

SUZANNE PERLMAN: PAINTING LONDON

30th April – 17th May
The Gallery, 28 Cork Street
London W1S 3NG

Suzanne Perlman is 91 years young and religiously paints every day with the same vitality, intensity and grasp of colour as she has done all her adult life. A pupil of Kokoschka in Salzburg and Gross in New York the influences of both are readily evident in her work.

Extensively exhibited in Europe, the Caribbean and North America, this is the first occasion when she has agreed to a comprehensive survey of her work since moving here some 25 years ago and focuses on her distinctive views and vision of her passionately adopted city of London.

Perlman was born in Budapest in 1923 to a family of antique dealers and collectors and her childhood was surrounded by art and artists. After marrying young, Suzanne moved with and her Dutch husband to the Netherlands. Their stay was short as WWII engulfed Europe. Their escape from Rotterdam to the southern Caribbean island of Curaçao, off the Venezuelan coast, via Paris is a story of Hollywood proportions and needless to say they were part of the few to survive the Holocaust that awaited them if they had remained. They made their home in this island of warmth and light for over twenty years. As with Kokoschka, the crystal clear Caribbean light and local palette has left indelible marks on her vision and she sees and paints with this vibrancy even under grey London skies.

Given the influences on her career and life experiences she has endured, this exhibition, celebrating her ninetieth year, presents London in a uniquely bright and vivacious fashion in a way that perhaps only an artist such as Perlman could.

Perlman studied at Columbia University, New York, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico and at St Martin's School of Art in London. The most influential period was in the 1950's when she was selected to work with Oscar Kokoschka in Salzburg. This was the clear catalyst for the following half century and more. Whilst undeniably individual, her expressionist vigour and joyous palette are seamlessly tinged by a rare sensitivity and command of her often demanding and complex subject matter. Her 'expressionist dash' (in the words of John Russell Taylor from a Times of London review) and energetic palette revel in the Kokoschka tradition.

Perlman's depictions of London are her own. Hers is a various city, part Arcadia, part metropolis, part fantasy and part documentary. Her subjects include summer revelling and autumn bloom in London's parks, traffic-laden busy thoroughfares, nightlife of Covent Garden, booksellers on a glowing Southbank and architectural

vistas of the Houses of Parliament, Trafalgar Square and Saint Pauls.

Her engagement with the river Thames flowing through the centre of London is so powerful one can only imagine it is borne from her love of the sea around Curaçao. She captures the moment effectively. In one example of many, her painting entitled 'Parliament' from 1996 captures both river and architecture beneath an almost Turnerian sky. In another, 'The London Eye' from 2011 her fusion of luscious pinks and purples, deftly and seamlessly integrated within her expressionist vigour, presents the viewer with an almost sensuous experience.

Perlman's love affair with London and its sprawling variety continues every day whether on her walks or in her car as she is never without her sketch pad, or in her studio where she works every day. She is clearly at one with Samuel Johnson: 'When a man is tired of London, he's tired of life.'

Background information:

Exhibition:

Press afternoon from 2pm 29th April.

Exhibition: 30 April – 17 May at 28 Cork Street, London W1S 3NG

Open Monday - Saturday 10 – 6; Sunday 12 – 4.

24 April: Ben Uri 'Talking Art' series interviewing the artist about her extraordinary life at JW3, Finchley Road.

The exhibition consists of some forty works across oil, watercolours and drawings – portraits and landscapes. Selected examples of her work from Curaçao and the South of France will be included.

Public collections include Queen Beatrix, the Queen Mother, Netherlands; the Museum of London; the Parliamentary Art Collection (House of Lords), Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, The Jewish Museum Budapest and Municipal Museum Curacao.

Awards: Officer of the Royal Order of Oranje, Nassau; Honorary Fellow of the Israel Museum, Rebecca Sieff International Prize, Freedom of the City of London.

For further information or to arrange possible interviews with the artist please contact Rachel Dickson at Racheld@benuri.org.uk or David Glasser at davidg@benuri.org

For high resolution images please contact Laura Jones at alixs@benuri.org