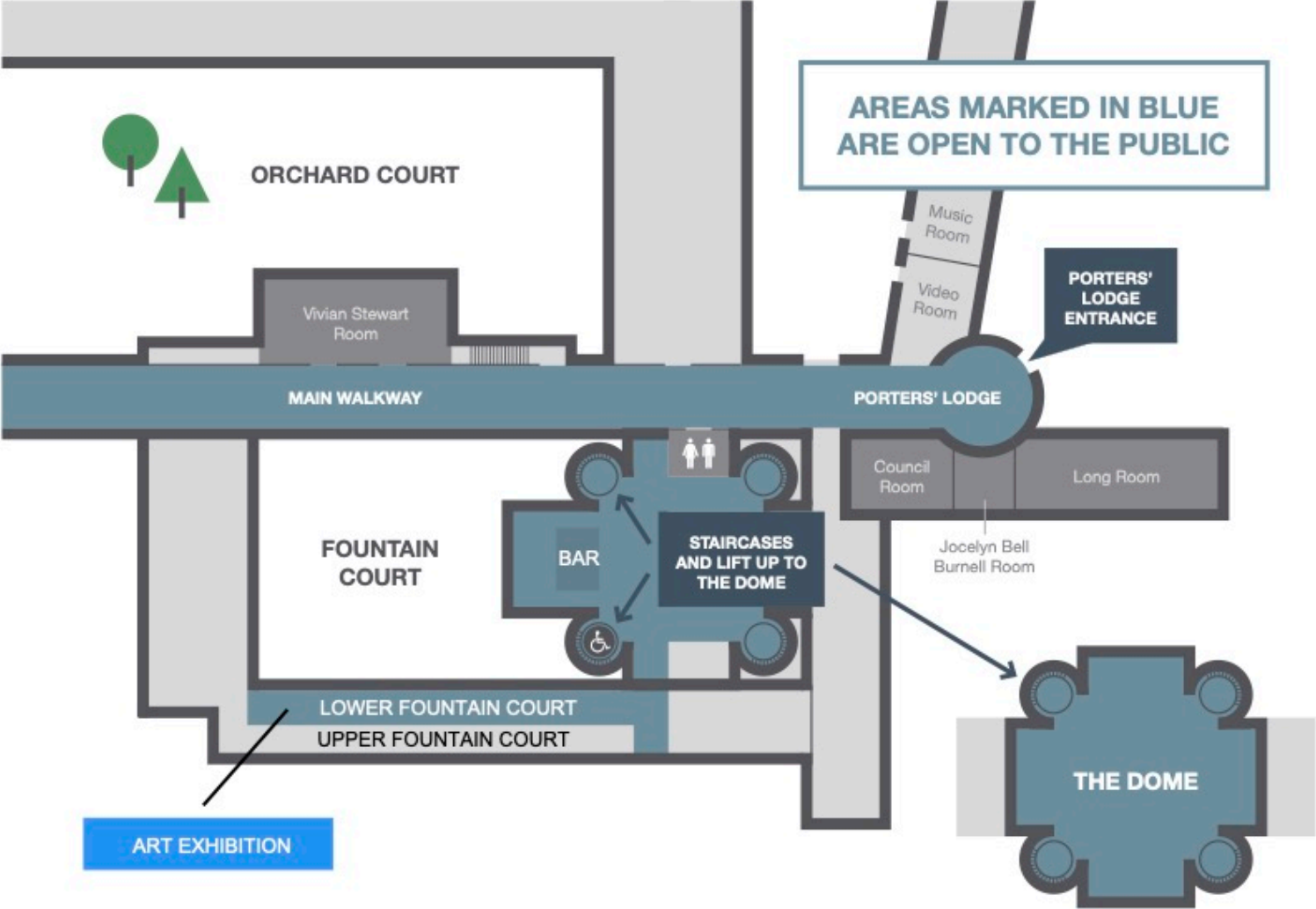


SELF-GUIDED TOUR



Please return this guide at the end of your visit



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Women's Art Collection at Murray Edwards

The Women's Art Collection is Europe's largest collection of art by women. It includes over 600 works by leading artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Paula Rego, Lubaina Himid, Faith Ringgold, Tracey Emin and Cindy Sherman.

