorticist *'Landscape'* (1913) in which trees and hills are broken into simplified facets and planes. In contrast, William Nicholson aimed for pared down simplicity in a series of small oil sketches of the village of Rottingdean where he lived from 1909 to 1914, such as his painting, *Cliffs at Rottingdean* (1909). Walking out onto the Downs from Rottingdean, Nicholson was drawn to the form and structure of the landscape as defined by light filtering out extraneous detail to focus on interplay between the sky and broad curves of the Downs.

During the first half of the 20th century, some artists found solace and reflection in the Sussex landscape, while for others it provided a vital space to explore different ways of living and artistic innovation. Bloomsbury Group artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, along with Grant's lover, the writer David Garnett, moved to Charleston farmhouse near Lewes in 1916. There they created a retreat for artists and writers during the First World War, an artistic hub where they adopted a new domestic lifestyle which rejected societal norms. Still intact today, the setting for this alternative way of living inspired many paintings, including Bell's *The Pond at Charleston, East Sussex* (c.1916) and Grant's *Landscape, Sussex* (1920), both of which were also influenced by continental Post-Impressionism. Sussex as a backdrop for unconventional lifestyles will also be exemplified by one work by Gluck, an artist who broke gender norms by adopting a non-binary name and wearing masculine attire. Moving in 1944 to Chantry House in Steyning, with their partner Edith Shakleton Heald, Gluck painted the surrounding landscapes and created the patented *'Gluck Frame'*, a three-tiered design, painted to match the wall, that will be demonstrated in the exhibition by way of *The Wave* (1966).

In the mid-20th century artists such as Eric Ravilious, Edward Burra, John Piper and David Jones adopted a more graphic take on landscape painting in watercolour and collage. Eric Ravilious, who grew up in Sussex, had a lifelong fascination with the distinctive chalk downland of Sussex, captured in a number of works to be shown in the exhibition including his watercolour *Chalk Paths* (1935) and wood-engravings such as *Taurus, May from the Almanack* (1928), which features *The Long Man of Wilmington*, one of Sussex's celebrated figures carved into a chalk hillside. Burra brought a note of Surreal menace into his wartime landscape, through the addition of the skeleton of an ox under an abandoned yoke.

The exhibition will also show how the Second World War led to artists seeking rural lives in Sussex, as a refuge from big metropolises such as London. As for the Bloomsbury Group in the First World War, Sussex provided a life-changing place of sanctuary for the painter Ivon Hitchens after his London studio was damaged by bombing in the early 1940s. His vibrant panoramas of his secluded home and studio *'Greenleaves'*, and the surrounding woods near Midhurst, less than 15 miles from Chichester, present an abstract response to nature, engaged as much with shape, space and depth as with the specific environment of West Sussex. This can be seen in the abstract oil paintings *Autumn Stream* (1945) and *Sussex River near Midhurst* (1965). American photographer Lee Miller, who had worked for *Vogue* and as a wartime photojournalist during the war, re-located to Farleys House in East Sussex in 1949, with the house becoming a meeting place for some of the leading intellectuals and creatives of the time, including Pablo Picasso, Man Ray and Joan Miró. Miller documented their life at Farleys House and the exhibition will include her *View from Farleys House, Muddles Green, Sussex, England* (c. 1951).

Dorothy Bohm arrived in Ditchling in 1939 as a 14-year-old Jewish refugee from East Prussia. Highlighting the significance of flint and chalk

in the Sussex landscape, Bohm captured flint barns and the fields surrounding her family farm during the 1970s and 1980s, and the exhibition will show *Coneyhurst Farm, West Sussex* (1970s). The interplay between humans and landscape was also a focus of the photographs of Eileen Agar, Paul Nash, Bill Brandt and Keith Vaughan. The exhibition will include rarely exhibited black-and-white photographs of the Sussex landscape by Eileen Agar and Paul Nash, depicting everyday objects such as ladders, haystacks and wood stacks.

The exhibition will also feature work by leading contemporary photographers who have recorded human interaction with the Sussex landscape, including Tom Hunter, Wolfgang Tillmans, Jem Southam, and Simon Roberts. Their practices extend the dialogue between artistic expression and landscape, as seen in Tillmans' *End of Land 1* (2002) and Southam's *Ditchling Beacon, Dew Pond* (1999 – 2003). Connecting creativity, personal freedom, environmental concerns, and a commitment to understanding, all of the works which will be on display discuss landscape with increasing urgency.

Pallant House Gallery has also commissioned three new works, made specifically for the exhibition. *Sussex Waters*, a site-specific installation by environmental artist Tania Kovats, will show a 'liquid mapping and excavation' of place, a collection of waters from the rivers across Sussex inspired by the artist's return to the landscape of her childhood. Sculptor and letter carver Jo Sweeting's commission *Driftway* will showcase a chalk boulder found in the Sussex landscape that she sliced into several strata then engraved with text developed collaboratively with writer Louisa Thomsen Brits. Susan Collins' commission *Dell Quay* will take the form of a gradually unfolding digital landscape, constructed from imagery captured by webcams at a site in Sussex, resulting in a constantly generated, real-time projection.

Artists include:

Eileen Agar, Vanessa Bell, Adrian Berg, Robert Bevan, Pippa Blake, William Blake, Dorothy Bohm, Bill Brandt, Frank Brangwyn, Edward Burra, Susan Collins, John Constable, Jean Cooke, Dennis Creffield, Edward Reginald Frampton, Roger Fry, Jeremy Gardiner, Gluck, Andy Goldsworthy, Allan Grainger, Duncan Grant, Ivon Hitchens, John Holloway, Tom Hunter, Emma Jamison, David Jones. Charles Knight, Tania Kovats, Guy Malet, Lee Miller, Gwenda Morgan, Paul Nash, CRW Nevinson, Jonathan Newdick, William Nicholson, Aimée Parrott, Tuëma Pattie, Roland Penrose, John Piper, Lucien Pissarro, Eric Ravilious, Abigail Reynolds, Simon Roberts, Helen Sear, Frank Short, Eric Slater, George Smith, Jem Southam, John Stezaker, Wycliffe Stutchbury, Graham Sutherland, Katharine Swales, Jo Sweeting, Robert Tavener, Wolfgang Tillmans, Hans Tisdall, JMW Turner, Keith Vaughan, Edward Wadsworth, Leslie Moffat Ward, Ethelbert White, Laetitia Yhap.

Accompanying Book:

To accompany the exhibition a new fully-illustrated catalogue will be published, written by curator of the exhibition Louise Weller and Simon Martin, Director of Pallant House Gallery. It will be distributed by the Yale Centre for British Art

Notes to Editors

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Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water will open on 12 November 2022 and run until 23 April 2023.

About Pallant House Gallery

Pallant House Gallery in Chichester is a leading UK museum that stimulates new ways of thinking about British art from 1900 to now. As well as an original and critically-acclaimed exhibition programme and a public programme with inclusion at its heart, the gallery houses one of the best collections of Modern British art in the country - all within

the distinctive setting of an 18th century townhouse and a 21st century gallery.
pallant.org.uk

Ticketing

Visitors are encouraged to pre-book timed tickets to ensure the Gallery adheres to Public Health England's Health and Safety measures. Tickets include full access to the house and temporary exhibitions programme.

Please visit pallant.org.uk to book your tickets, or call the gallery on +44 (0) 1243 774557.

Opening Hours

Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 5pm
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Mondays: Closed

Café opening hours:

Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 5pm
Sunday: 11am – 5pm
Monday: Closed

Please go to pallant.org.uk ahead of your visit to check for daily updates to opening hours.