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The Nicolas and Frances McDowall collection of British Neo-Romantic Art

Exhibition dates:

Saturday 4 July - Sunday 5 September 2015 inclusive

Thurs-Fri 11.00 – 17.00; Sat – Sun 14.00-17.00. Other times by appointment

Location:

Monnow Valley Arts Centre, Middle Hunt House, Walterstone, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR2 0DY .
Entrance free but donations requested. Garden entrance £4 per adult.

Tel: 01873 860529 info@monnowvalleyarts.org www.monnowvalleyarts.org

The McDowall Collection of British Neo-Romantic Art is the first exhibition to be held of this very significant collection. The collection is the fruit of over 40 years of collecting by the McDowalls and uniquely concentrates on those artists who continued the spirit of neo-romanticism beyond Piper and Sutherland from the 1940s to the 1990s.

Presented at Monnow Valley Arts, the exhibition consists of 60 works: 37 paintings and 23 prints and monotypes. It will be a revelation for it contains some highly important works of art by both well known artists and lesser known who continued to be inspired by the neo-romantic tradition.

The collection includes a significant number of prints and monotypes. The McDowalls have a particular interest in monotypes which by the way they are created have greater freedom than prints generally and are of course unique. Robin Tanner (1904-88), one of the most outstanding etchers in the genre, became a personal friend and the McDowalls have a complete collection of his prints, two of which personally dedicated to them are included in the exhibition. Starting with work by William Blake and Samuel Palmer, the father figures of the romantic movement, the collection moves on to etchers such as Sutherland, Drury, Craxton and Webb are also included. Wood engraving is represented by Nash and Hermes. Post war work by Piper, Rothenstein, Bert Isaac, Colquhoun and MacBryde, Ceri Richards and Bryan Ingham.

The larger body of work, however, is in paintings and drawings. Because of their interest in book illustration, the collection includes original drawings and paintings for books by Ayrton, Bawden, Minton, Nash, Trevelyan and Vaughan.

Nicolas McDowall's interest in the painters of the neo-romantic movement started with a visit to the Redfern Gallery when he was 15 years old where he saw the work of Alan Reynolds (1926-2014) for the first time. The exhibition at the Barbican in 1987 *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic*

Imagination in Britain 1935-55 set the McDowalls on a search for works by the artists represented and for younger less well known practitioners. Although their budget was at time severely limited, they have been gratified to find that many of the artist they identified such as John Elwyn, Garrick Palmer, Bert Isaac, R J Lloyd, Rigby Graham have become sought after in recent years.

Artists such as Michael Ayton, Leslie Hurry, Cecil Collins, Robert Colquhoun, Robert McBryde, Bernard Meninsky, Ceri Richards, William Scott and Bryan Wynter are all represented in the collection.

Curating the exhibition

The exhibition has been curated by Rupert Otten at Monnow Valley Arts and Nicolas and Frances McDowall. Dr Peter Wakelin (former secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales and former director of Collections at the National Museum of Wales) who has written the catalogue introduction. The McDowalls are also the partners of the Old Stile Press; one of the few private presses left in the UK. It was through their interest in collecting illustrated books from the first half of the 20th century, that their interest in the artists who worked for these publishers was kindled and which led them ultimately to found their own publishing house. Many of the artists represented in the collection have also worked on books for the Old Stile Press notably, Bert Isaac, Rigby Graham, Clive Hicks-Jenkins and Garrick Palmer.

Monnow Valley Arts

Monnow Valley Arts is a charitable foundation situated in Herefordshire between Abergavenny and Hay on Wye in an area of outstanding natural beauty overlooking the Black Mountains of Wales. Monnow Valley Arts specialises in curating exhibitions drawn from major private collections of art which otherwise would not be accessible to the general public. In the past it has curated exhibition of private collections of work by David Jones, Eric Gill, Cecil Collins, Edward Ardizzone and Ben Nicholson. It has also curated group exhibitions of ceramics from the Luke Herrmann collection, prints and books from the Julian Francis Collection and ceramics, glass, furniture and automata from the Ken Stradling Collection.

Catalogue

A fully illustrated 72 page catalogue has been prepared with Foreword by Nicolas and Frances McDowall and introduction by Dr Peter Wakelin.

Information and images:

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