

Special Exhibition Celebrates Gift of Rhoda Pritzker Collection of Modern British Art to the Yale Center for British Art

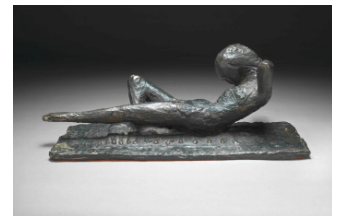
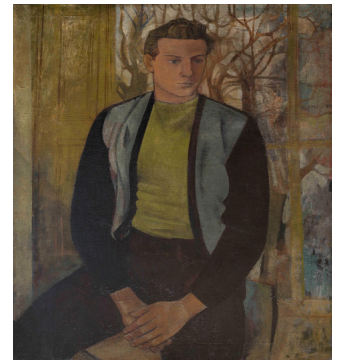
MODERNISM AND MEMORY: RHODA PRITZKER AND THE ART OF COLLECTING

May 11–August 21, 2016

NEW HAVEN (May 10, 2016) — In celebration of its reopening on May 11, 2016, the Yale Center for British Art presents a special exhibition highlighting the collection of modern British art formed by British journalist Rhoda Pritzker (1914–2007). The collection represents a major gift to the Center from the Libra Foundation, established by the family of Susan and Nicholas Pritzker. Featuring more than one hundred works of art, mostly drawn from Rhoda Pritzker’s intensely personal collection, *Modernism and Memory: Rhoda Pritzker and the Art of Collecting* also includes loans from the Pritzker family, presented alongside more than fifty related objects from the Center’s extensive holdings of twentieth-century British art. This exhibition aims to offer a richer understanding of Pritzker’s collecting style while showcasing developments in the work of a number of notable British modern artists.

Born in Manchester, England, Rhoda Pritzker was a writer of witty and gritty journalism and, as a member by marriage of a Chicago-based family of financiers and philanthropists, a contributor to many fields of American endeavor. She never lost touch with her British roots, however, which remain reflected in a singular collection of twentieth-century British paintings, drawings, and sculpture.

Though works in her collection span the twentieth century, with objects dating from 1903 to 1995, Pritzker was committed to supporting the careers of emerging artists, and focused primarily on contemporary art from the 1950s and 1960s. In so doing, she captured early snapshots of the careers of some of the most significant British modern artists. Loyal to no school, and admiring both abstraction and representation, Pritzker acquired important works by artists such as Michael Ayrton, Prunella Clough, Alan Davie, Ivon Hitchens, William Turnbull, and Keith Vaughan. She also occasionally looked to earlier years, acquiring significant pieces from the beginning of the century, including Duncan Grant’s portrait *Vanessa Bell at Her Easel* (1914), Walter Sickert’s portrait *Carolina dell’Acqua* (1903–1904), and Gwen John’s *Seated Woman in a Broad-Brimmed Hat* (undated).



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Sculpture in the Pritzker collection includes examples of small-scale works by some of the most significant British artists working at the time, such as Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, as well as early pieces by sculptors who would later achieve international recognition, such as Kenneth Armitage, Bernard Meadows, Reg Butler, Anthony Caro, and Eduardo Paolozzi. These sculptures, which include Anthony Caro's *Corner Boy* (1956) and F. E. McWilliam's *Seated Woman with Hat* (1953), may comprise the most important part of Pritzker's collection, exemplifying her commitment to contemporary art.



Pritzker particularly favored Northern artists, and she amassed an artistically noteworthy selection of paintings by L. S. Lowry, Alan Lowndes, and Helen Bradley that evoke scenes recalling Pritzker's childhood in an industrial conurbation and on the Lancashire coast. Five works by Lowry that Pritzker held most dear to her heart are showcased in the exhibition. These paintings depict the eerie emptiness of seaside and rural scenes and the isolated figure in which this artist, famous for crowd scenes, became interested later in his career. The exhibition juxtaposes these haunting works with Lowry's major oil painting from 1952, *The Market Place*, which itself exemplifies one of Pritzker's favorite themes – scenes of everyday life represented with a sprinkling of humor.



