

DAVID BOMBERG: PRESS RELEASE

Bomberg

21 October 2017 – 4 February 2018
(Press View: Thursday 19 October 2017)

Ben Uri launches its major reassessment of the life and career of David Bomberg (1890-1957) at Pallant House Gallery on the 21 October. This is the first stage of a national tour before travelling to The Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle opening on the 17 February until the 27 May 2018 and then to Ben Uri at the end of June next year. The equally awaited new extensive monograph, the first for 30 years, is similarly written and edited by Ben Uri and Bomberg curators Rachel Dickson and Sarah MacDougall and will be available at Pallant House and nationally from selected book stores and museum shops from the 21 October. It will be celebrated in London with the official launch at Ben Uri on the 14 November. This exhibition will illustrate profound developments in the artist's own work as well as his significant achievement within the context of British modernism through more than 60 works representing all significant periods of Bomberg's oeuvre. Despite scandalous critical neglect within his own lifetime, today Bomberg is recognised as one of the 20th century's leading British artists.

The largely chronological exhibition will explore key themes including:

- The artist's Jewish background and engagement with Yiddish culture
- His important contribution to pre-war British modernism
- His role as a war artist in WW1 and WW2
- His work as a graphic artist and his exposure in contemporaneous 'little magazines'
- The Jerusalem Landscapes
- Self-portraiture and portraiture of friends and family
- His mature achievements as a landscape painter

Born in Birmingham to Polish-Jewish immigrant parents, Bomberg spent his formative years in London's East End among his fellow 'Whitechapel Boys'. The influence of his early evening class tutor Walter Sickert is reflected in Bomberg's *Bedroom Picture* (1911-12, private collection) which was later re-worked as the Vorticist-influenced *At the Window* (1919, Ben Uri Collection); both works are included in the exhibition, an example of a pairing or re-working that is one of its major themes.



Bomberg, *Ghetto Theatre*, 1920, Ben Uri Collection © Ben Uri Gallery and Museum

EXHIBITION INTERVIEWS / IMAGES:

Anna Zeuner, Head of Communications a.zeuner@pallant.org.uk 01243 770 823
Blaise Marshall, Rees & Company blaise@reesandco.com 020 3137 8776

MONOGRAPH INTERVIEWS / IMAGES:

Sarah MacDougall, Curator sarahm@benuri.org 0207 604 3991
Rachel Dickson, Curator racheld@benuri.org 0207 604 3991



PALLANT HOUSE GALLERY

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At the Slade School of Art, as part of the so-called 'Crisis of Brilliance' generation, Bomberg was regarded as a 'disturbing influence'. An early innovator with stylistic similarities to the English Vorticists he established crucial contacts with the European avant-garde, and in 1914 co-curated (with Jacob Epstein) a 'Jewish Section' within the exhibition 'Twentieth-century Art: A Review of Modern Movements' at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. He held his first critically acclaimed solo show in London the same year. In this period Bomberg sought a new and radical language to articulate his Jewish East End heritage and culture, expressed in early master works such as *Ju-Jitsu* (c. 1913, Tate), observed at his brother's East End gym and reflecting the artist's fractured experience as the son of Polish immigrants.

Bomberg's harrowing service in the trenches during the First World War was compounded by a disastrous experience as a commissioned war artist (*Study for Sappers at Work*, 1918-19, Tate); his post-war disillusionment was expressed in the masterly *Ghetto Theatre* (1920, Ben Uri Collection).

In 1923 Bomberg travelled to Jerusalem and, on expeditions to Jericho, Petra and the Wadi Kelt, produced a series of detailed, realistic landscapes which evolved from a tightly topographical style into a looser, characteristically expressionistic style. This series heralded the painterly achievements of Bomberg's final years, despite a series of disappointments including a difficult Second World War commission as a war artist.

Following his visit to Spain in 1929, a renewed vigour entered Bomberg's work that eventually resulted in the fulfillment of the early promise in his maturity, particularly as a compelling, powerful creator of landscapes both in the UK and in Spain.

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Works from major institutions including the Arts Council, the Fitzwilliam and Tate, are represented

alongside works from important private collections, as well as from Pallant House Gallery and the Ben Uri Collection. The Pallant House Gallery collection spans Bomberg's career from early Cubist drawings to some of Bomberg's finest late works, among them *Talmudist* (1953), the artist's final *Self-portrait*, and his final landscape (both 1956). Ben Uri's Collection reflects its close association with Bomberg, particularly in its early years, with works including the acclaimed *Ghetto Theatre* (1920) acquired direct from the artist as early as 1920.

This will be the first full Bomberg exhibition for more than a decade (since Abbot Hall's 2006 *Spirit in the Mass*).

Bomberg runs at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester from 21 October 2017 - 4 February 2018. It then tours to The Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, from 17 February – 27 May 2018 before showing at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London during summer 2018.

A lavishly illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition.

--Ends--

About the curators: Sarah MacDougall (Head of Collections) and Rachel Dickson (Head of Curatorial Services) are joint senior curators at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum. Both the exhibition and publication follow on from Ben Uri's ongoing series of exhibitions on the 'Whitechapel Boys' during the last decade.

About Ben Uri Gallery and Museum: Founded in 1915 in London's East End, Ben Uri Gallery and Museum has followed a remarkable trajectory from Jewish émigré beginnings to mainstream art museum operating under



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the banner 'Art, Identity and Migration'. Ranging from late 19th century painting to 21st century new media, the permanent collection of works by artists of primarily European Jewish descent, including Auerbach, Bomberg, Chagall, Gertler, Kossoff and Soutine, has since 2001 widened to embrace émigrés from all backgrounds and ethnicities. Today the collection numbers more than 1,300 works by more than 400 artists from almost 40 countries.

About Pallant House Gallery: Located in the heart of historic Chichester on the south coast, Pallant House Gallery houses one of the most significant collections of Modern British art in the country, including important works by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Lucian Freud, Walter Sickert, John Piper, Peter Blake and many more. Acclaimed for its innovative exhibitions that present the best of Modern British, international, contemporary and Outsider art, it is also known for its exemplary Learning and Community programme. The Gallery has won numerous awards since re-opening in 2006.

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