Founded in the early 1990s, the Collection challenges the underrepresentation of women artists in museums and galleries. It is a celebration of women's agency and creativity, an art historical record and a living, evolving body of art. The Collection tells the story of major art movements since the 1950s as reflected in work by women artists. At the heart of its founding mission is the principle of collaboration in which women play the roles of artists, collectors, curators and patrons.

The Collection is displayed throughout Murray Edwards College, an iconic Brutalist building designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon as a manifesto for women's education. Works of art are hung in public rooms and student corridors and sculptures are part of the College's famous gardens. In 2018, the Collection was granted Museum Accreditation by Arts Council England.

Today, we continue to celebrate and support women artists, giving them visibility and a voice. We stage two exhibitions a year, alongside a dynamic programme of events including talks, tours, workshops, screenings and performances. The Collection is open to the public daily from 10am–6pm and is free to visit.

  @womensartcollection

 @TheWomensArt



MAIN WALKWAY



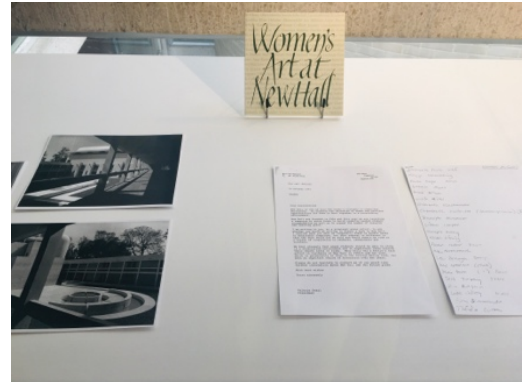
If you have collected this guide from the Porters' Lodge, walk down the corridor into the College through the glass doors into the Walkway which overlooks Fountain Court.

ARCHIVAL DISPLAY

John Maltby, Photographs of New Hall, c. spring 1965

Initial letter to artists and handwritten list of artists

The Women's Art Collection catalogue, second edition, 1992



This archival display showcases documents relating to the foundation of The Women's Art Collection. John Maltby's atmospheric black-and-white photographs of the Fountain Court, Main Walkway and Library show how the College looked when it was first built, before it was filled with artworks. The typewritten letter is the initial invitation sent out to women artists, asking them to donate work while the handwritten list indicates the curators' shortlist of artists, many of whom generously contributed to the Collection. The catalogue, which includes an essay by the writer Marina Warner, documents the works in the Collection while it was still in its infancy in the early 1990s.

CLAUDIA CLARE

Wedding Feast, 1999

Ceramic, 5 pieces

Donated by the artist, 2001

Claudia Clare is British artist whose ceramic works reflect on contemporary social issues, such as migration, feminism and lesbian identity. Her experimental, narrative-based ceramic works reflect the impact of major historical events on individuals. Using her artistic practice as a form of activism, she sees her clay pieces 'both as memorials and as a call for action'.



Clare's series of works in The Women's Art Collection was created during the Kosovo War (1989-99) as a tribute to her friend Rachel's relationship with a Kosovan woman, Igo. Comprised of five pieces, 'Wedding Feast' (1999) portrays Rachel and Igo's spontaneous 'wedding' in 1995, in Novi Sad, Serbia, which was both a celebration of lesbian emancipation and an anti-nationalist event.



GARDENS

Go through the door at the end of the Walkway and turn right into the gardens.

BARBARA HEPWORTH

Ascending Form (Gloria), 1958

Bronze, edition of 6

On loan from the Hepworth Estate

Hepworth (1903-75) is one of the best-known British artists of the 20th century. She was born in Yorkshire, but spent most of her life in St Ives, Cornwall and was a member of the St Ives School, along with Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo. Though concerned with form and abstraction, Hepworth's art was primarily about relationships: not merely between two forms presented side-by-side, but between the human figure and the landscape, colour and texture, and between people at an individual and social level.



Some critics have interpreted the shape of *Ascending Form (Gloria)* as a pair of hands in prayer, a reading reinforced by Hepworth's renewed spirituality during this period of her life following the death of her son, Paul, in 1953. She made six copies of this sculpture and intended one of them as her gravestone. As it turned out, she was buried in a graveyard (Longstone Cemetery Carbis Bay, Cornwall) which would not allow it. However, this sculpture was clearly made with mortality in mind.

