

ART AND ALTRUISM

SIR MICHAEL ERNEST
SADLER'S GIFT TO THE
COOPER GALLERY

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FOREWORD

PAUL ELMHIRST, CHAIR OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE COOPER GALLERY

This Catalogue contains a scholarly examination of the life of Sir Michael Sadler with particular emphasis on his art collecting and his gift to The Cooper Gallery and reference to his career in education, which I commend to all visitors to this exhibition.

The Cooper Gallery was established in 1914 by the generosity of Mr and Mrs Cooper whose gift included 275 paintings of quality as well as the building. However, that act of generosity was followed in 1923, 1931, 1933 and 1936, when Michael Sadler gave four groups of artworks to the Cooper. It is pleasing to note in passing that two other memorable Barnsley events took place just before 1914. One was the appointment of Michael Sadler of Barnsley in 1911 as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds and the other was Barnsley's triumphant victory in winning the FA Cup in 1912.

On the 21 December 1934 the Cooper Gallery was registered as a charity owning its building and artworks. There were three trustees, Charles Fox, (Brewer), Francis Joseph Sadler MD (Michael's brother and our family doctor) and John Elmhirst, (Solicitor and my father's cousin).

Michael Sadler was a brilliant student and a notable academic all his life, but he was much more than that. He travelled extensively, attended lectures on many subjects and became a knowledgeable art collector, even having time to spot the talents of abstract artist Wassily Kandinsky. He gave lectures on a wide range of subjects although I suspect that John Ruskin, whose art lectures he attended, must have been a particularly powerful influence on Sadler, both politically and artistically.

One remarkable event in Michael Sadler's life, and there were many, was his appointment in 1917 to lead the Sadler Commission to India. Originally a Commission to review higher education at Calcutta University, the work expanded to include elementary and secondary schools. My uncle Leonard Elmhirst, who had enjoyed a Barnsley upbringing like Sadler and whose families knew one another well, was also in India at this time. In a letter home, Leonard, who was a YMCA aid worker, described a five-day trip with Sadler into the wilds of Deccan in southern India to survey some villages.

Back home Sadler was an enthusiastic supporter of technical colleges and research into manufacturing as well as local enterprises. What I find difficult is to imagine how a man from Michael Sadler's comfortable Yorkshire background and education, followed by his illustrious career, could have developed such a powerful interest in and knowledge of the modern artists whose works he collected. He seems to have had no fear of new ideas, notwithstanding his degree in Classics at Oxford and his job as professor of History and Education at the University of Manchester. The references in this catalogue to his energetic collecting give numerous examples of the wide range of artists he collected, but Sir Michael Sadler remained a remarkable Barnsley man to the end of his days.

INTRODUCTION

Sir Michael Sadler was both a passionate and considered collector of art from tentative beginnings in the 1880s buying watercolour landscapes to full-blown support of cutting-edge Modern artists in the 1920s and 1930s. His choices were often derided by his contemporaries, but his vision saw him buying art from some of the most significant artists of the early twentieth century.

Sadler was very generous with his art collection. He lent and gifted works of art to educational institutions as well as galleries and museums. He made four gifts to The Cooper Gallery in Barnsley which was the town where he was born and grew up. This catalogue focusses on the gift of sketches donated by Sadler in 1933 which provided a survey of drawings and watercolour sketches from the 1750s through to the 1930s. The addition of a further, small group of drawings in 1936 to supplement the series is also discussed.

The works of art in the initial gift were hung in what is now known as the Sadler Room, in the upper part of The Cooper Gallery. They were placed on a series of screens which were loosely chronological and broadly themed. In 1937 Sadler wrote a catalogue of the works called, 'Notes on a Collection of English Drawings' which outlined his motivations for the gift.

This catalogue looks at Sadler's early life in Barnsley and his development as a collector of art from tentative beginnings to full-blown confidence. The catalogue also places the gift to Barnsley in context and considers how this was received in the period. The final section of the catalogue lists the works of art that were gifted and arranged to reflect the groupings that Sadler chose for them by placing them on specific screens.

Acknowledgements

Sir Michael Sadler was such an important and prolific collector that a great deal of research has already taken place into his life, career and collecting. The author would like to acknowledge the work undertaken by the curators (past and present) at the Stanley and Audrey Burton Gallery at the University of Leeds. Thanks also go to Barnsley Archives and Local Studies, Tate Archives and Special Collections at the University of Leeds for access to their Sadler related collections. The author is also indebted to Clare Miles for the draft catalogue of the 1933 gift to The Cooper Gallery which was written in 1992 and upon which much of this catalogue builds. Thanks also go to Imogen Holmes-Roe at Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester for sharing details of the works gifted by J E Taylor.

Thanks also go to Art Fund (previously National Art Collections Fund) for enabling Sadler's gift in 1933 and for their ongoing support of The Cooper Gallery.

This catalogue would not have been possible without funding from Barnsley Museums and Heritage Trust and the Trustees of The Cooper Gallery.

Text and research by Melissa Gallimore.

THE LIFE AND COLLECTING OF SIR MICHAEL SADLER

BEGINNING IN BARNSELEY

The twin pillars of Sadler’s life were his passion for education and his love of art.

Michael Ernest Sadler was born in Barnsley in 1861 and was amongst the fourth generation of the Sadler family to live in the town. The family were best known for being doctors and both Sadler’s father and brother were GPs. The practice was based on the corner of Church Street and Regent Street and was also the family home. The building was lost when the area was remodelled in the early 20th century. In October 1933 Sadler Gate, near to the Town Hall, was named in honour of the family.

Michael Sadler was more commonly known as Ernest to his close family and friends. He was an intelligent and academic child. Sadler was educated at North Hill House School, Winchester and then at Rugby School before winning a scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford to study Classics. Despite spending time away from Barnsley, Sadler always proclaimed his affection for the town. In his own words reminiscing about his life during the 1870s he talked about a ‘brotherhood’ or a group of friends who roamed the countryside near

Barnsley and who were also influenced by the culture of the town.¹



One of the friends that Sadler spent time with was Mary Ann Harvey. She was the daughter of Charles Harvey of the Harvey family of linen

📷 Michael Sadler in 1872, aged 11–12. © Barnsley Archives and Local Studies.

manufacturers based in Barnsley. Mary was nine years older than Sadler and when he proposed to her she was initially reluctant to marry him due to the age gap. Their temperaments were also different. Sadler was an energetic and enthusiastic character filled with great ambitions for himself and society at large whilst Mary was quieter and more reserved which was partly due to her Quaker upbringing. Sadler himself described her character; ‘She was by temperament sceptical but without losing simple faith... brave but never rash... Her figure was graceful: her voice low and sweet... She had great insight into character... Self-possessed, considerate and dignified...’² Despite her reservations she agreed and they married in July 1885 and had their only child in 1888. Their son was also called Michael Sadler but was known as Tony. In later life he changed his name to Michael Sadleir to distinguish himself from his father.

After finishing at Oxford, Sadler spent time in Heidelberg, Germany teaching English and learning German. His life was punctuated by periods of travel which enabled him to experience the culture and education systems of other countries. Sadler’s career as an educationist was established in the late 1880s and by 1894 he had become the Director of Special Inquiries and Reports for the government’s Education Department. In this role he wrote reports to advise local authorities on educational needs.

In 1903 Sadler joined the University of Manchester as Professor of the History and Administration of Education. In 1911 he was invited to be Vice-Chancellor at the University of Leeds where he was to have a significant impact on the city and the university. In 1917 Sadler went to India as the Chairman of the Calcutta University Commission and returned in 1919 having reviewed and reported upon the education system. It was this work that merited him being made a KCSI (Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of India) and styled as Sir Michael Sadler. In 1923 Sadler was approached to be Master of University College Oxford, a post that he would hold until his retirement in 1934.

The twin pillars of Sadler’s life were his passion for education and his love of art. These often wove together due to his strong belief in the power of art and culture to enhance people’s lives.



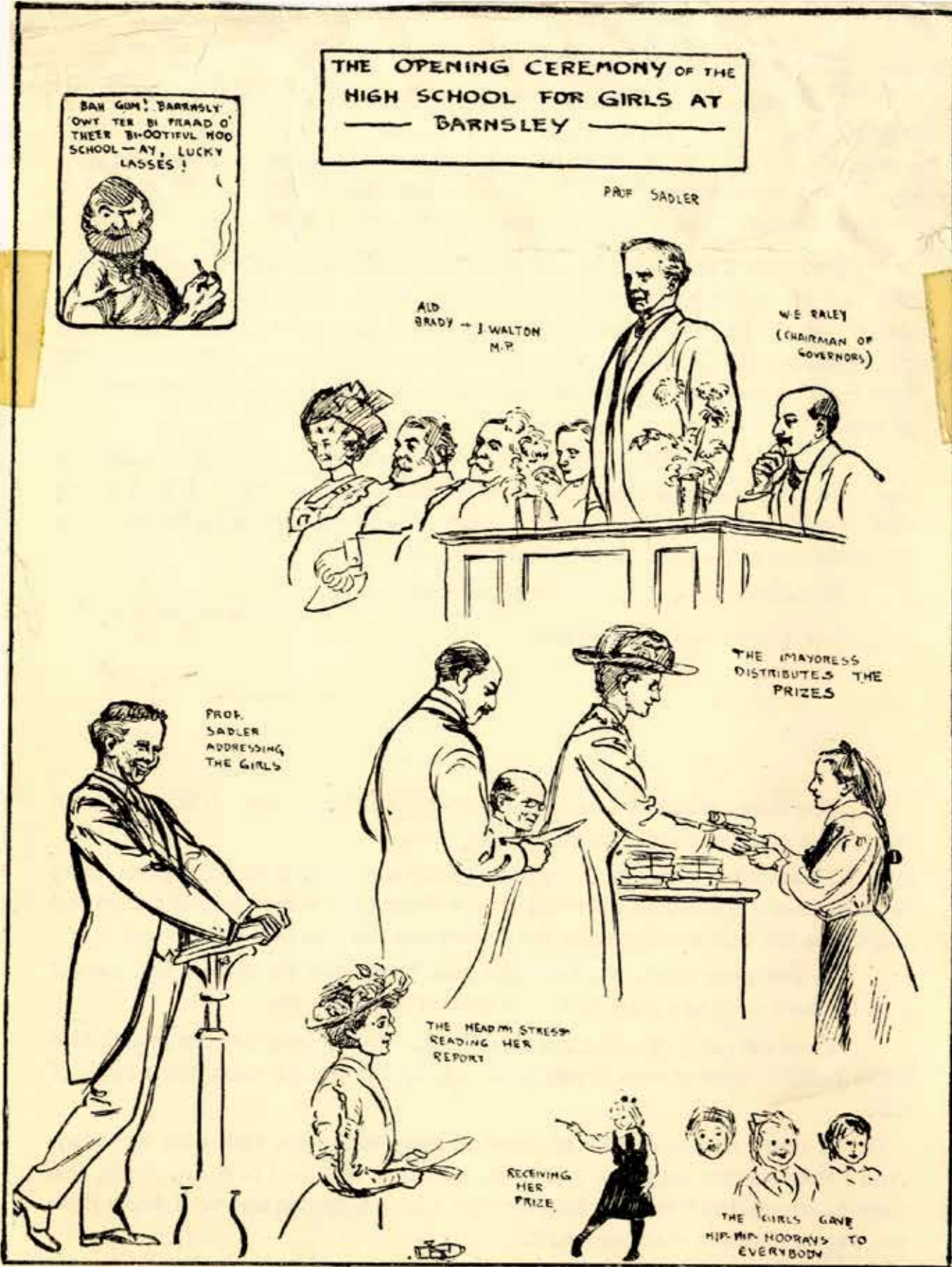
📷 Michael Sadler as a baby with his parents and grandmother. © Barnsley Archives and Local Studies.

Sadler’s collecting will be discussed in more detail throughout the catalogue but in brief Sadler collected hundreds of works of art. He started in earnest in 1909 when his love of art developed significantly. He started with the traditional Old Master drawings but soon developed a passion for post-Impressionism and Modernism, both of which were very controversial in the 1910s. Sadler was very generous with his art collection regularly loaning pieces to technical colleges, schools and galleries so that they could be seen and appreciated by many people.

Sadler gifted many art works to galleries and museums across the United Kingdom and abroad, including the Tate and the V&A in London, the Whitworth in Manchester and the Ashmolean in Oxford as well as galleries in Canada and Australia. Sadler made four separate gifts to the Cooper Gallery in Barnsley to support the town where he grew up. The first in 1923 was in memory of his parents and the second in 1931 was a series of mainly French drawings in memory of his wife, Mary Ann Sadler. In 1933 Sadler gave 85 drawings to the gallery as a survey of British drawing from the 1750s until 1933. This was supplemented further by a small group of drawings in 1936.

