

Rothenstein's Relevance

**William Rothenstein, Barnett Freedman, Mark Gertler,
Jacob Kramer, Albert Rutherston, Mark Wayner and Alfred Wolmark**

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, Boundary Road
10 September 2015 – 17 January 2016



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

In partnership with Cartwright Hall, Bradford Museums and Galleries, Ben Uri Gallery and Museum is delighted to announce our upcoming autumn exhibition, *Rothenstein's Relevance*, examining the work of Sir William Rothenstein (1872–1945) and his circle and running at Boundary Road from 10 September 2015 – 17 January 2016, alongside our Centenary exhibition at the Inigo Rooms, Somerset House (02 July – 13 December 2015). This will be Ben Uri's first exhibition on this hugely influential figure and is a partial tour of the Bradford exhibition, *From Bradford to Benares: the art of Sir William Rothenstein* (7 March – 12 July 2015), the first Rothenstein retrospective for over 40 years, now reconfigured for its London showing. It comprises some 40 works including paintings, works on paper and archival material.

Artist, writer, teacher and consummate networker, Sir William Rothenstein was a leading British artist in the years before the First World War and a highly influential and well connected figure

throughout his career. The exhibition will examine a number of his major themes including Jewish subjects, portraiture and figures studies (in Paris, London and Gloucestershire) and work from the First and Second World Wars contextualized by work on similar themes by a number of (mostly younger) contemporaries including Mark Gertler, Jacob Kramer, Eric Kennington, Albert Rutherston and Alfred Wolmark, who were all either influenced directly by or worked alongside Rothenstein.

The majority of works will come from Bradford's own collection, together with selected loans from the Arts Council, Leeds City Art Gallery, Manchester City Art Gallery, Sheffield City Art Gallery and Tate Britain, as well as works from Ben Uri's own collection and a number of private collections.

Highlights of the exhibition include Rothenstein's *Coster Girls*, c. 1894 (Sheffield), shown alongside its preparatory study, *Woman in a Black Hat* (1893, Private Collection), which established Rothenstein as a painter of 'modern' subjects, inviting the comment when shown in 1894 at the New English Art Club that 'Many are the painters more agreeable than Mr. Rothenstein; but it is scarcely possible to be more clever than he'. The 'Coster' theme, to date little examined, is a subject embraced by many British artists c.1880–1920 including Walter Sickert, Augustus John, William Orpen, Ambrose McEvoy, John Lavery, Mark Gertler and Eric Kennington, and it will be flanked by two later interpretations: the first, *Coster Girl* (1907, Arts Council) by Rothenstein's younger brother, Albert Rutherston, and a later work by Mark Gertler, *The Coster Woman* (1923, Private Collection), allowing us to explore this motif in a broader context.

Rothenstein's *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*, 1906 (Tate), one of his most celebrated depictions of Jewish ritual, will also be included. When first shown at the New English Art club in summer 1906, it was hailed as 'far and away the most impressive and most important' of his Jewish paintings. It was included within the 1906 *Jewish Art* exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, mounted as a response to the debate around immigration that had resulted in the 1905 Aliens Act, and was subsequently presented to Tate by Jacob Moser in commemoration of this show. This opens our exploration of Rothenstein's work on Jewish themes, as well as his relationships with and influence upon other contemporary Jewish artists. It will be paired with Kramer's stark modernist interpretation of Jewish ritual, *The Day of Atonement* (1919, Leeds) – the preparatory drawing for which, from Ben Uri's own collection, will be shown concurrently in the centenary exhibition, *Out of Chaos*, at Somerset House). Similarly, Rothenstein's *Reading from the Book of Esther* (1907, Manchester), which directly inspired Gertler's *Talmudic Discussion* (1911, private collection), will be paired with this work for the first time. Alfred Wolmark's *In the Synagogue* (1906, Ben Uri Collection) will also be shown to throw light upon his later claim that the two artists had worked together in the East End on Jewish themes although Wolmark's own work in this genre pre-dates Rothenstein's own by a number of years.

Rothenstein's role as an Official War Artist in both the First and Second World wars will also be examined with works by his younger contemporaries including Eric Kennington and Barnett Freedman, the latter from Ben Uri's own collection.

This exhibition aims to re-examine the significance, influence and continuing importance of Rothenstein's artistic achievements and his continuing relevance within the British artistic canon.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

Figures (clockwise from top to bottom):

- Fig. 1 Sir William Rothenstein, *Self-portrait*, 1906, oil on canvas, Bradford (catalogue only)
- Fig. 2 Sir William Rothenstein, *Coster Girls*, c. 1894, oil on canvas, Sheffield
- Fig. 3 Mark Gertler, *The Coster Woman*, 1923, oil on canvas, Private Collection
- Fig. 4 Albert Rutherston, *The Coster Girl*, 1907, oil on canvas, Arts Council
- Fig. 5 Mark Wayner, *Sir William Rothenstein*, c. 1940, lithograph, Ben Uri Collection
- Fig. 6 Sir William Rothenstein, *Reading the Book of Esther*, 1907, oil on canvas, Manchester City Art Gallery
- Fig. 7 Mark Gertler, *Talmudic Discussion*, 1911, Private Collection
- Fig. 8 Sir William Rothenstein, *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*, 1906, oil on canvas, Tate
- Fig. 9 Jacob Kramer, *The Day of Atonement*, 1919, Leeds City Art Gallery
- Fig. 10 Eric Kennington, *Bourlon Wood*, Private Collection
- Fig. 11 Sir William Rothenstein, *Blasted Trees*, 1918, Bradford
- Fig. 12 Sir William Rothenstein, *The Old Gardener*, oil on canvas, Bradford
- Fig. 13 Mark Gertler, *Russian Peasant Girl (Catharine Carrington)*, 1926, oil on canvas, Bradford
- Fig. 14 Sir William Rothenstein, *Miss Grant*, c. 1925, oil on canvas, Bradford

Notes for editors:

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