NAOMI PRESS

Improvisation, 1988

Stainless steel

On loan from the artist, 2012

Naomi Press is a contemporary sculptor, who has exhibited widely in South Africa, the US and UK. She was born in Poland, raised in Zimbabwe and now divides her time between London, New York and Cape Town. . She began her career as a ballerina and her understanding and training in classical dance has had a profound and compelling impact on her sculpture.



Press has been functionally blind since her 40s because of a neurological disorder, but has continued to make sculptures over the course of her seven-decade-long career. She works exclusively in sculpture but in a variety of different materials – bronze, marble, terracotta and steel. Many of her bronze sculptures depict female nudes. In the work *Improvisation*, some see elements of the human body in this work, while others see elements of music or dance.



MAIN WALKWAY

Now return to the Walkway and walk back towards the Porter's Lodge, passing by the following artworks.

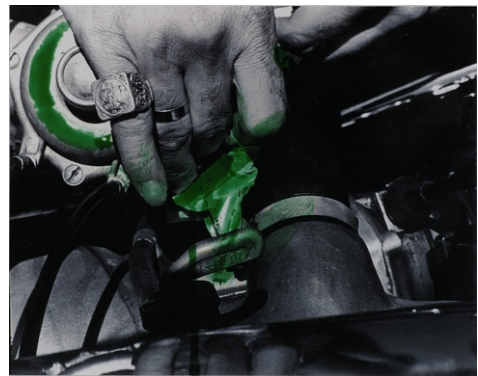
ALEXIS HUNTER

Approach to Fear XI - Effeminacy Productive Action, 1997

6 photographs with green paint

Donated by the artist, 1991

Alexis Hunter (1948-2014) was an artist whose powerful and provocative works explored feminist issues through photography, film and text. Born in Auckland, Hunter moved to London at the age of 24, where she joined the Women's Workshop of the Artists Union. She later said that at that time she struggled to find printers which would print her photographs because she was a woman. Her photographic sequences are now considered key works of feminist art.



Between 1967-77 Hunter created a large body of work titled *Approaches to Fear* in which she pictured hands performing actions that challenged gendered expectations. For example, in these photographs the hairy male hands fixing a bike are bedecked with ornate feminine rings and a bracelet. Compositionally, the hands could be the viewer's own, directly implicating them in the work.

CHANTAL JOFFE and ISHBEL MYERSCOUGH

Fraser, 2016

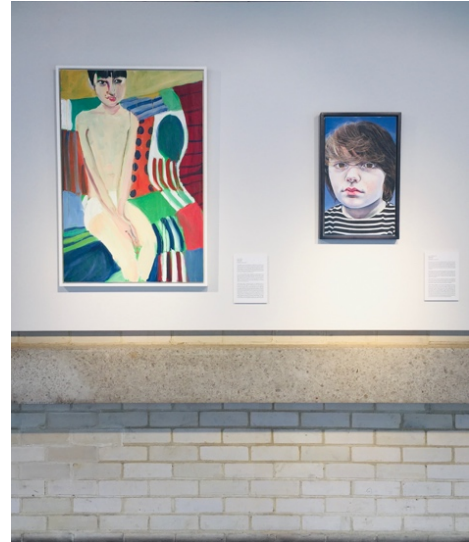
Oil on board

Donated by the artists, 2017

Fraser, 2017

Oil on panel

Chantal Joffe is a contemporary painter known for her expressive and intimate portraits of women, children and her family members. Her portrait of Fraser – Myerscough's son – gives importance to the psychology of his character: his innocence and the awkwardness of youth. The slim boy sits on a brightly coloured sofa that draws attention to his pale, almost naked body. His head and legs are cropped as though the painting were a snapshot.



British artist Ishbel Myerscough is recognised for her highly detailed and meticulously observed paintings. In her portrait, *Fraser*, her son's face fills the whole surface of the painting focusing in on every freckle and even the emergence of a faint moustache. The closeness of their relationship conveyed through Myerscough's evident familiarity with her son's face and his deep, trusting gaze. These contrasting portraits of the same child demonstrate the artists' different styles and approaches. Joffe and Myerscough met at the Glasgow School of Art in the late 80s and have painted portraits of each other's families for over 30 years.