Sadler maintained his connection with Barnsley throughout his life and was often asked to officiate at local events. In 1909 he gave an address at the opening of the High School for Girls which was reported in the Yorkshire Telegraph and Star alongside an illustration of the event.

¹ Sadler, M.E. *Notes on a Collection of English Drawings*, 1937 p.6
² Sadleir, M. *Michael Ernest Sadler: A Memoir by his Son*, 1949 p.359



Reproduced from "The Yorkshire Telegraph and Star," 23rd November, 1909, by courtesy of "The Sheffield Telegraph and Star."

A drawing from the Telegraph and Star in 1909 showing Sadler opening the High School for Girls in Barnsley. © Barnsley Archives and Local Studies.

BELIEFS: THE POWER OF ART AND EDUCATION

Sadler was a great supporter of the Jewish community in Leeds and across the North of England.

Michael Sadler is remembered for a number of significant contributions to society which were driven by his core beliefs. His career in education was characterised by the ethos that everyone would benefit from increased education with a focus on making schools and universities more accessible to all. His focus on the idea that art, music and culture would enhance people’s experiences and develop society generally was also a fundamental part of his character. His generosity of nature meant that these two ideas often coincided as his own art collection was used to the benefit of generations of artists, designers and the public.

Sadler’s interest in the cross over between art and socialism started during his university days. He was fascinated by the writings of William Morris and in 1882 attended a series of lectures by the art critic John Ruskin. Both men echoed the prevailing ethos of the Victorian period that focussed on art and craft skills being beneficial to both individuals and to society as a whole. Sadler was liberal with his politics throughout his life, focussing on the way that education could benefit people.

Sadler’s wife, Mary was slightly concerned about his leftist sentiments and what she felt was his romanticisation of ‘the worker’. However, Sadler stayed true to his principles and used his art collection to benefit those around him. During his time as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds he placed his own art works around the university buildings where they could be seen by staff and students alike.



🖼️ *On the Rampart of Sens* by John Ruskin (Catalogue №28). John Ruskin was a highly influential art critic in the Victorian period. He championed the work of JMW Turner as well as the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He encouraged people to engage with contemporary artists of the time in the same way that Sadler eventually would.

The couple lived on Headingley Lane near the University and their home was used to display many art works. Artists and critics were invited to see these and included Roger Fry, Paul Nash and Henry Moore. For many of the younger artists of the period this was the first time that they had seen Impressionist, post-Impressionist or Modernist works of art and it had a profound effect on their own work and thinking.

Sadler also encouraged the cross-cultivation of ideas around art and culture by using his own home for the meetings of the Leeds Art Club. He also gave illustrated lectures at the University and across the United Kingdom to spread knowledge about the art and artists of the period. He arranged music concerts at lunchtimes and on Saturdays so that people from across the city could attend. He actively encouraged a better relationship between the people of Leeds and those studying at the University.

Sadler’s obituary in the Yorkshire Post sums up his beliefs and character: ‘He believed with Plato that an environment of beautiful sights and sounds was of the most value to education. So pictures from his great collection, sometimes of a rather startling modern kind, appeared on the walls of the University. ... He did great work, but the man was greater than his work. He had a wonderful gift for friendship, and a great number of men and women received from him stimulus and help in their difficulties.’³

It would be easy to characterise Sadler as a typical member of the British middle classes but his approach to life and people was based on an openness to many cultures and religions. His time spent in India resulted in him purchasing and learning about Asian art including Japanese prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai and Chinese silks as well as Indian paintings. He was also fascinated by the parallels between Asian and European art, especially the influence on artists such as Monet, Gauguin and Philip Wilson Steer.



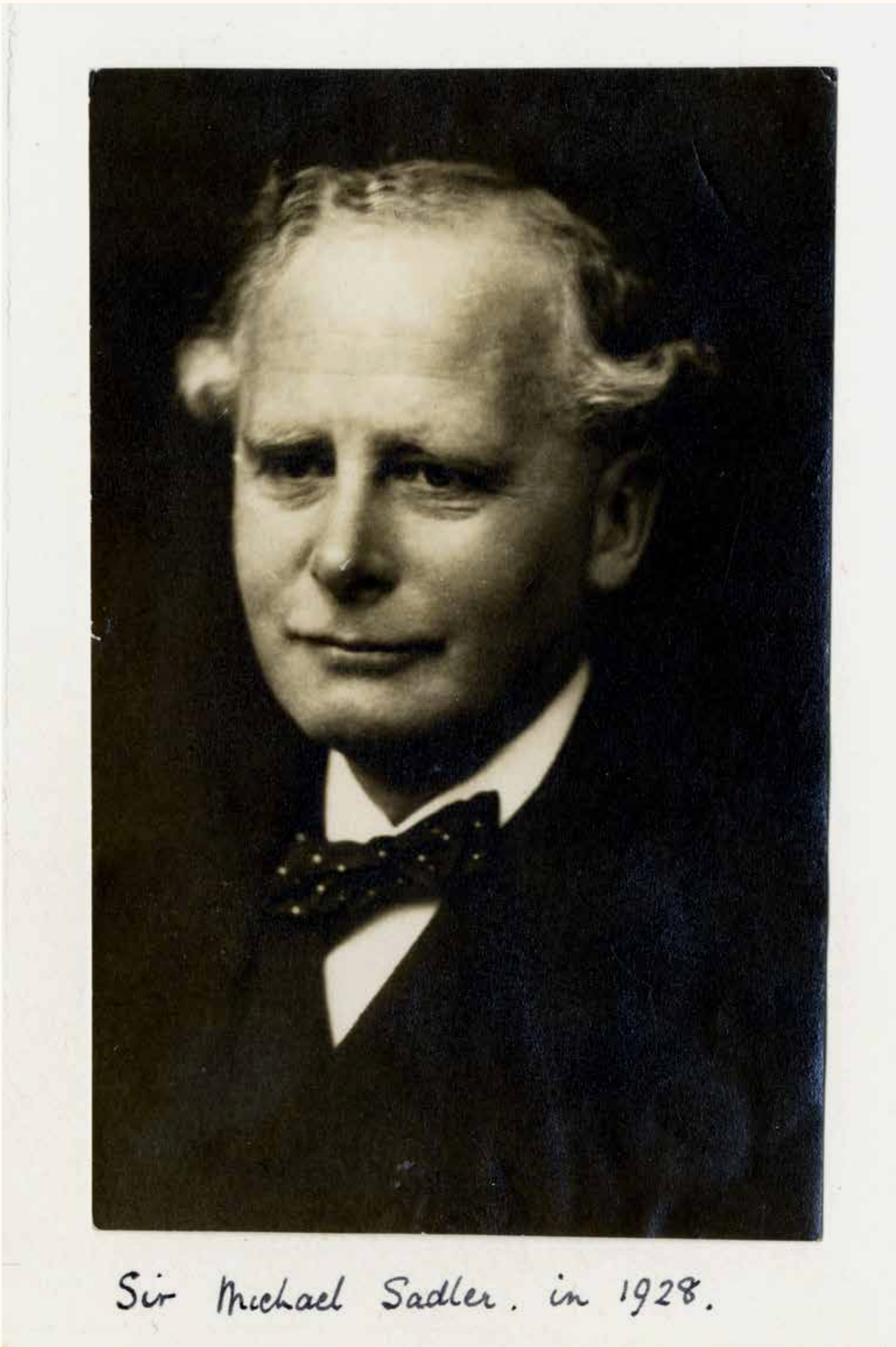
🖼️ *Mother and Child* by Bernard Meninsky (Catalogue №64).

Sadler was also a great supporter of the Jewish community in Leeds and across the North of England. The First World War had stirred up a lot of anti-Jewish feeling but Sadler was involved with the Jewish Education Aid Society and would actively support Jewish artists. He also wrote to the newspapers and gave speeches in support of the Jewish people and their culture.

In the biography written by Sadler’s son, he quotes comments from a Leeds resident: ‘The Jewish community in Leeds asked him to preside at a meeting to protest against pogroms. ... he delivered an appreciation of the Jewish people, their history and tribulations and their gifts.’⁴ Sadler championed several Jewish artists including Jacob Kramer and Bernard Meninsky.

The impact of Sadler’s time at the University of Leeds wasn’t just on arts and culture. He was also a great supporter of research to benefit the manufacturing industries and secured an investment in wool research. He supported the development of technical colleges including the one in Barnsley which he officially opened in 1932 and using his address to call for more support for liberal education.⁵ When Sadler left the University of Leeds in 1923 he donated a substantial number of paintings, drawings, prints and textiles to the institution as well as books for the library. He also gifted twenty-five paintings to the Art Gallery in Leeds in 1932 in memory of his wife which included works by Constable, Turner, Sickert and Wilson Steer.⁶

³ *Yorkshire Post* 15th October 1943
⁴ Sadleir, M. *Michael Ernest Sadler: A Memoir by his Son*, 1949 p.335
⁵ *Yorkshire Post* 6th October 1932
⁶ *orkshire Post* 19th May 1932



 Michael Sadler in 1928. © Barnsley Archives and Local Studies.

THE NOVICE COLLECTOR

For Sadler collecting art was an emotional and enriching experience.

Sadler started taking an interest in art at a time of rapid change.. For many centuries European art had followed the premise of striving for naturalism and representation but the nineteenth century saw a move away from this ethos to focus more on emotion and feeling. The Barbizon School of painters in France started to focus on light and colour which was then extended by the Impressionists in the 1870s to evoke an ‘impression’ of what they saw rather than the most accurate representation. The next generation of artists known as the post-Impressionists pushed these ideas even further and moved away from perspective and naturalism to focus on colour and evoking emotion. A plethora of Modernist movements followed quickly with Cubism and Vorticism exploding onto the art scene before and after the First World War. Echoing the French artists rebelling against the Salon in Paris, influential British artists formed the New English Art Club in 1886 to provide a focus away from the very traditional Royal Academy in London.

During Sadler’s university days he was friends with a number of people who would become very influential such as D S MacColl who went on to become Keeper at both the Tate Gallery and the Wallace Collection at differing times in his career. In the 1880s and 1890s Sadler collected art on a small scale often buying traditional landscape drawings or watercolours by historic painters such as Thomas Gainsborough, JMW Turner, John Constable and John Sell Cotman.

Sadler’s son cites a visit to the Netherlands in the summer of 1909 as being the point at which Sadler started to become more confident about being adventurous in his tastes; ‘... transforming a conventional admirer of Raphael and Leonardo and a modest buyer of old English watercolour into an adventurous champion of contemporary art and a picture collector of tireless and experimental enthusiasm...’⁷

In October of the same year Sadler had approached D S MacColl about his developing interest in contemporary painters. MacColl responded by arranging for him to visit both the artists Augustus John and Philip Wilson Steer. In Sadler’s notes he provided descriptions of both men:

[John] ‘...in his shirt sleeves, a man with a shock of reddish hair swept back over his ears; round gold earrings in his ears; an auburn beard; a brigand’s shirt; a bright violet and magenta silk neckerchief thrown loosely round his neck; smoking a large pipe... the drawings were marvellous’.

[P W Steer,] ‘He was shy and rather blunt and very incapable of expressing himself...he has in him this gift of genius which enables him to



produce wonderful painting, and all the time he is a little bit embarrassed by the possession of it.’⁸

 *The Common* by Philip Wilson Steer (Catalogue N°47).

Sadler also commented that: ‘He [MacColl] thinks Steer the greatest English landscape painter living – the man who will be to this generation what Turner was to an earlier one ...’.⁹ Sadler’s interests had moved from historic artists that he had seen in galleries across the country to those who were contemporary to him. John and Steer were two artists who were very influential in their day and were both cornerstones of the New English Art Club. The NEAC was established by a new generation of artists who were influenced by the Impressionist and post-Impressionist movements from the continent. Steer is often referred to as a British Impressionist and was very well regarded in his day.

By 1910 Sadler was taking a keen interest in the Impressionist painters and the Barbizon School.¹⁰ A later inventory indicates that he owned works by Monet and Renoir as well as Troyon, Corot and Diaz who were well-known painters of the Barbizon School.

By 1911 his taste was developing quickly partly with the support and encouragement of the art critic, Roger Fry. Fry was a key member of the Bloomsbury Group and was also promoting post-Impressionist art in Britain. He staged the first British exhibition of post-Impressionist paintings at the Grafton Gallery in London in 1910. Sadler owned a number of paintings by Gauguin and Cezanne as well as Picasso. In 1911 Sadler was also starting to take an interest in artists who were little known in Britain such as the Russian, Wassily Kandinsky to whom his son introduced him.