“Pritzker's collection has a rare and special quality in that she did not chase big names or objects, did not spend vast amounts of money, and never dogmatically adhered to any particular trend,” observed Ian Collins, independent curator, writer, and curator of the exhibition. “Rather, she put together a representative and quietly rich collection that tells a compelling story of art in Britain after the Second World War and reflects her own warm, idiosyncratic personality.”

ABOUT RHODA PRITZKER

Rhoda Pritzker's accomplishments as an art collector grew from her colorful and storied life experiences. As a hard-news journalist covering the Great Depression in northern England in 1931, she developed liberal political sympathies. Early in the Second World War, given the threat of Nazi victory, Pritzker (née Rhoda Goldberg) fled Britain with 1,600 other travelers on the SS *Scythia*. This group included celebrity passengers, such as Roddy McDowall and H. G. Wells, whom she befriended. Upon arriving in the United States, she worked in a department store and as a blackjack dealer while relaunching her career in journalism. It was in America that she was introduced to Jack Pritzker of the Chicago business family that made its fortunes in real estate, manufacturing, industrial services, and finance. After they married, Rhoda became one of Chicago's leading social and philanthropic figures, forging close friendships with iconic influencers such as Eppie Lederer, better known by her pen name Ann Landers. She acquired the majority of the work in her collection on regular return visits to England. Her experience, intelligence, and curiosity led to an eclectic collection of British art, bearing her own highly personal imprint.



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OPENING LECTURE, May 18, 2016 at 5:30 pm

Independent writer and curator of the Pritzker exhibition Ian Collins will deliver an opening lecture on the exhibition on May 18. The lecture will highlight Rhoda Pritzker's broad and singular aesthetic as a collector of twentieth-century British paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints, demonstrating her fondness for contemporary creativity and for works that reminded her of her roots in northwest England. In this lecture, Collins will consider how Pritzker's background, character, and wide interests informed her unique taste in art.



CREDITS

Modernism and Memory: Rhoda Pritzker and the Art of Collecting has been organized by the Yale Center for British Art and curated by Ian Collins, independent curator and writer. The organizing curator at the Center is Scott Wilcox, Deputy Director for Collections, with assistance from Samuel Shaw, Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Prints and Drawings.

PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by the Center in association with Yale University Press and edited by Ian Collins and Eleanor Hughes, Deputy Director for Art & Program at the Walters Art Museum. The book features a preface by Margo Howard and essays by Collins, Frances Spalding, Samuel Shaw, and Eric Stryker.



Portions of the text in this press release are drawn from Collins's essay "Home Thoughts from Abroad: Rhoda Pritzker's Life in Art," featured in the exhibition catalogue.

ABOUT THE YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. The Center's collections include more than 2,000 paintings and 250 sculptures, 20,000 drawings and watercolors, 40,000 prints and 35,000 rare books and manuscripts. More than 40,000 volumes supporting research in British art and related fields are available in the Center's library.



Visit the institution online at britishart.yale.edu.

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Images: John Minton, *Portrait of a Young Man Seated*, 1950, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of the Libra Foundation, from the family of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker, © Royal College of Art; Reg Butler, *Study for Italian Girl I*, 1960, bronze, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of the Libra Foundation, from the family of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker, © Estate of Reg Butler; Duncan Grant, *Vanessa Bell at Her Easel*, 1914, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of the Libra Foundation, from the family of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker, © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / DACS, London; F. E. McWilliam, *Seated Woman with Hat*, 1953, bronze, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of the Libra Foundation, from the family of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker, © Estate of F. E. McWilliam; L. S. Lowry, *The Market Place*, 1952, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of Nicholas Pritzker, © The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS / ARS 2015; Rhoda Pritzker, early 1940s, Collection of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker; David Holt, *Coastal Watcher*, 1963, oil on panel, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of the Libra Foundation, from the family of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker, © Estate of the Artist; Anthony Caro, *Corner Boy*, 1956, bronze, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of the Libra Foundation, from the family of Nicholas and Susan Pritzker, Courtesy of Barford Sculptures Ltd.; John Minton, *Cornish Landscape*, 1946, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of George E. Dix, Yale BA 1934, MA 1942, © Royal College of Art; Yale Center for British Art, photo by Richard Caspole.