ANYA PAINTSIL

Blodeuwedd, 2022

Acrylic, wool, alpaca and mohair, synthetic hair and human hair on hessian

Acquired through Ed Cross Fine Art, 2022

Anya Paintsil directly draws on her Welsh-Ghanaian heritage to create her textile pieces. She uses rug-hooking, passed down by generations of Welsh women in her family. She also employs Black and Afro hairstyling techniques, often integrating real and synthetic hair into the works themselves.



She aims to elevate craft-based practices associated with women of colour and working-class women. *Blodeuwedd* is part of Paintsil's recent series of portraits of women from Welsh folklore. *Blodeuwedd*, the central character in the tale of Math fab Mathonwy, translates from Middle Welsh as 'Flower Face'.

LEXI STRAUSS

Tupperware Party, 2013

Hostess, 2014

Acrylic on paper

Donated by the artist, 2017

British artist Lexi Strauss creates paintings, installations, soundscapes and performances which conjure surreal and theatrical narratives and engage with the themes of escapism, belonging and individuation.



Tupperware Party depicts a man breastfeeding a baby. The anonymous figure wears a suit and tie with fake breasts containing milk. He dominates the whole painting, giving no space to discern the context. The predominance of blues and greys isolates the composition and seems to strip it of humanity, while the gesture itself seems both tender and absurd. *Hostess* depicts a female nude, a pregnant woman, floating in a monochromatic composition. Far from painting a gentle and beautiful expectant woman the artist shows a ghostly, hideous and irregular figure. Strauss draws attention to the belly and breasts covering them with protuberances, giving the image a disturbing look. The semi-abstract quality of the work creates a borderlessness between the body and its background, while the haunting figure subverts expectations about what a female nude looks like.

THE ART CAFÉ



Turn right after exiting the Walkway through the double glass doors. Take the door on the right into art café. The café is open to the public so please do feel free to sit down and order a coffee and cake.

FIONA BANNER

Beagle Punctuation, 2011

Neon, perspex frame, wire and transformer

Anonymous donation, 2015

Fiona Banner was born in Merseyside, England. She graduated from Goldsmiths College in the early 1990s and was part of the generation known as the Young British Artists (YBAs). Banner's work is an ongoing exploration of text, through sculpture, installation and publications.



Her early work took the form of 'wordscapes' or 'still films' – blow-by-blow accounts written in her own words of feature films. *Beagle Punctuation* is part of a larger exploration of the famous dog from the cartoon *Peanuts*. In the work, Banner plays with words, letters and punctuation. Here, the image of Snoopy's face teeters on the edge of abstraction: two neon question marks and a full stop, labelled in pencil, conjure his unmistakable face, yet these punctuation marks seem to question the very existence of the dog.

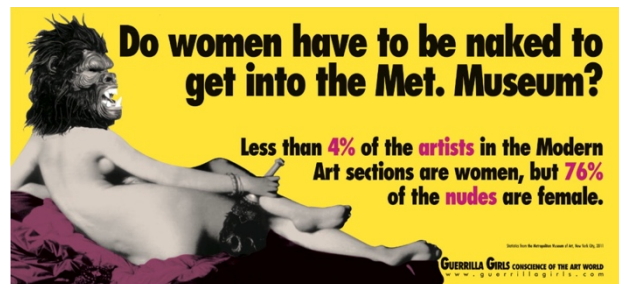
GUERRILLA GIRLS

The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist, 1988

Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum? 1989

Screenprints

Donated, 2016



Formed in 1984 in New York, the Guerrilla Girls are an anonymous feminist activist group who highlight discrimination in the art world. The group's members protect their identities by wearing gorilla masks in public and by assuming pseudonyms taken from famous women of the past including Frida Kahlo and Gertrude Stein and. They produce posters, stickers, billboards and projects with their characteristic combination of humour, bold graphics and subversive use of public space.