🖼️ *Flowerpiece by Vanessa Bell (Catalogue Nº56).*

Vanessa Bell was an important artist but she is perhaps better remembered for being part of the Bloomsbury Group. This was an unofficial association

of writers, artists and critics in the early part of the twentieth century. The group included Vanessa's sister, the writer Virginia Woolf, as well as artists Clive Bell (Vanessa's husband), Roger Fry and Duncan Grant. Bell had her first solo exhibition at the Independent Gallery, London in 1922 following a joint exhibition at the same venue with Duncan Grant in 1920. It is likely that Sadler bought this painting directly from one of these exhibitions. Many members of the Bloomsbury Group were also very influential in the more formal London Group which was an association of artists formed in 1913. They

organised their own exhibitions, initially at the Goupil Gallery, London which Sadler seems to have attended. Vanessa Bell joined the London Group in 1919.

In these years it is clear that Sadler involved his wife, Mary in the decisions around purchases for his art collection. Mary had significant wealth of her own but Sadler was quite clear that they would live on his income alone. This meant that his budget for purchasing pictures could be quite limited. He would often give talks and take on additional work and the income from this would form his purchase fund. Mary's character was such that she disliked extravagance but she seemed to be generally supportive of the purchase of the traditional landscape drawings and watercolours that initially interested Sadler. Sadler started to take an interest in the work of Hercules Brabazon Brabazon whose watercolours were often inspired by these landscape artists but who pushed the boundaries using colour and form in an exciting way. Whilst Sadler grew more fascinated by his work Mary started to voice her dislike of his watercolours causing tension between them.



🖼️ *Study After Turner by Hercules Brabazon Brabazon (Catalogue Nº18).*

In January 1910 Sadler wanted to buy a sculpture entitled, 'Lycidas' by the artist James Havard Thomas and gift it to Leeds Art Gallery. His notes indicate that in February 1910 he was waiting for his wife's decision on the expenditure. At a cost of £1,000 this was a very significant outlay and one that Mary seems to have initially refused to endorse.¹¹ In the end she seems to have relented as the sculpture was gifted to the Tate in 1911 via the NACF (now Art Fund).

For Sadler collecting art was an emotional and enriching experience. His choices could be hasty and excessive. On numerous occasions he would tell a dealer that he wanted to buy a painting only to have to renege on the agreement due to lack of funds. The passion and intelligence that Sadler harnessed turned him into an important collector in the history of British Modernism.

⁷ Sadleir, M. *Michael Ernest Sadler: A Memoir by his Son*, 1949 p.197
⁸ Tate Archive 8221.5 – *Writings by Michael Sadler*
⁹ Ibid
¹⁰ Tate Archive 8221.1 – *Catalogue of Pictures, Drawings, Prints and Sculptures in the possession of Sir Michael Sadler at The Rookery, Headington near Oxford – Vols I+II by M L Hutchinson, December 1934*
¹¹ Tate Archive 8221.6 – *Correspondence from D S MacColl to Michael Sadler, Jan–Feb 1910*

THE CONFIDENT COLLECTOR

Sadler was fascinated by industrial landscapes and was obviously discussing this with key figures of the day.

By 1911 it was clear that Michael Sadler was finding his confidence as a collector. His notes show that he attended a lecture given by Roger Fry on the subject of post-Impressionism.¹² The overarching drive of Fry’s lecture was the nature of post-Impressionist paintings to be both decorative and full of meaning. He cited the fact that the artists were moving away from naturalistic representation and towards pattern and decoration. He also believed that this created greater freedom and meaning in the works. ‘The artists of the Post-Impressionist movement are vindicating for the future the right of direct self-expression. It is a movement of liberty for the ordinary individual to express himself through line and colour.’ Interestingly, Sadler believed that Fry was being disingenuous at times: ‘The curious result on my mind of attending the lecture is that I think much less seriously of the Post-Impressionist movement than before I heard it.’ Sadler even noted that he believed Fry to be wrong about his statements around the history and use of perspective. Sadler cited examples of Asian art where perspective is used in different ways to create meaning and that this has not been devised by the artists of the post-Impressionist movement.

It is interesting to note that even before Sadler had spent time in India he had taken an interest in Asian and African art and understood its direct influence on the modern movements of European art. Sadler started actively collecting Asian art in around 1918 despite the fact that

this wasn’t popular in Britain. His interest in prints, scrolls and textiles enabled him to draw comparisons between the arts of China, India and Japan and European artists. He states that Monet and Manet were influenced by Hokusai and Hiroshige, Cezanne was influenced by Chinese prints and also that Modigliani was influenced by African masks.

Industrial Art

In this period Sadler also started to develop his own thoughts about the development of themes within the art of the period. Sadler was fascinated by industrial landscapes and was obviously discussing this with key figures of the day. In 1913 Sadler invited Walter Sickert to visit Yorkshire to give a series of lectures at art schools. Sickert was a founder member of many of the most important groups of the period including: The Camden Town Group, The London Goup and the New English Art Club. The purpose of the letter is to enquire what Sickert would like to do whilst in Yorkshire. Sadler mentioned various exhibitions and the Dales but concluded ... ‘The real thing here is the life of the people and the industrial landscape, and the Goya-like alleys at dusk. I wish to goodness someone would draw the Leeds back streets.’¹³

Sickert and his contemporaries had already started focussing on the grittier side of London life but their work was often interiors and street scenes. Sadler was advocating for a focus on

industry as a suitable subject matter. In this he was supported by a number of influential people such as C J Holmes. Alongside his more traditional landscapes Holmes’ work focussed on the industry of the North. He started sketching industrial landscapes in 1913 during a project to work on industrial scenes around Sheffield and Wakefield.

Holmes was an artist as well as being Director of the National Portrait Gallery and later the National Gallery, London.

In his autobiography Holmes mentioned going to Steel, Peech and Tozer’s at Rotherham and encountering a significant rainstorm which would account for the sky in this painting.¹⁴ There is an oil painting by Holmes of the same company in the collection of the Imperial War Museum.¹⁵



 *Railway Bridge at Steel, Peech and Tozer Ltd., Rotherham by Sir Charles John Holmesn (Catalogue N°50).*

Modern Art

In 1914 Wyndham Lewis launched the movement he termed ‘Vorticism’ which used aspects of post-Impressionism and Cubism to express the dynamism of the modern world. It was similar in style to Futurism which had been established in Italy in 1909. Sadler engaged with these movements with the same careful consideration that he gave to all art: ‘The futurists succeed when their pictures are dominated by some pattern which has significance of form and colour.’¹⁶

The First World War had a significant impact on art in many ways. It was a crucial point in ‘the machine age’ when developments in mechanisation were driven by the needs of war. Artists were also forced to confront the horrors of war as many joined the armed services or medical corps. Artists started to draw what they saw around them on a scale that had not been seen previously and the results were shown in galleries across Britain.

One of these exhibitions in 1916 was a series of drawings by CRW Nevinson. As was noted in the catalogue Nevinson had been a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps. In the catalogue Nevinson himself clearly articulated the break away from traditional art as it didn’t have the vocabulary to express the situation in the world at the time: ‘It is impossible to express the scientific and mechanical spirit of this twentieth-century war with the languishing or obsolete symbolism of Medieval and Classic

Art. In the year before the war the accusation of decadence was frequently brought against the young men and artists of the day. No charge has proved more false.’¹⁷ Nevinson defended the fact that although the emerging modern movement was derided when it first arrived, it had the vocabulary to reflect the splintered nature of a world at war and one where industrialisation was developing at a remarkable pace. Sadler bought works by Nevinson as well as by key artists from the Vorticist movement.



🖼️ *Artillery/Action* by Percy Wyndham Lewis (Catalogue N°67).

Lewis was a key figure in the Vorticist movement and was also a founder member of the London Group in 1913. Lewis was appointed an official war artist in 1918 and in that year created the core of his work which formed his solo show, 'Guns'. The picture was bought by Sadler from the exhibition which was held at the Goupil Gallery, London in 1919.



🖼️ *Crucifixion* by William Roberts (Catalogue N°68).

This picture shows Roberts' angular style of drawing which was influenced by the Cubism of artists such as Picasso and Braque. Roberts started his artistic career designing posters and this linear quality remained evident throughout his drawings and paintings. Roberts was also a signatory on the short-lived Vorticism Movement along with Wyndham Lewis. This drawing is widely believed to be a preparatory sketch for a finished oil painting of the Crucifixion which is held by the Methodist Modern Art Collection.¹⁸ The painting was shown at Roberts' first solo show in 1923 at the Chenil Galleries in London. Some artists used biblical subjects in the early 1920s to draw comparisons with the atrocities of the First World War.



🖼️ *Composition with Shell* by Edward Wadsworth ARA (Catalogue N°80).

New English Art Club and the London Group. Shells often featured in Wadsworth's work due to the appeal of their geometric forms. Having previously painted them in perspective Wadsworth later started to abstract and flatten them in his compositions.

Wadsworth was born in Yorkshire and studied in Bradford before going to the Slade School of Art. He was associated with many of the most important art movements of the twentieth century including the Vorticists and the Omega Workshops as well as being a member of the

Defence of Modernism

Sadler’s art collecting in the 1910s was slightly limited due to the significant issues caused by the First World War. By the 1920s his collecting reflected his confidence in purchasing art that was at the cutting edge of Modernism. These Modernist movements were still against the prevailing tastes of the public. Sadler regularly found himself writing and speaking in defence of Modernism through talks, newspaper articles and in one case a booklet published by The Hogarth Press. The booklet entitled, ‘Modern Art and Revolution’ was published in 1932 and focussed on whether artists can predict social change through their art but also looked at why some people were finding it difficult to embrace Modern Art: ‘The subject which I wish to discuss with the readers of this pamphlet is whether the temper of mind and trend of feeling disclosed by the work of modern artists portend economic and social revolution.’

Sadler says that younger people find the sculptures ‘instantly congenial’ but the elderly react with ‘repugnance, anger and alarm’. New ‘modernist’ forms in design are accepted more easily and with less emotional reaction. ‘But modernism in advertisement – Mr McKnight Kauffer’s designs for example – though many of them are brilliantly cubistic, the public evidently likes. Hence it is that cubism in textiles wins popular approval long before the same goodwill is shown towards cubism in painting. ... But it is significant that taste should, by instalments, find modernism tolerable. ... For us today, art boils with controversy.’¹⁹

It is clear that by the outbreak of the First World War Sadler had engaged thoughtfully with the rapidly changing art world and developed his own tastes in contemporary art. By the end of the decade Sadler was established as a collector of confidence and influence who followed his own passions and was excited by Modernist movements. This sometimes put him in a position of conflict with society, the art world and his own wife, but his aim was always to learn as well as to encourage and educate those around him.

¹² [Tate Archive 8221.1 – Notes by Michael Sadler on a Lecture given by Roger Fry on Post-Impressionist Art, January 1911](#)
¹³ [Tate Archive 8221.2 – Letter from Michael Sadler to Walter Sickert, 11th October 1913](#)
¹⁴ [Holmes, C. J. *Self and Partners \(Mostly Self\): Being the Reminiscences of C. J. Holmes*, 1936](#)
¹⁵ [www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/13526](#)
¹⁶ [Tate Archive 8221.5.27 – Notes by Michael Sadler on Futurist Painting, 13th November 1914](#)
¹⁷ [Hamilton, I. *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings and Drawing of War by C R W Nevinson*, 1916 p.7](#)
¹⁸ [www.methodist.org.uk/faith/the-methodist-modern-art-collection/browse-the-collection/the-crucifixion-william-roberts/](#)
¹⁹ [Sadler, M.E. *Modern Art and Revolution*, 1932.](#)

THE ALTRUISTIC COLLECTOR

The sheer pleasure of purchasing art and supporting other people also helped to alleviate his own negative feelings.

Sadler’s ethos of the benefits of education and culture were reflected in his inherently altruistic nature. Early on in his collecting Sadler realised that buying works from contemporary artists had a number of benefits. These included being able to provide financial support for people who were actives as well as being able to influence the market more generally in their favour. This was critical in the first years of the 1930s after the Wall Street Crash caused a global recession and many collectors stopped buying art. Sadler’s support also enabled artists to see his collections, writing to newspapers in support of their work and also recommending them for relevant positions.

Sadler often displayed his own works of art in places such as the University for people to appreciate but he would also lend them to schools and colleges for exhibition. He lent works to artists and critics to be used to illustrate talks which was highly significant in a period before mass colour reproduction. Sadler sometimes lost track of which works had been lent out and in some cases he would later gift them directly to the educational institution or to the person who had borrowed them.

Sadler was a supporter of the brothers, Paul and John Nash who were young artists when they visited him in Leeds in 1914. They were invited to Sadler’s home on Headingley Lane where most of his collection was on view. Paul Nash wrote afterwards to thank Sadler: ‘I had meant to tell you how much we both enjoyed

our day with you and the pictures. It was very interesting to see your fine collection, especially do I remember the French fellows who were a revelation. ... I must say how much we enjoyed your C J Holmes and the Gauguins to see them was a real treat.’²⁰



🖼️ Dead Tree by Paul Nash (Catalogue Nº57).

At a time when there were fewer public galleries and those that were open often had very traditional art collections it was difficult for people to experience new innovations in art. As a young artist, being able to see Impressionist, post-Impressionist and Modern paintings and drawings would have been a hugely enriching experience and provided confidence and inspiration for their own work.

Sadler was also a great supporter of two other brothers, Stanley and Gilbert Spencer. They visited Sadler in Leeds and on 23rd June 1924 Stanley Spencer wrote a letter in which he reminisced about his visit: ‘It was nice to hear from you again and to be reminded of my visit to Leeds which inspired me very much.’²¹ Sadler also recommended Gilbert Spencer to a colleague to work as an art teacher.

The Nash and Spencer brothers went on to become four of the most influential names in twentieth century art. They are represented in many national and international museum and gallery collections. However other artists of the time did not have such successful stories. Sadler was a great supporter of the artist John Currie whom he described as, ‘blazing with genius’.²² In 1913 and 1914 Sadler was purchasing works from Currie and invited him to Leeds. Afterwards Currie commented: ‘Dear Mr Sadler, I have come away with delightful recollections of you and your pictures – the visit will remain in my mind as one of the most pleasant things I have known.’²³ Intriguingly Sadler also seemed to have enabled Currie to visit Italy: ‘At Xmas I intend taking a journey to Italy for 2 months, a pleasure I have looked forward to all my life. It is mainly to you I owe this treat and great opportunity.’²⁴ It is not clear whether this was financial assistance or by way of a recommendation. Sadly, Currie suffered badly with mental health issues. He left his wife and child and moved in with his mistress. Their relationship was tempestuous and he eventually shot his mistress and then killed himself. Currie’s wife wrote to Sadler and was grateful to him for buying some of Currie’s drawings from her to support herself and her child.²⁵

Sadler may have been sympathetic to Currie’s mental health issues due to his own bouts of depression which affected his life and his collecting at sporadic intervals. The ebb and flow of his depression was often linked to his career but was also due to his family circumstances. After the death of Mary in 1931 his spending on art increased rapidly which was typical of the mania he would sometimes experience with his depression. The sheer pleasure of purchasing art and supporting other people also helped to alleviate his own negative feelings.

Sadler’s support and influence wasn’t just financial. In 1937 the eminent sculptor, Henry Moore wrote to Sadler to thank him as he had contributed £40.00 to the Museum of Modern Art in New York towards the purchase of a sculpture by Moore. Moore was grateful for the financial support but was also pleased that it was from, ‘... so discerning a collector as Sir Michael Sadler.’²⁶ He went on to thank Sadler for getting his work into such an important gallery.

Edward McKnight Kauffer is less well-known now but was a highly influential designer and artist in the mid-twentieth century. In 1925 Kauffer wrote to Sadler to thank him for his support: ‘My work has not up to now received the distinction that it has achieved by being shown in Oxford under your guidance. ... I have always remembered the event some years ago when you purchased a painting of mine. I have mentioned this fact very often for it also was and still is an encouragement I value.’²⁷



 A Ship by Edward McKnight Kauffer (Catalogue N°81).

During the First World War anti-Jewish sentiment was quite high. However, Sadler used his influence to support a number of Jewish artists who were facing criticism and misunderstanding from the art world and from society more generally. One of those was Jacob Kramer. Kramer had been born in Klintsey (a town on the Russian border with Ukraine) in 1892 to a Jewish family but they moved to Leeds when he was young. He attended art school in Leeds from 1907–1913 and at that point Sadler recommended him for a place at the Slade School of Art in London. Kramer’s father died in 1916 and Sadler helped financially by buying paintings and drawings. The two corresponded regularly and Kramer would often borrow pictures from Sadler to study or to illustrate talks that he was giving.

In 1919 two works by Jacob Kramer were presented to Leeds Art Gallery and the gift was supported by Sadler.²⁸ The poor reception of these works by the public at the time indicate how much hostility Kramer faced. The Yorkshire Post in August 1921 published a review of Kramer’s work that was being shown in Harrogate. Some of the works were considered favourably but ‘The Jew’, which was a Cubist inspired piece owned by Sadler, was criticised

for representing the Jewish people as ‘down-trodden’ and ‘abject’ rather than ‘flamboyant’. The article went as far as to say that some works; ‘... have a touch of the weird’ and there are; ‘...few frankly naturalistic portraits.’²⁹ Sadler was still defending Kramer’s work in 1933 when he had a painting rejected by the Tate Gallery: ‘There is genius in Kramer’s pictures and I have no doubt that his reputation will steadily grow’.³⁰

Interestingly Sadler would also encourage other artists to find the positives in each other’s work. It is clear from a letter from Stanley Spencer that Sadler had been promoting Kramer’s work to him: ‘Please remember me to Kramer if you should ever see him and his mother. I begin to understand his work more. His picture of the Jews in the temple on the day of the Atonement which hangs in the Leeds Art Gallery moves me very much.’³¹

Sadler would often commission artists to create a likeness of him not from vanity but as another means of support. He commissioned Kramer to paint a portrait of him but it is clear from a letter from Mary Sadler to Kramer that she was not keen on the finished painting: ‘I agree that there is a good deal of character and strength about Mr Sadler’s portrait, but I can’t say I think it much like him ... a lovely genial expression but this picture gives him the impression of a lined old man with a bad temper....that is the face of a soured pessimist. ... I am not [intending?] to express any opinion as to the artistic merits of the pictures. I have no doubt it is very good from this point of view;’³²

Of the 85 sketches that Sadler initially gifted to the Cooper Gallery in 1933 only three were by women. They were Vanessa Bell, Elsie Henderson and Betty Sadleir (Catalogue numbers 305, 54 and 66). A further one was possibly added with The Addendum in 1936 which was by Frances Hodgkins (Catalogue number 97). Sadler’s administration of his collection could be erratic and wasn’t always accurate. It is possible that although he included the Hodgkins in his Notes in 1937 he hadn’t actually gifted the work as there is no evidence of it being at the Gallery and it was sold in 1944 (possibly by his son).³³ It is possible Sadler lent it for the period of the exhibition and then it was returned to him.

It is clear from reports of Sadler’s talks in newspapers that he strongly supported the education of women and was very aware of the rise of the ‘Modern Woman’ in the 1920s. He bought works of art by Vanessa Bell but his 1934 inventory only included three by her compared to fifteen by Duncan Grant.³⁴ Betty Sadleir was married to Sadler’s son and had some success as an artist including a solo exhibition in 1936. Sadler was a great admirer of the work of the New Zealand born artist, Frances Hodgkins. In 1933 Hodgkins had a solo show at the Lefevre Gallery in London and this included the painting, ‘Drawing Water’ which is included in Sadler’s catalogue of works at the Cooper Gallery. It is possible that he bought it directly from the show.

In 1931 Sadler used his influence with the Contemporary Art Society and recommended to Lord Ivor Churchill that they purchase two watercolours by Hodgkins.³⁵ Sadler himself donated works by Frances Hodgkins to a number of galleries including the Ashmolean in Oxford.

Whilst women artists have always had a small presence throughout the history of art they were emerging in greater numbers in the later nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century women were still facing prejudice but were starting to get established within the main art movements and groups of the day including the Bloomsbury Group, the London Group and the New English Art Club. Sadler also purchased works of art from Nina Hamnett, Margaret Hannay, Therese Lessore, Nora Unwin, Clare Leighton and Barbara Hepworth but did not include any of these in his choices for the survey for the Cooper Gallery.

²⁰ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from Paul Nash to Michael Sadler*, 16th August 1914

²¹ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from Stanley Spencer to Michael Sadler*, 23rd June 1924

²² Sadleir, M *Michael Ernest Sadler: A Memoir by his Son* 1949 p.253

²³ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from John Currie to Michael Sadler*, 18th March 1914

²⁴ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from John Currie to Michael Sadler*, 5th December 1913

²⁵ Tate Archive 8221.6 – *Letter from Jessie Curry to Michael Sadler*, 1914

²⁶ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from Henry Moore to Michael Sadler*, 10th March 1937

²⁷ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from McKnight Kauffer to Michael Sadler*, 19th June 1925

²⁸ Dickson, R. *Michael Sadler and Jacob Kramer: art patronage in the Leeds Jewish community 1913–1923*, 2024

²⁹ *Yorkshire Post* 23rd August 1921

³⁰ Special Collections (University of Leeds) BC MS 20c *Letter from Michael Sadler to Wilfred Childe* 21st January 1933

³¹ Tate Archive 8221.2 – *Letter from Stanley Spencer to Michael Sadler*, 23rd June 1924

³² Special Collections (University of Leeds) BC MS 20c *Letter from Mary Ann Sadler to Jacob Kramer* 26th October 1917

³³ Sadler, M.E. *Notes on a Collection of English Drawings* 1937 p.20. The same document also lists a sketch by JMW Turner entitled, ‘Blue Stream, Gothard’ but this was not included in the NACF list of items gifted to the gallery in 1933 and has never been recorded as being at the Gallery. It is included in the 1934

³⁴ Tate Archive 8221.1 v – *Catalogue of Pictures, Drawings, Prints and Sculptures in the possession of Sir Michael Sadler at The Rookery, Headington near Oxford – Vols I+II by M L Hutchinson*, December 1934

³⁵ Letter from Frances Hodgkins to Arthur Howell 10th Dec 1931. E H McCormick Archive of Frances Hodgkins' Letters, E H McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

THE GIFT TO THE COOPER GALLERY

Sadler always maintained his links with South Yorkshire and with Barnsley.

In 1933 Michael Sadler gifted 85 drawings to the Cooper Gallery in Barnsley. This was his third donation to the Gallery having previously given drawings in memory of his parents in 1923 and then his late wife in 1931. The 85 drawings and watercolours were chosen to provide a survey of British art from 1750 up to 1933. A further group of drawings was added by Sadler in 1936 to enhance the previous selection. In 1937 Sadler wrote a catalogue to accompany a display of the drawings entitled, ‘Notes on a Collection of English Drawings’ in which he provided his thoughts on the selection of certain art works and his motivations for the gift.

Sadler always maintained his links with South Yorkshire and with Barnsley. In the introduction to his catalogue he refers to the time spent in Barnsley as a youth with his friends and how influential this was for him. As the Cooper Gallery did not open until 1914 there wasn’t a public collection of art for Sadler and his friends to visit in their youth. However, the Sadlers and the Coopers seem to have known each other and it is likely that Michael Sadler saw S J Cooper’s art collection at his home at Mount Vernon, Barnsley. Cooper’s significant interest in the painters of the Barbizon School is likely to have been of interest to Sadler. Up until his death in 1936 Sadler’s younger brother, Dr Frank Sadler was a Trustee at the Cooper Gallery and was supportive of additions to the collection.

The selection of 85 drawings is sometimes referred to as the ‘In Historic’ series as Sadler specifically wanted to provide a chronology of works from 1750 up to the present day. In his introduction Sadler mentions a gift of drawings and watercolours to the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester by J E Taylor which totalled 266 works donated between 1892 and 1912. The works were mostly architectural and landscape views by artists such as JMW Turner, William Blake and JR Cozens. Sadler went to see the works whilst he was in Manchester and was inspired by the idea of gifting such works to a public institution. Sadler chose many of the same artists but was also very innovative in expanding his survey to cover the modern period. Sadler compared the two collections in his Notes; ‘... there is a rich, extensive, and well-chosen array of English drawings [in Manchester] which afford an admirable panorama of what is here attempted in uncompleted outline.’³⁶

Sadler seems to have devised the idea for the gift in 1931–32 and started collecting works to add to it. Two significant events may have influenced his decision making. Firstly, the death of his wife in 1931 had a detrimental effect on him which may have led to an increase in his collecting. The second was the economic downturn of the period which encouraged Sadler to buy from living artists as a way of supporting them.

The works were passed to the National Art Collections Fund in 1933 and finally made their way to the Cooper Gallery later the same year. The works were included in the NACF 30th annual report for 1933 which was published in 1934: ‘The collection is based more upon personal taste than on representative character, yet opening with such names as Gainsborough, Alexander and John Robert Cozens, Towne and Farington, it passes by way of Rowlandson, Dr Monro and Thirtle to Turner, Girtin, Constable, Cotman, to the Victorian artists, David Cox, De Wint, Hunt, Lewis, Palmer, Lear, Ruskin and Swann, to conclude with Steer, Sickert, John and other distinguished draughtsmen of our own day.’³⁷

The Survey

Sadler chose to start his selection of paintings in 1750 which he considered to be the start of the ‘modern era’. In his booklet, ‘Modern Art and Revolution’ Sadler outlined the significance of this date; ‘At this time Handel was writing his oratorio, Reynolds was nearing his time in Rome, Gainsborough was getting established in Ipswich, Richard Wilson was painting in Italy,...’.³⁸ Sadler saw this as a time in which Britain created its own identity and developed its confidence in art and culture.

Sadler arranged the works of art on a number of screens which were broadly chronological in nature. The screens started with Thomas Gainsborough and Alexander Cozens and concluded with Edward Wadsworth and Anthony Brown. Some of the screens were assigned a theme to help provide a coherent understanding of the grouping. These groupings were explained in the catalogue written by Sadler and published in 1937.