These two posters are among their best-known works. *Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?* was originally commissioned for a billboard in New York, but was rejected on grounds of not being clear. The Guerrilla Girls then rented advertising space on buses until the bus company cancelled their lease saying it was too 'suggestive'. Posters of *The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist* were fly-posted overnight in the fashionable New York art district of SoHo. The Guerrilla Girls continue to produce publicity exposing discrimination, as well as conducting seminars and workshops in schools, colleges and art institutions, including at The Women's Art Collection in 2016.

CHILA KUMARI SINGH BURMAN

Dream, 2021

Acrylic transparent board and neon tubing

Donated by Martin and Ros Roland, 2022

Chila Kumari Singh Burman is a self-described 'Punjabi Liverpoolian' who likes to combine her Indian roots with popular culture to create multi-media artworks. In her own words, her work is 'A clash between high art and popular culture. An eclectic mix of art and activism addressing global protest'. Burman is celebrated for her radical feminist practice which examines representation, gender and cultural identity. She works across a wide range of mediums including printmaking, drawing, painting, installation and film.



SIBYL ANDREWS

Windmill, 1933

Colour linocut on Japanese paper

On loan from The Ingram Collection

Sibyl Andrews often focused on the natural elements, particularly in pastoral settings. *The Windmill* conveys nature's magnificent power and its potential for both production and destruction, a duality also seen in Nevinson's *The Blue Wave*.

Harnessing nature and revealing its extraordinary force, a large windmill dominates the composition; the spiky forms of its blades are echoed in the knife-like shadows on the ground and seem to refract into the splintered blue-and-white sky. Its image is echoed in the smaller form behind it, which resembles a pinwheel or flower. The windmill was one Andrews knew well as it was located in the Suffolk town of Woolpit, near her hometown of Bury St Edmunds.





UPPER FOUNTAIN COURT

Come out of the Bar and continue down the corridor, taking the first right onto Upper Fountain Court

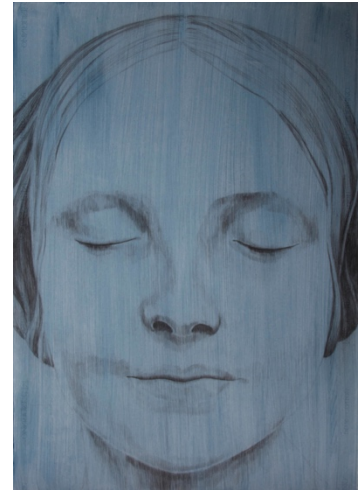
REBECCA FORTNUM

L'Inconnue de la Seine, 2011

Mixed media

Donated by artist, 2018

In her portraiture, contemporary British artist Rebecca Fortnum examines the relationship between sitter, artist and viewer. Exploring the ethics of sight and looking, particularly in relation to the gendered gaze, she considers ideas related to women's interiority, creativity and sense of self.



In *L'Inconnue de la Seine* (*The Unknown Woman of the Seine*), Fortnum draws the death mask of a young woman said to have been pulled from the river Seine – a popular icon of early 20th-century bohemian Parisian society. In Fortnum's interpretation of the woman's likeness, her face floats in a blue wash, eyes closed, wearing an eerily content expression. Her closed eyes shut out the viewer's gaze and so we are denied access to her interiority. Encouraging extended looking and meditation, the serene yet emotional image encourages the viewer to consider the fleeting nature of life.

LINDER

Hiding But Still Not Knowing, 1981

C-type print from original negative on photographic paper

Donated by artist, 2021

Linder is a British artist known for her photography, radical feminist photomontage and confrontational performance art. Born in Liverpool, she was an active member of the 70s Manchester punk scene, reflected in her 'fem-punk' montages which combine punk culture with the feminine psyche and mass-media imagery.



In this self- portrait, Linder reflects her ongoing preoccupation with the presentation of woman as decorative object. She breaks up and reconstructs accepted symbols of femininity, such as lace and pearls, juxtaposing them with surreal features: a strange, arresting gaze and cellophane wrapped around her face. Making eye contact with desperation and alertness, she is muzzled and muted by the plastic. The sinister, yet alluring image shows the ways in which gender identity is constructed, consumed and perceived. By putting herself in the frame and undermining a potentially glamorous image, Linder casts femininity as masquerade.