Sadler was very aware that his chronology had deviations and omissions. For the first screen he mentioned a number of artists whose work he didn't manage to acquire, from Thomas and Paul Sandby to Richard Wilson and William Blake. The latter he refers to as a ‘poet, designer and visionary sage’.³⁹ There were some criticisms of Sadler’s selections from people saying that the choice was too personal to others indicating that it was rather outrageous. In 1936 Sadler gifted a further group of drawings to the survey which provide some interesting insight into his thinking. Some of the choices were traditional such as Sir Edwin Landseer and Michael Angelo Rooker but others were very contemporary such as Frances Hodgkins and Henry Moore. Sadler also added two drawings which were then thought to be by Sir John Everett Millais and Sir Edward Burne-Jones. It is interesting to note that the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood artists were not included in the original survey. They had rather fallen out of fashion in the early twentieth century and were not as well regarded by dealers. Sadler seemed to have realised this was

a significant omission and attempted to rectify this.

Sadler was also criticised for donating drawings and watercolour sketches rather than finished paintings. Sadler indicated in his catalogue that this was a very deliberate choice as the sketch allowed the viewer to use their imagination and also commented that; ‘the art of water-colour has been one of the characteristics of English culture.’⁴⁰

The Public Response

In January 1934 the Barnsley Chronicle reported on the drawings and commented that the paintings were, ‘... accommodated in rather “higgledy-piggledy” fashion in a small room upstairs – not as the owner intended they should be exhibited.’⁴¹ The art works were placed on ten screens in what is now called the Sadler Room upstairs at the Gallery. It is clear from the newspaper article that Sadler wanted to come to Barnsley to hang the drawings himself but couldn’t manage it due to other commitments. He wanted them to remain chronological but confirmed that there were options within that. In the article he talked about his hopes for the collection: ‘Knowing them so well and loving them so much ... I trust that young people in the future, who have a taste for these things, will derive pleasure from the drawings just as my wife and I got great enjoyment and knowledge from the historical series of English drawings at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester.’⁴²

The pictures were gifted at an interesting time for the Gallery as in 1934, Thomas Fox and his sisters, Sarah and Annie, had gifted a number of Victorian oil paintings. The Fox family had been brewers and publicans in Barnsley and alongside the gift of paintings they also paid for a new wing to be built at the Cooper Gallery. The newspaper coverage of this period focusses on the new wing and the oil paintings with only a brief mention of the works gifted by Sadler which were squeezed into the room upstairs. With hindsight it is interesting that the Victorian artists collected by Fox have largely faded into relative obscurity and the Modern artists collected by Sadler are now the important names in the canon of art history.

The newspaper coverage of the period provides evidence of a contrast between the reception of the Victorian oil paintings and the modern sketches. Some critics tried to encourage a change in attitude: ‘If they could get behind their minds that the artist was not trying to imitate nature but to express nature, they might come a little nearer to believing that art did not reach its apex with Landseer and that there could be advance beyond him.’⁴³

It is clear that the drawings created a mixed response when they were gifted to the Gallery but by 1940 Pawsey, who was one of the trustees of the Gallery, wrote to Sadler; ‘...the facts are that for a year or so after your gift there was, I think, an increased number of visitors to the Art Gallery, who were certainly interested in the pictures that you presented

to it. Then came the war and the attendance slackened’⁴⁴

Sadler was not deterred by the lukewarm response and in 1935 lent a number of Impressionist, post-Impressionist and Modern works to the Technical College just over the road from the Cooper Gallery. The artists included: Gaugin, Matisse, Augustus John, Jacob Kramer, Duncan Grant and Walter Sickert. The exhibition was styled as an experiment to see how people would react to more modern works.

The newspaper reports from the time evidence a fascinating contrast between the reaction to these new paintings and to the more traditional Victorian art in the Gallery: ‘The attempt to discover what Barnsley thinks about modern art has not made a very encouraging start, for there were only a handful of persons present at the opening.’

The exhibition was opened by Mayor Alderman who was reluctant to give an opinion, ‘...because I would not like to give offence in any way’. ⁴⁵

An interview with a potential visitor was not very complimentary: ‘I hear there are some terrible pictures at the Technical College... I shall go and have a look just out of curiosity but I know I shall not like the nasty things.’ ⁴⁶

The coverage indicated that many people were still focussing on whether a work of art was natural or lifelike rather than embracing the ethos of Modernism. It is also clear that younger people were perceived to be reacting more positively to the works of art than older people. These reactions reiterate how important and generous Sadler was as a collector. Even in the face of public opposition he continued to support contemporary artists and encourage understanding of their works.

³⁶ Sadler, M.E. *Notes on a Collection of English Drawings*, 1937 p.23
³⁷ National Art- Collections Fund Thirtieth Annual Report 1933, published 1934
³⁸ Sadler, M.E. *Modern Art and Revolution*, 1932
³⁹ Tate Archive 8221.3 – *Notes about Screen One by Michael Sadler*
⁴⁰ Sadler, M.E. *Notes on a Collection of English Drawings*, 1937 p.22
⁴¹ *Barnsley Chronicle* 20th January 1934
⁴² *Barnsley Chronicle* 20th January 1934
⁴³ *Yorkshire Post* 17th April 1935
⁴⁴ Tate Archive 8221.3 – *Letter from Pawsey to Michael Sadler*, 10th September 1940
⁴⁵ *Yorkshire Post* 2nd April 1935
⁴⁶ *Yorkshire Post* 16th April 1935



 Sadler Room © Barnsley Archives and Local Studies.

A REMARKABLE LEGACY

Sadler actively supported Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell, Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer, Jacob Kramer, CRW Nevinson, Edward Wadsworth, Wyndham Lewis and Henry Moore amongst many others who have become pivotal names in the history of British Modernism.

Mary Ann Sadler died in 1931 which created a difficult time for Sadler as his depression took hold. Their son commented in a family letter about the difficulties father and son faced; ‘... and can understand how desolate we have been left and how great is the burden my father has to bear.’⁴⁷ In the first instance Sadler gave a gift of mainly French drawings to the Cooper Gallery in memory of his wife. It is touching that he chose works of art that he knew Mary enjoyed and appreciated rather than focussing on his own taste.

1934 was a year of significant change for Sadler. He retired from his Mastership at Oxford, moved house and married Eva Gilpin. Eva had been a friend of the family for many years, at times being responsible for the education of Sadler’s son. Eva and Sadler were like minded when it came to their views on education and Sadler had previously supported her to open a progressive school for youngsters.

Sadler and his second wife moved to a property called ‘The Rookery’ outside of Oxford and an inventory taken in 1934 gives an indication of the scale and scope of Sadler’s art collection (excluding those that had already been given to friends or public collections). There was a strong element of the British landscape tradition including thirty-six by Constable, thirty-three by J S Cotman and several by Gainsborough. The French works included the Barbizon School ranging from Diaz and Corot to Troyon. It also included Impressionist works by Monet and Renoir as well as numerous prints

and reproductions of Impressionist works. There were various post-Impressionist works including; Gaugin, Matisse and Picasso and even a Surrealist work by Salvador Dali. The Bloomsbury Group was well represented by Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. The New English Art Club had many famous members including; Sickert, Nicholson, Nash, Nevinson, Augustus John and six pieces by Edward Wadsworth. Kramer, Meninsky and Kandinsky all had frequent entries. Sadler’s interest in Brabazon was expressed by at least twenty pieces by the artist and there were eleven drawings and six sculptures by Henry Moore as well as two by Barbara Hepworth. There were also numerous colour prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai as well as Chinese silk paintings and African sculptures.⁴⁸ After Sadler’s death the collection was largely dispersed by his son.

Eva sadly died in 1940 leaving an aging Sadler with an art collection that was partly stored away due to the threat of being bombed during the Second World War. By 1942 Sadler himself was becoming increasingly ill and his son wrote: ‘I am here for the weekend. My father is not at all well, ... he enjoyed my visit though there is little enough I can do for him, and is as interested and quick facultied as ever. Only the body is inclined to fail. But as long as he can continue a very secluded regular existence he should go on tolerably well. Sister Evelyn Powys from Meanwood is a god send and looks after him admirably.’⁴⁹ Sadler died in October 1943 having made a significant contribution to the

worlds of art and education as well as having supported many friends and colleagues along the way.

Many people wrote movingly about Sadler after his death but it was his friend, the artist, John Piper who summarised his collecting most effectively; ‘...independence of taste and courage of opinion...The creative collector buys not at all for financial, but for spiritual enrichment. ... he backed winners almost every time; ... The most astonishing thing about his collection was the large number of works ... that were bought at their first showing, and that represented those periods well... If he thought an artist was good, he wanted to risk a share in the proving of him.’⁵⁰



🗿 One of two known busts of Michael Sadler by Loris Rey whom Sadler supported. Mary Sadler considered the bust as being one of the best likenesses of him. Image courtesy of The Stanley and Audrey Burton gallery, University of Leeds⁵¹

The Continuation of a Legacy

In the catalogue to accompany his gift to the Cooper Gallery in 1937 Sadler commented on the fact that time changes the way in which we perceive artists and their work: ‘A choice made in 1930 is very different from the choice which a similar committee or amateur would have made in 1900, and it is certain to differ from the choice which would be made in 1960.’⁵² Reviewing the choices that Sadler made from a distance of over ninety years allows a new perspective on the works of art. In the words of his son, ‘... many of the young artists whose productions he bought failed to develop and faded into oblivion. But others, ... justified his vision...’⁵³

The reputations of artists ebb and flow over the years and are considered differently by each generation. In the mid-1940s when Sadler’s son was looking at selling some of the works of art inherited from his father, he was advised that the pieces by Duncan Grant and Henry Moore would not sell well and would only fetch low prices.⁵⁴ The pictures by C J Holmes which were incredibly popular in his lifetime fetched very low prices after the artist’s death. Holmes has largely disappeared from the canon of art history and is rarely shown in museums and galleries today but the work of Grant and Moore is highly prized by both private collectors and public institutions.

Sadler used his extensive research skills and his gut instinct combined with his enthusiasm

to bring many artists to the fore in the period from 1910 until the early 1940s. A print by Picasso was owned by Sadler in 1913 and displayed at an exhibition in London. It was the first piece by Picasso to enter a British public collection in 1922.⁵⁵ Sadler actively supported Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell, Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer, Jacob Kramer, CRW Nevinson, Edward Wadsworth, Wyndham Lewis and Henry Moore amongst many others who have become pivotal names in the history of British Modernism. His support varied from purchasing pictures to providing recommendations for career opportunities and joining societies. He would also provide a confidence boost via visits and correspondence or enable his own collection to be seen by many people, not just artists, to provide inspiration for creativity and wellbeing. He regularly wrote letters of support to individuals and to newspapers, giving artists a voice through talks and exhibitions and actively supported those who were marginalised by society.

⁴⁷ Special Collections (University of Leeds) MS 1701/3 *Letter from Michael Sadleir to John Harvey* 16th March 1931

⁴⁸ Tate Archive 8221.1 – *Catalogue of Pictures, Drawings, Prints and Sculptures in the possession of Sir Michael Sadler at The Rookery, Headington near Oxford – Vols I+II* by M L Hutchinson, December 1934

⁴⁹ Special Collections (University of Leeds) MS 1701/3 *Letter from Michael Sadler to John Harvey*, 17th October 1942

⁵⁰ Sadleir, M *Michael Ernest Sadler: A Memoir by his Son*, 1949 p.359 and p.387

⁵¹ Tate Archive 8221.6 – *Notes from Michael Sadleir*

⁵² Sadler, M.E. *Notes on a Collection of English Drawings*, 1937 p.22

⁵³ Sadleir, M *Michael Ernest Sadler: A Memoir by his Son*, 1949 p.246

⁵⁴ Tate Archive 8221.6 – *Letter to Michael Sadleir*, undated

⁵⁵ Beechey, J. and Stephens, C. *Picasso and Modern British Art*, 2012 p.60



 Michael Sadler as Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds. © Barnsley Archives and Local Studies.

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‘It takes time to get used to change. It strikes one at first as subversive, but may prove less revolutionary than one supposed.’

The year after Sadler’s gift of 1933, the works of art were displayed on screens in the upstairs room at the Cooper Gallery, now known as the Sadler Room. Originally there were ten screens each with a broad theme and there was a general chronological feel to the layout which reflected Sadler’s ethos behind the donation. In 1936 a further group of pictures was added to the series of sketches and these were referred to as ‘The Addendum’ in Sadler’s own catalogue published in 1937. These works were chosen to extend and expand the chronological series.

Screen One

This screen was curated to show English watercolours between the period 1750 and 1789. The first date was one that Sadler believed to be the beginning of ‘the modern era’ and 1789 was the year of the French Revolution which was a highly significant event for art and society across Europe. Sadler highlighted the work of Thomas Rowlandson, Alexander Cozens and Thomas Gainsborough as being some of the most important artists of that period. Sadler bought many sketches by Gainsborough but over the years several of these have been reattributed to ‘after’ or ‘circle of’ as Gainsborough’s work regularly inspired contemporary or slightly later artists.

Screen Two

This screen was heavily influenced by the Romantic revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sadler drew parallels between the poetry of William Wordsworth and the art of Thomas Girtin and JMW Turner.

Artists were beginning to focus on the north and west of England as well Scotland drawing and painting the landscape. The Norwich School comprising artists such as John Sell Cotman and John Thirtle was also making East Anglia increasingly important artistically.

Screen Three

Sadler saw these sketches as being part of a movement in art which started to express ‘feeling’ through landscape and cited John Constable as being the towering figure in this period. He also listed artists who created romantic landscapes such David Cox in Wales.

Screen Four

This screen covered the middle decades of the nineteenth century and Sadler described the artists as having all the skill of those who preceded them but something external repressed them so they did not reach their full potential, resulting in a period of ‘intellectual hesitancy’. The mid-nineteenth century saw the development of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Sadler seemed to have felt that the art of this period was a little old-fashioned when viewed from the period of rapid change that he had experienced.

Screens Five and Six

These screens marked a ‘revival of talent and purpose’ which coincided with the founding of the New English Art Club in 1886. The NEAC was founded by a group of artists who were dissatisfied with the conservative nature of the Royal Academy of Art. The group included

Walter Sickert, Augustus John and Philip Wilson Steer. By the 1920s there were many young members including Duncan Grant, Stanley Spencer and Paul Nash. The art critic, Roger Fry was also highly influential in this period.

Screens Seven to Ten

These screens all displayed the works of young, contemporary artists from the 1910s through to 1933. Sadler recognised that their newness might have shocked some visitors to the gallery, ‘It takes time to get used to change. It strikes one at first as subversive, but may prove less revolutionary than one supposed.’ By way of comparison Sadler mentioned that there was an initial reluctance to the work of Turner until people were encouraged by Ruskin to embrace his work. Sadler also specifically referenced the impact of the First World War in terms of society at large and the significant effect on artists and the art world more generally.

The Addendum

Sadler provided little comment on the choice of these pictures which was added in 1936, three years after the main gift. It is interesting that he made the effort to include two drawings by artists of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood which he seemed to recognise as an oversight in the original gift. The addition of works by Frances Hodgkins and Henry Moore implied that Sadler was keen to keep the survey as up to date as possible.

SCREEN 1
PRE WILLIAM
WORDSWORTH
AND THE FRENCH
REVOLUTION

1

Wick Church, Bath
Late 18th – early 19th centuries

Dr Thomas Monro (1759–1833)
(Previously Thomas Gainsborough RA)

Chalk and wash on paper



2

Cottage in a Sandy Lane
Mid–late 18th century

Follower of Thomas Gainsborough RA
(Previously Thomas Gainsborough RA
(1727–1788))

Chalk and watercolour on paper



3

Landscape with Trees
(Previously ‘Tree’)
Mid 18th century

Alexander Cozens (1717–1786)

Pen and watercolour on paper



4

Vietri and Raito, Bay of Salerno

c.1782

John Robert Cozens (1752–1797)

Watercolour on paper



5

**Near Glarus
(Previously ‘Mountain Scene
in Switzerland, 1781’)**

1781

Francis Towne (1740–1816)

Ink and wash on paper

Gifted by Sadler in 1936



6

Tiverton

1813

Francis Towne (1740–1816)

Ink and watercolour on paper



7

**Bridge over the River Dochart near Killin, Perthshire
(Previously ‘Yorkshire Village’)**

1801

Joseph Farington RA (1747–1821)

Chalk on paper



8

**Cetara on the Gulf of Salerno
(Previously ‘Cilorio’)**

1800s

John 'Warwick' Smith (1749–1831)

Watercolour on paper



9

Landscape with Church

Early–mid 19th century

Circle of James Robertson (active 1815–1855)
(Previously Thomas Rowlandson)

Ink and wash on paper



A Wooded Landscape

Late 18th – early 19th century

Dr Thomas Monro (1759–1833)

Chalk on paper



SCREEN 2
ROMANTIC
REVIVAL

11

Northern Town
Late 18th century

Circle of Thomas Girtin (1775–1802)
(Previously Thomas Girtin)

Watercolour and pencil on paper



12

Lake Lugano
(Previously ‘A Town on the Italian Coast’)
1790s

JMW Turner RA (1775–1851)
and Thomas Girtin (1775–1802)
(Previously JMW Turner)

Pencil and wash on paper



13

Fastolf's Tower, Caister Castle
(Previously 'Falstaff's Tower,
Caister Castle, Norfolk')
1800–1804

John Sell Cotman (1782–1842)

Pencil and watercolour on paper

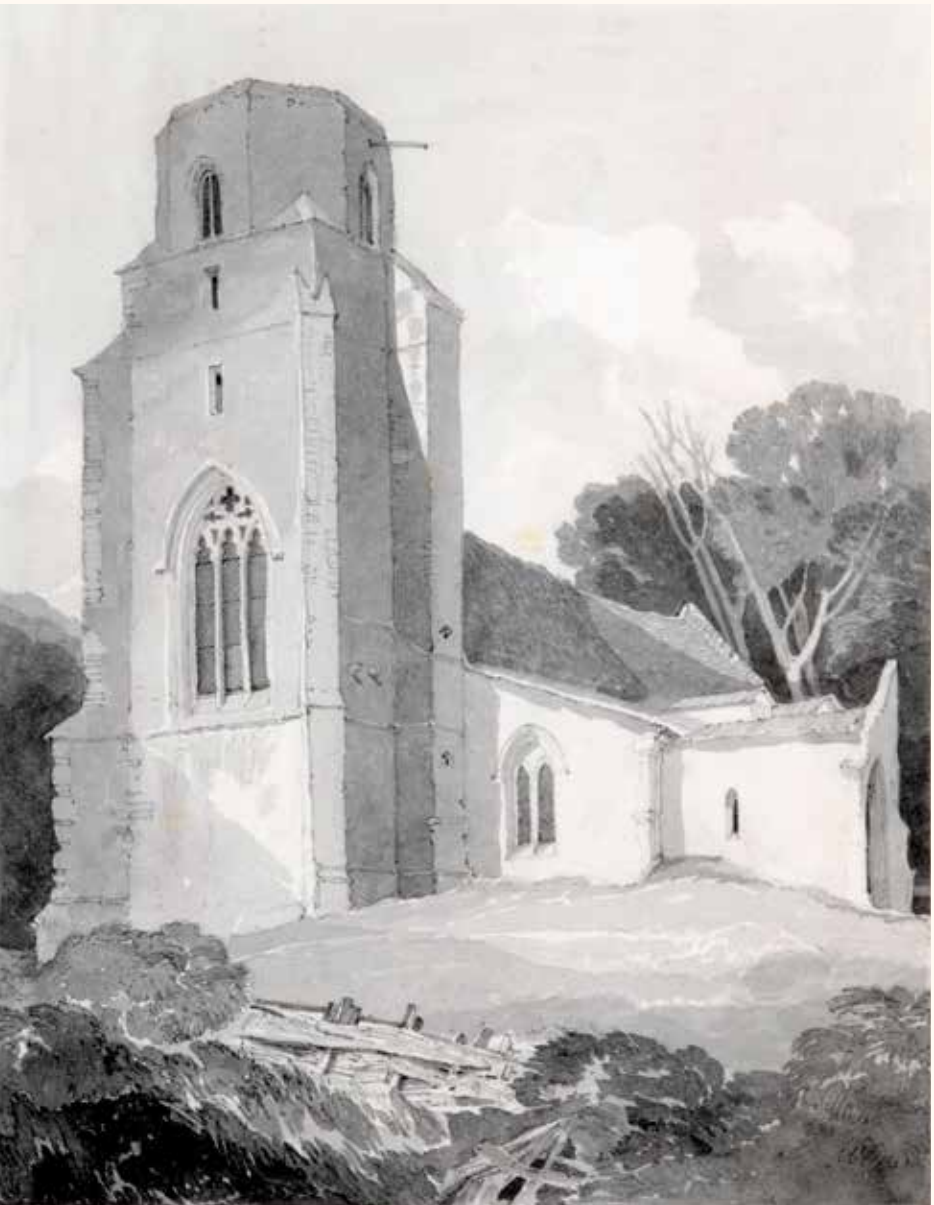


14

Scoulton Church, Norfolk
1809

John Sell Cotman (1782–1842)

Ink and wash on paper



15

River at King Street, Norwich
Early 19th century

John Thirtle (1777–1839)

Pencil and wash on paper



16

Boats in a Mist
Mid 19th century

John le Capelain (c.1814–1848)

Watercolour on paper



17

**The Hospice of St. Bernard,
Great St. Bernard Pass**
1830s

John Ruskin (1819–1900)
Ink and watercolour on paper



18

Study after Turner
Mid-late 19th century

Hercules Brabazon Brabazon (1821–1906)
Gouache on paper



SCREEN 3
FEELING FOR
LANDSCAPE

19

Windmill on a Hill
(Previously ‘The Windmill’)
Early 19th century

Attributed to George Frost (1734–1821)
(Previously John Constable RA)

Chalk on paper



20

Study of a Tree
Early 19th century

John Varley (1778–1842)

Watercolour and charcoal on paper



21

Wooded Mountains with Lake
(Previously ‘Mountains with Lake’)
Early–mid 19th century

Circle of David Cox RWS (1783–1859)
(Previously David Cox RWS)

Pencil and watercolour on paper



22

Atcham Church, Shrewsbury
c.1841–1843

Peter de Wint (1784–1849)
Watercolour and pencil on paper



23

Waterloo Bridge
c.1817

William Henry Hunt RWS (1790–1864)
Pencil and wash on paper



24

Dolwyddelan Churchyard
c.1836

Samuel Palmer (1805–1881)
Chalk on paper



25

Coming Storm
Mid 19th century

William Roxby Beverley (1811–1889)
Watercolour, body colour and pencil on paper



26

A Gypsy Encampment

1833

William James Müller (1812–1845)

Watercolour and ink on paper



27

**Moored Barges
(Previously 'Barges')**

Late 19th century

Edward Angelo Goodall RWS (1819–1908)

Watercolour and pencil on paper



28

On the Rampart of Sens

1846

John Ruskin HRWS (1819–1900)

Ink and wash on paper



Near Oxford (after Peter de Wint)

Mid-late 19th century

Hercules Brabazon Brabazon (1821–1906)

Watercolour and pencil on paper



SCREEN 4
INTELLECTUAL
HESITANCY

30

Interior of Süleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul
(Previously ‘Mosque of Suleimania,
Constantinople’)
c.1840

John Frederick Lewis RA (1805–1876)

Watercolour, bodycolour and pencil on paper



31

Portrait of John Baring
1839

George Richmond RA (1809–1896)

Chalk and pencil on paper



32

Radcliffe Camera, Oxford, from Quadrangle
of Brasenose College
Mid 19th century

After JMW Turner RA (1775–1851)

Pencil and watercolour on paper



33

San Michele, Taormina

1847

Edward Lear (1812–1888)

Ink and watercolour on paper



34

**Binfield
(Previously 'Benfield')**

Mid-late 19th century

Thomas Collier (1840–1891)



35

Ellerby Moor, North East Yorkshire

1900

Frederick William Jackson (1858–1918)

Watercolour and pencil on paper



36

Dusk

Late 19th – early 20th century

Arthur Douglas Peppercorn (1847–1924)

Watercolour on card



Sienna
1888

Harry Goodwin (c.1842–1925)
Watercolour and ink on paper



38

Tiger
Late 19th century

John Macallan Swan RA (1847-1910)

Chalk on paper



39

Study of a Girl's Head
c.1898

James Havard Thomas (1854-1921)

Pencil on paper



40

Norfolk Crescent, Bath
1916-1919

Walter Richard Sickert RA (1860-1942)

Ink, was and chalk on paper



41

Mont St. Michel

Late 19th – early 20th century

Dugald Sutherland MacColl (1859–1948)

Watercolour on paper



42

**Porta della Carta, Doge's Palace, Venice
(Previously 'St. Marks, Venice')**

1907–1910

Henry Tonks FRCS (1862–1937)

Watercolour and pencil on paper



43

Near Stanhope Gate Farm

1911

Sir Charles John Holmes FSA (1868–1936)

Charcoal and watercolour on paper



44

Hilton Fell and Murton Pike

1910

Sir Charles John Holmes FSA (1868–1936)