JACQUELINE MORREAU

Self-Portrait, Hand to Mouth, 1989

Charcoal on paper

Donated by the artist, 1998

Jacqueline Morreau (1929-2016) was an American artist known for her active female subjects and re-imaginings of mythological and symbolic narratives. Her works disrupt patriarchal norms and emphasise female autonomy and creativity.

Self-Portrait, Hand to Mouth is one of a series of works in which Morreau studies herself not for objective likeness, but with the intention of capturing subjective notions of self. Here Morreau shows herself as slightly off-balance, her life lived precariously – ‘hand to mouth’ in more than one sense.



CHRISTINE BORLAND

The Quickening, 1999

Print

Donated by Hughson Gallery,
2000

Scottish artist Christine Borland is known for her cross-disciplinary approach, in which

she draws on forensic science, medical ethics and human genetics. Through her work with techniques and practitioners in these fields, Borland explores the fragility of human life and the value systems which govern it: in particular how to identify truth and objective scientific fact.



In *The Quickening*, Borland considers the theme of identity through an individual's confrontation with themselves. Poised to shoot, the figure directs the gun at their mirror image. The term 'quickenning' refers to the increase in the foetal heartbeat but also to life itself, as in the phrase: 'the quick and the dead'. It also means the first fluttering 'in utero' movements. This work is therefore concerned with the fragility of life and the way in which our lives are often held in the hands of others.

DOME



Leave the Upper Walkway through the same door. Walk back past the Bar and take the left door after it which leads to the first staircase up to the Dome – the College's Dining Hall. Stop as you go up the staircase and look down! If you would prefer to take the lift, take the first left after leaving the Upper Walkway.

WENDY TAYLOR

Three Dung Beetles, 2000

Bronze

Donated by the artist, 2006

Sculptor Wendy Taylor was born in Lincolnshire in 1945 and studied at St Martins School of Art in London. Her impressive range of large-scale, site-specific sculptures total over seventy.



There are two elements to her sculpture: she creates both highly detailed, anatomically correct animals, as well as large, abstract works. Taylor uses a variety of materials in her work, from stainless steel to bronze to bricks and mortar, and, a Fellow of the Royal Zoological Society, she creates a prolific quantity of drawings and sketches to support her sculptural work. Taylor was one of the first artists of her generation to 'take art out of the galleries and onto the streets'.



At the top of the stairs is the Dome, home to works with a wide range of styles and subject matter, some exploring colour and abstraction while others raise questions about women in society.

MAGGI HAMBLING

Gulf Women Prepare for War, 1986

Oil on canvas

Donated by the artist, 1992

Slade School of Art graduate Maggi Hambling is notable for her expressive painted portraits and sculptures. In 1980, she was the first artist in residence at the National Gallery and during this time made a study of Manet's painting of the execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico.



The central figure in *Gulf Women Prepare for War* refers back to Manet's soldier. Just as Manet based his work on a newspaper account of Maximilian's assassination, Hambling's work is based on a photograph from *The Times* documenting preparations from the Iran-Iraq War. Hambling's female Muslim soldiers subvert many art historical tropes, challenging traditional depictions of women. Wielding their enormous weapons, the women in this painting are not passive and submissive, but powerful, active and dangerous.

SHANI RHYS JAMES

The Collector, 1994

Oil on canvas

Donated by the artist, 2005

This still life is anything but still. There is a sense of vibrating movement created by the artist's rough, rapid brushstrokes, which make certain elements of the scene difficult to decipher. The composition features an eclectic group of objects, some of which are characteristic of still life (plates and bowls, a pile of books, the empty candlestick), while others are surprising: an upright pumpkin, mouldy banana and snake's head.



In the corner is a vase of flowers behind which lurks an image which could be a painting-within-the-painting or a mirror reflecting the artist's face, staring back out at the viewer. Shani Rhys James, who has continually painted domestic scenes throughout her career, often explores human psychology and relationships, reflecting on mortality and the cycle of life.

EILEEN COOPER

Another Step on the Ladder, 2022

Charcoal and pastel

Donated by Christina Dawson, 2023

Another Step on the Ladder is part of a series of works by Eileen Cooper about the life and work of Nobel Prize-winning scientist Marie Curie. The works conjure Curie's remarkable life through closely observed moments of struggle, tenderness and joy.