Charcoal and watercolour on paper



45

Estuary
1920s-1930s

Sir Muirhead Bone (1876-1953)
Watercolour, chalk and pencil on paper



46

Boats
1920

Philip Wilson Steer OM (1860-1942)
Pencil and wash on paper



47

The Common
1923

Philip Wilson Steer OM (1860-1942)
Watercolour on paper



48

Study of a Whippet
c.1905

Augustus John OM RA (1878-1961)
Pencil on paper

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49

**Olive Trees
(Previously ‘Olives’)**

1920

Roger Fry (1866–1934)

Chalk on paper



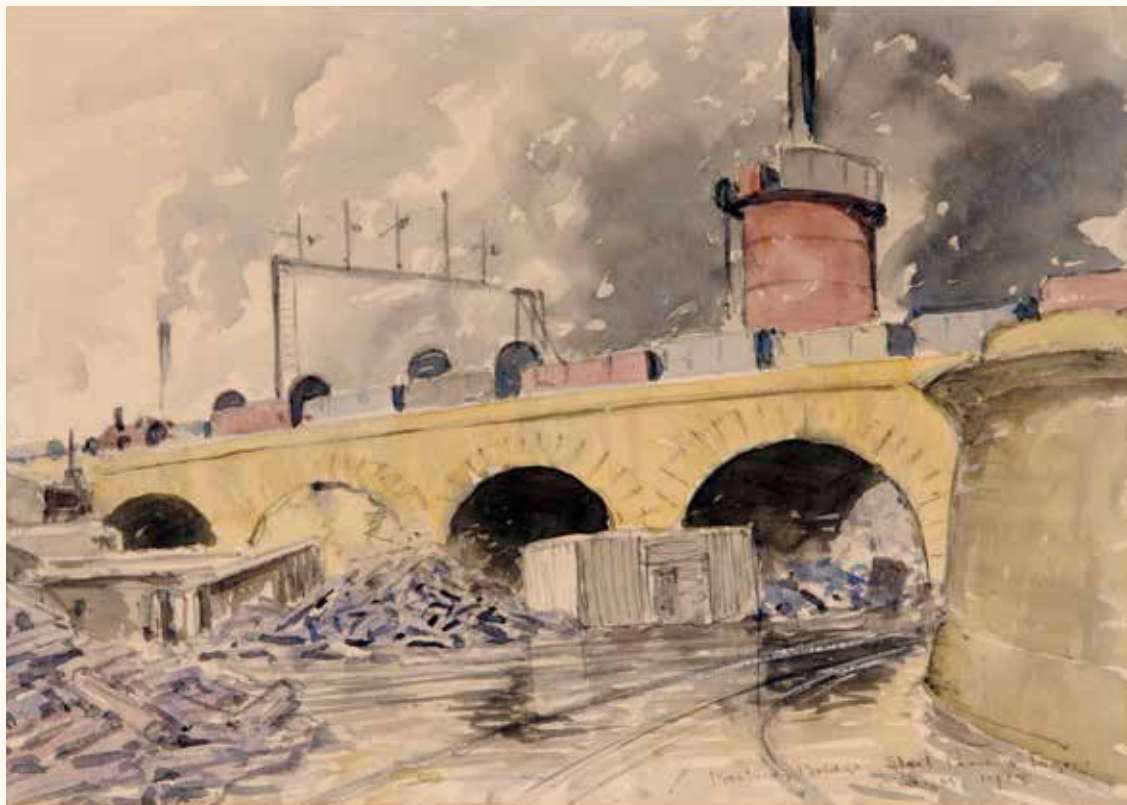
50

**Railway Bridge at Steel,
Peech and Tozer Ltd., Rotherham
(Previously ‘The Railway Bridge’)**

1918

Sir Charles John Holmes FSA (1868–1936)

Watercolour and pencil on paper



51

Study of a Breton Boy

c.1910

Henry Lamb RA (1883–1960)

Pencil on paper

© Cooper Gallery / Bridgeman Images



52

**Church of the Vera Cruz, Segovia, Spain
(Previously ‘Italian City’)**

1910s

1910s

Wyndham Tryon (1883–1942)

Pencil and wash on paper



53

Grasse
c.1910

Albert Rutherston RWS (1881–1953)
Ink on paper



54

Studies of Cows
1900s–1910s

Elsie Henderson (Baroness de Coudenhove)
(1880–1967)
Chalk on paper

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SCREENS 7–10
IMPACT OF THE
FIRST WORLD
WAR

55

Flowers
c.1926

Duncan Grant (1885–1978)

Watercolour and pencil on paper

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56

Flowerpiece
(Previously 'Flowers')
1920s

Vanessa Bell (1879–1961)

Watercolour, bodycolour and pencil on paper

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57

Dead Tree
1916

Paul Nash (1889–1946)

Gouache, watercolour and ink on paper



58

Study of a Man's Head

1920s–1930s

Sir Stanley Spencer RA CBE (1891–1959)

Pencil on paper

© Cooper Gallery / Bridgeman Images



59

A Boy's Head

1920s

Gilbert Spencer RA (1892–1979)

Pencil on paper

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60

Bermuda

1922–1924

Owen Merton (1887–1931)

Watercolour and pencil on card



61

A Street in Mentone

1909

Charles Maresco Pearce (1874–1964)

Ink and watercolour on paper

© The artist's estate



62

Side Pike
Early-mid 20th century

Elliott Seabrooke (1886–1950)
Charcoal, ink and wash on paper



63

**Sketch for Lock Gates, Bath
(Previously ‘The Golden Valley’)**
1926

John Nash RA (1893–1977)
Pencil and wash on paper
© Cooper Gallery / Bridgeman Images



64

Mother and Child
1918

Bernard Meninsky (1891–1950)
Ink and wash on paper



65

Farmer's Son
1931

Russell Sidney Reeve (1895–1970)
Charcoal on paper
© The artist's estate



66

**The Radcliffe Camera from
All Souls College, Oxford**
Early 20th century

Betty Sadleir (1893–1978)

Watercolour and graphite on paper

© The artist's estate



67

**Artillery / Action
(Previously ‘Artillery’)**
1918

Percy Wyndham Lewis (1884–1957)

Ink on paper

© Cooper Gallery / Bridgeman Images



68

Crucifixion
Early 1920s

William Roberts (1895–1980)

Ink and Conte crayon on paper

© Estate of John David Roberts.
By permission of the Treasury Solicitor.



69

**Man and Woman, Sorrow
(Previously ‘Man and Woman’)**
1914

Jacob Kramer (1892–1962)

Charcoal on paper

© Estate of John David Roberts.
By permission of the Treasury Solicitor.



70

**Portrait of the Artist's Sister
(Previously 'Portrait of a Girl')**
1917

Jacob Kramer (1892–1962)

Chalk, pastel and wash on paper

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71

Custom House Quay, Dover
1926

Randolph Schwabe (1885–1948)

Watercolour, bodycolour and ink on paper

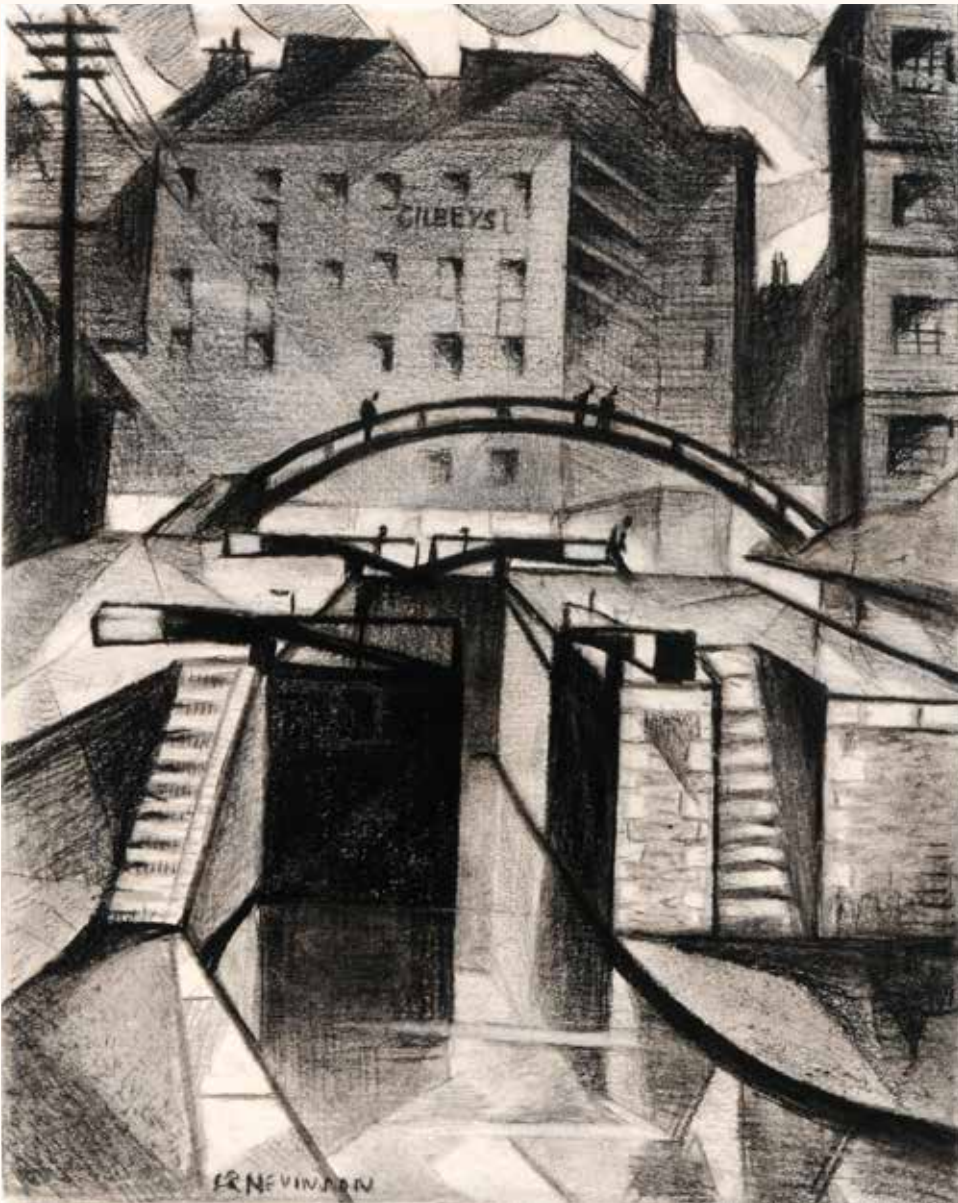


72

Factories (Camden Lock)
1913

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson ARA
(1889–1946)

Pencil, chalk and Conte crayon on paper



73

**Woman in a Cabbage Field, Belgium
(Previously 'Allotments')**
1914–1916

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson ARA
(1889–1946)

Charcoal, chalk and pencil on paper



74

Bainbridge, Yorkshire

c.1928

Roland Vivien Pitchforth RA (1895–1982)

Ink and watercolour on paper

© The artist's estate



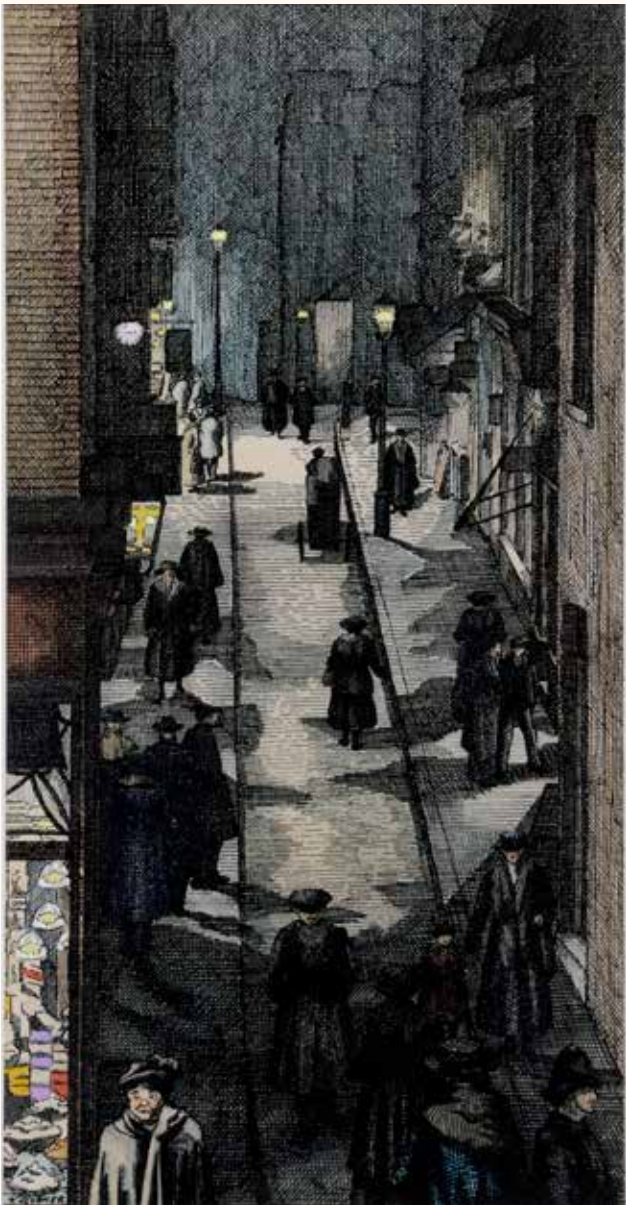
75

Flask Walk - Night

1920s

Charles Ginner ARA (1878–1952)

Ink, gouache and watercolour on paper



76

Mother and Child

1911

Rudolph Ihlee (1883–1968)

Chalk on paper

© Bridgeman Images



77

**House and Garden,
St. George's Square, London
(Previously 'London House and Garden')**

c.1912

John Currie (c.1884–1914)

Charcoal on paper



78

**View of Wednesbury
(Previously 'Factories')**

c.1928

Edward Wadsworth ARA (1889–1949)

Ink on paper



79

Industrial Landscape

1920s

Edward Wadsworth ARA (1889–1949)

Ink on paper



80

**Composition with Shell
(Previously 'Composition')**

1930

Edward Wadsworth ARA (1889–1949)

Gouache and pencil on paper



81

A Ship

1926

Edward McKnight Kauffer (1890–1954)

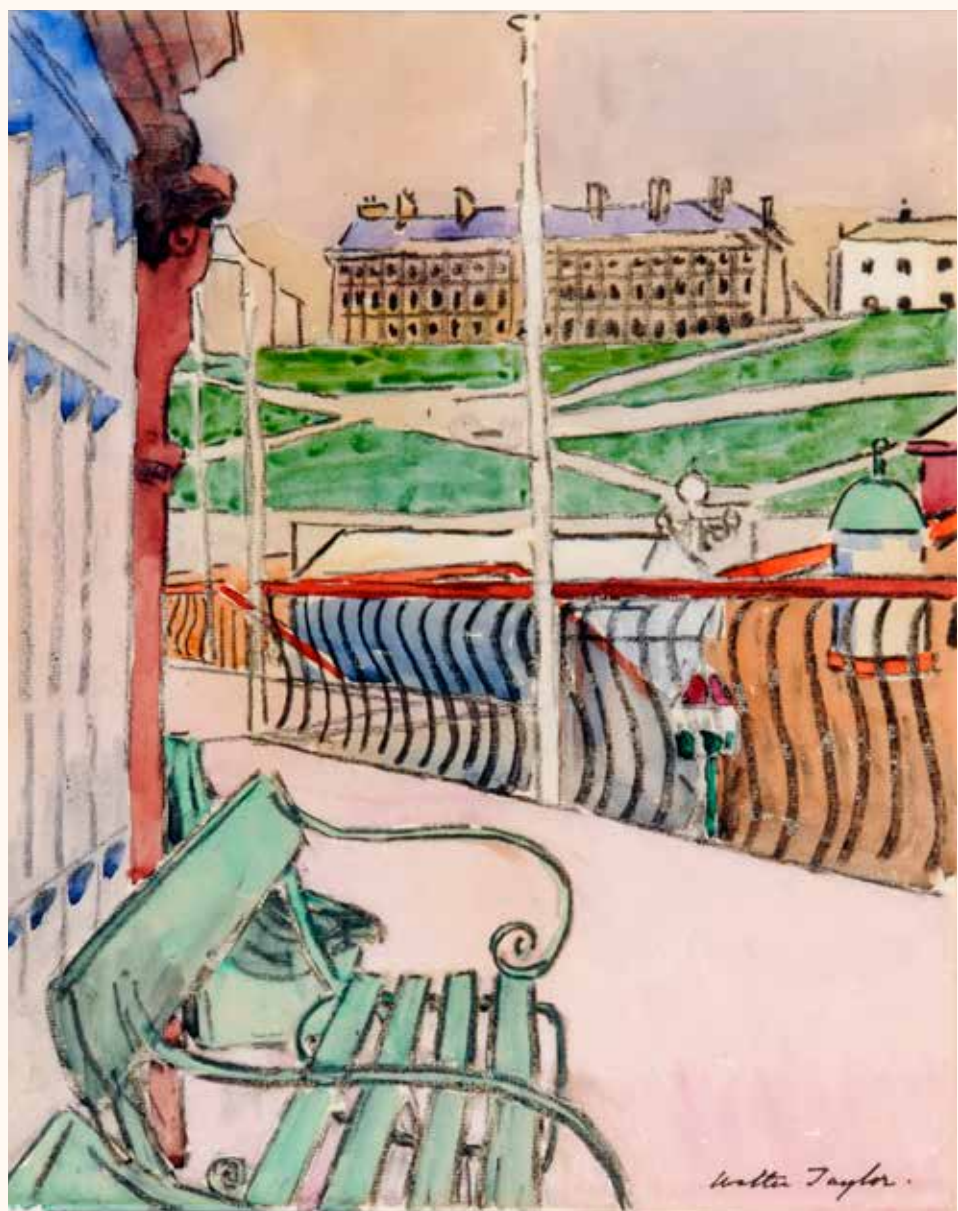
Ink on paper



82

Folkestone
Early 20th century

Walter Taylor (1860–1943)
Watercolour and charcoal on paper



83

Jaguar
1931

David Michael Jones CBE (1895–1974)
Pencil and watercolour on paper
© Cooper Gallery / Bridgeman Images



84

The Pool in the Wood
1929

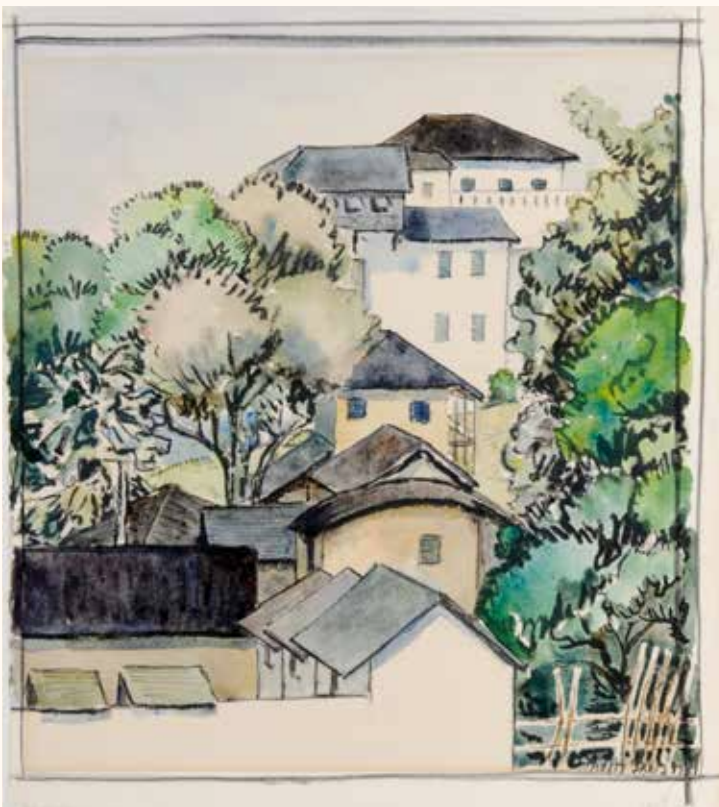
Richard Eurich RA (1903–1992)
Pencil on paper
© The artist's estate



85

**Fort St Anthony, Axim, Ghana
(Previously ‘Sierra Leone’)**
1919

Anthony Brown (1906–1987)
Watercolour, crayon and pencil on paper
© The artist's estate



86

Ruin by a River
Mid-late 18th century

Attributed to William Payne (1760–1830)
(Previously Rev. William Gilpin)

Watercolour on paper



87

**North East View of Blythburgh Priory,
Suffolk**
1780s

Samuel Hieronymous Grimm (1733–1794)

Watercolour and ink on paper



88

Caerphilly Castle
1790s

Michael Angelo Rooker ARA (c.1746–1801)

Pencil and wash on paper



89

**View of Arundel Castle, Sussex
(Previously ‘Landscape’)**

Early–mid 19th century

Anthony Vandyke Copley Fielding (1787–1855)

Ink and wash on paper



90

**Sandhurst
(Previously ‘Stream with trees and bridge’)**

1930

William Delamotte

Pencil, chalk and wash on paper



91

Deerhounds

Mid 19th century

Sir Edwin Landseer RA (1802–1873)

Chalk on paper



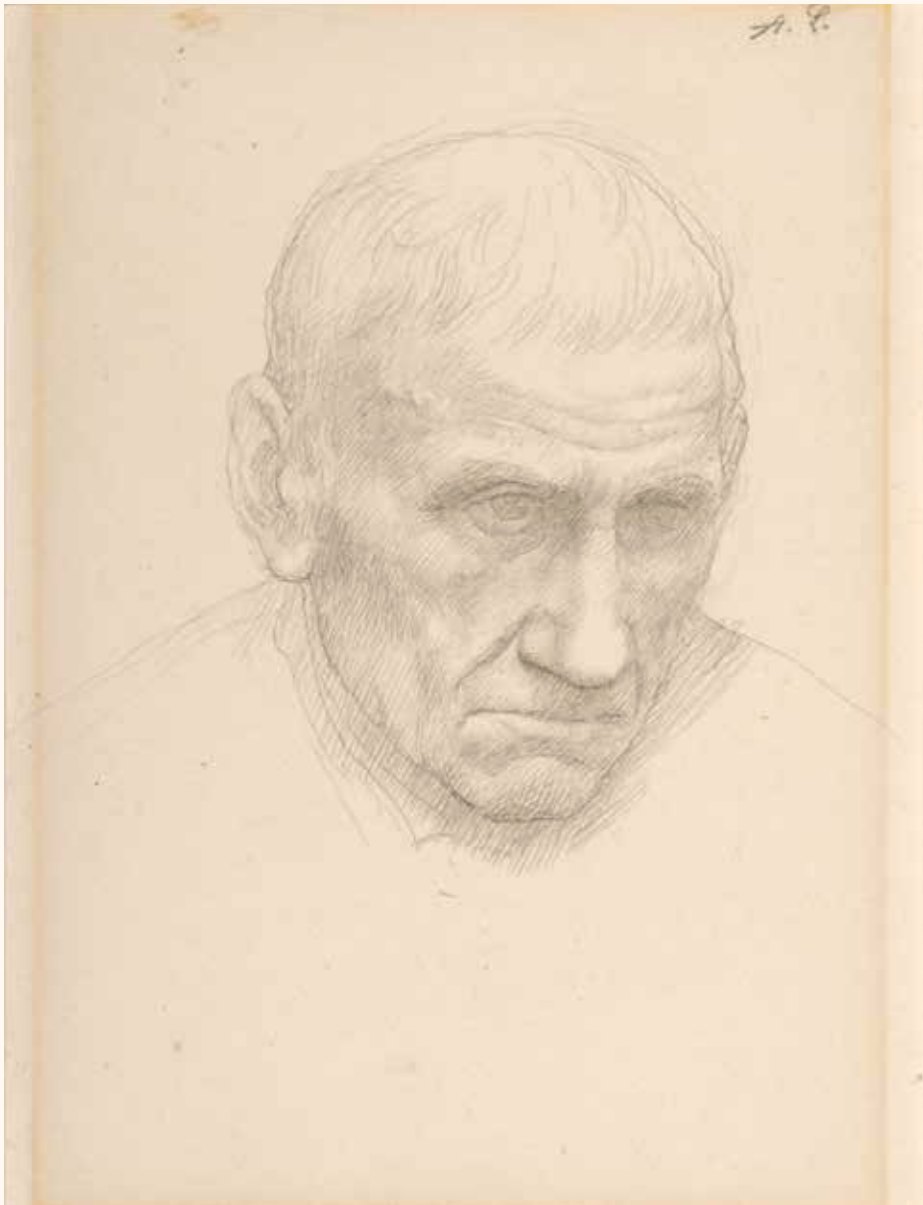
92

Vieux Laboureur

Early-mid 19th century

Alphonse Legros (1837-1911)

Pencil on paper



93

Shopping

Mid 19th century

John Leech (1817-1864)

Pencil on paper



94

Lady on a Sofa

1850s-1860s

Attributed to Sir John Everett Millais PRA
(1829-1896)

Pencil and Conte crayon on paper



95

Sheep Pastures, Bognor

Late 19th century

William Charles Estall (1857–1897)

Watercolour on paper



96

Study of a Standing Female Nude
(Previously ‘Study of a Woman’s Figure’)

Late 19th century

After Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones ARA
RWS (1833–1898)

Pencil on paper



97

Drawing Water

1933

Frances Hodgkins (1869–1947)

Watercolour and bodycolour on paper

Sold in 1944 (may have been loaned
in 1936 rather than gifted)

© Private collection



Study for Sculpture: Reclining Nude Woman
1929

Henry Moore O.M. (1898–1986)

Charcoal and watercolour on paper

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