This large-scale drawing explores the theme of creative support: between Marie Curie and her sister, Bronisława. The ladder, which is a motif throughout the series, symbolises the way in which women lift each other up in life. Cooper's powerful and distinctive iconography of female figures, which usually touches upon the universal, here finds expression in the real historical figure of Marie Curie.



Head down the staircase to the left of the servery, Carry on down towards the lower ground floor for some more works at the bottom of the staircase.

ROSE GARRARD

Models Triptych: Madonna Cascade, 1982

Plaster relief and paint

Donated by the artist

Rose Garrard is a contemporary British artist whose work in the Collection spotlights lost and invisible histories of women artists. Garrard studied sculpture art school, before extending her practice to installation, performance, video and audio art.

Her *Models Triptych* is a series of works which recreate self-portraits by historic women artists who were once highly regarded, but fell into posthumous obscurity: Artemisia Gentileschi, Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun and Judith Leyster. *Madonna Cascade* depicts fragments of a self-portrait by the Dutch seventeenth-century painter Judith Leyster. The self-portrait is framed by cascading plaster figurines of the Virgin and Child, based on one which Garrard's Catholic mother placed by her bed when she was a child. In this work she intimately combines the personal and political.





ART EXHIBITION

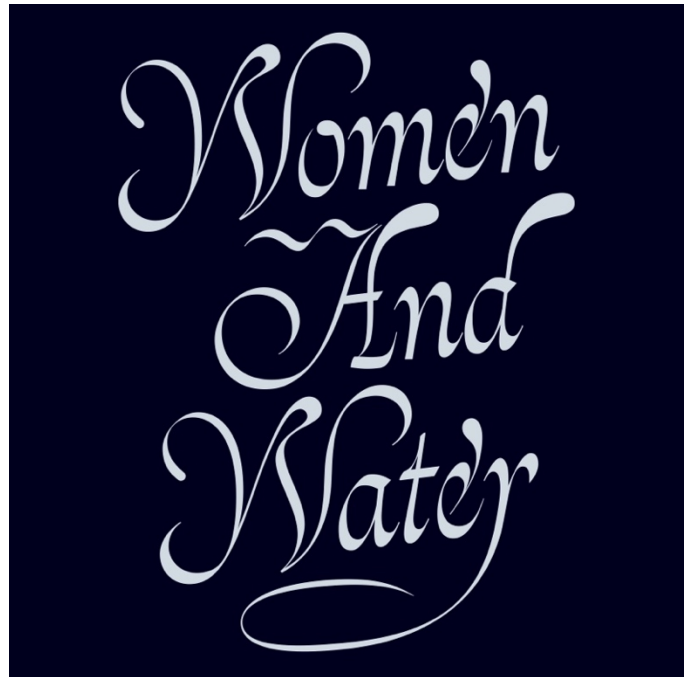
Carry on through the door ahead of you (marked 'Toilets') then turn left at the end. Continue down the corridor and turn right into the ART EXHIBITION.

WOMEN & WATER

7 October 2023 – 25 February 2024

A group exhibition exploring the relationship between women and water in modern and contemporary art, inspired by the Fountain Court at the heart of Murray Edwards.

WOMEN AND WATER brings together a selection of works by women artists created between the 1920s and the present day. The exhibition examines how water has been used by artists both as subject matter and artistic medium to reflect the multiplicity of women's experiences.



For the artists in the exhibition water represents a source of pleasure and refuge, as well as a threatening, dangerous presence. In their depictions of water, the artists reflect on family relationships, personal griefs and generational traumas. Water also becomes a symbol of new life, the passage of time and the possibility of renewal.

You can buy the exhibition catalogue for £5 from the Porters' Lodge.



RETURN TO PORTERS' LODGE

Turn left when coming out of the Art Exhibition and take one of the staircases up. Go back to the Porter's Lodge to return this self-guided tour.

That's the end of the self-guided tour. Please feel free to wander round the gardens before you leave. Other parts of the Collection may be visited by special arrangement: email us at womensart@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk.

Thank you for visiting The Women's Art Collection!