

THE HEPWORTH WAKEFIELD

Press Release – 6 October 2015

WILD GIRL: GERTRUDE HERMES SCULPTURE & PRINTS

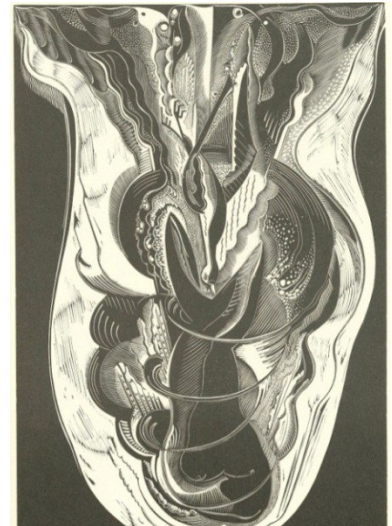
THE FIRST UK RETROSPECTIVE FOR 30 YEARS WILL FEATURE OVER 120 WORKS
TO OFFER A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORK OF THIS ACCLAIMED BRITISH ARTIST
AND CONTEMPORARY OF BARBARA HEPWORTH AND HENRY MOORE



Gertrude Hermes, *Carving*, (Planet New, silver gelatin print), archive imagery, image © Leeds Museums and Galleries



Gertrude Hermes, *Butterfly*, 1937, walnut, 74 x 58 x 9 cm. Image © Christie's Images Limited (2015). Courtesy private collection - Collection of Ömer M. Koç © The Gertrude Hermes Estate.



Gertrude Hermes, *Fathomless Sounding*, 1932, wood engraving, (reduced from 15 x 10.63 in). Courtesy the Arts Council Collection © The Gertrude Hermes Estate

WILD GIRL: GERTRUDE HERMES, SCULPTURE & PRINTS 13 NOVEMBER 2015 – 24 JANUARY 2016

'When I look around at my early wood engravings by that wild girl Gert Hermes, I say to myself, what was it? What did I want them for and what is it that I still get out of them? There was the sheer craftsmanship, of course ... but it wasn't just that'.

Naomi Mitchison, 1967

(Taken from 'Gert' - Introduction to the catalogue of Gertrude Hermes retrospective at the Whitechapel Gallery, 1967).

The Hepworth Wakefield is delighted to celebrate the work of British artist Gertrude Hermes OBE, RA with the first UK retrospective of her work in 30 years, featuring over 120 works.

This exhibition offers a new and fresh perspective on one of the most important British female artists of the twentieth century, and for the first time draws together the dialogue between her two-dimensional and three-dimensional work, showcasing her artistic journey - from schoolgirl, to teacher, engraver and sculptor, illustrator and craftswoman.

Hermes (1901-1983) was one of the most highly acclaimed British print-makers of her generation. While her exquisite wood engravings and prints earned her awards, titles and recognition, her first love was sculpture, much of which has remained unseen by a wider public until now. The exhibition *Wild Girl: Gertrude Hermes, Sculptures & Prints* seeks to redress this balance by presenting a compelling insight into Hermes' audacious draughtsmanship and its extraordinary and explicit relationship to her sculpture.

On display are more than 40 sculptures by Hermes including decorative commissions and over 80 works on paper. These will be presented alongside rarely seen school-girl notebooks, sketchpads, artists' woodblocks, private press books, zoo drawings and a portrait of Hermes by her former tutor Leon Underwood.

Hermes' work as a designer of architectural features, door-knockers, car mascots and commissioned book illustration is also re-examined in light of her prodigious sculptural output. Architectural and decorative commissions included a fountain for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, as well as weather vanes and door furniture.

Wild Girl presents the two distinct strands of the artist's sculpture: carvings of organic forms, and highly representational sculptural portraits of friends, family and commissioned subjects, including a bronze of two of her children *Judith and Simon* (c. 1939). The persistence of natural forms in the work is demonstrated across time and medium; for example, an early drawing from nature featuring the heart shape of a fern's reproductive organs in her school girl sketchbooks, reappears many years later in the form of a sculptural work *The Heart* (1934) and the intricate engraving *Five Senses* (1934).

Other examples of Hermes' love of nature can be seen in her earliest sculptures, stone carvings of cows, birds, frogs and a rabbit made during the 1920s through to *Butterfly* (1937) a hand carved sculpture in walnut which made its debut at the London Group exhibition in 1937. While she was carving these extraordinary and vital sculptures, Hermes' was also addressing the same subjects in her engravings, often as illustrations for books such as Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selbourne* or the famous *The Compleat Angler*.

In 1945 Hermes began to introduce colour into her graphic work which still focused on natural themes. One of the most extraordinary of these was based on a drawing Hermes made while staying at the country home of her dear friend, the author Naomi Mitchison, in Carradale, in the Mull of Kintyre, Scotland. *Ring Net Fishers* depicts five fisherman on a boat hauling in a circular or 'ring' net which is one of the ways salmon are caught off the Scottish coast. This relationship with Mitchison was one of many that contributed to the networks of creativity, influence and friendship that included Henry Moore, P. L. Travers (for whom she illustrated the first edition of *I Go by Sea, I Go By Land*) and Frieda Lawrence.

Wild Girl: Gertrude Hermes, Sculptures & Prints opens alongside a new exhibition of the work by Italian-born contemporary artist Enrico David, with both artists exploring the critical dialogue between drawing and sculpture.

BIOGRAPHY: GERTRUDE HERMES

Born in Bromley, Kent, Gertrude Anna Bertha Hermes was the second of five children born to German parents, Louis August Hermes (1866-1949) and his wife, Helene, née Gerdes (1872-1949), of Altena, near Dortmund. Her father was a textile dealer and artistic director of Sambrook Whitting, manufacturers of patterned silk wear.

From 1919-20 Hermes studied at Beckenham School of Art and in 1922 she enrolled at the Brook Green School where she trained under Leon Underwood. Her fellow students included: Henry Moore, Eileen Agar, Edna Ginesi and Blair Hughes-Stanton, whom she later married in 1926. Together the couple became leading lights in the early twentieth-century's wood-engraving revival and their collaborative designs for Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* attracted critical acclaim. She had two children with Blair, Simon Hughes-Stanton and Judith Russell, before the couple divorced in 1933.

A member of the English Wood-Engraving Society 1926; Society of Wood-Engravers 1933; London Group 1935; R.E. 1951, Hermes worked for the Cresset Press 1926, the Gregynog Press 1932, the Golden Cockerel Press 1936. Some of her key commissions included the design of a carved fountain with a mosaic pool floor and door fittings for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford on Avon, 1930.

Hermes exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy from 1934 and was elected associate to the Royal Academy in 1963, a full member in 1971 and was awarded an OBE in 1981. She famously kicked up a fuss and wrote a letter to the RA in 1966 in which she protested against the fact that female Academicians were not invited to the dinner that followed the AGM. The next year female academicians were admitted alongside other distinguished female guests including Barbara Hepworth and Barbara Castle.

Her work was shown internationally. In 1937 Hermes produced a commission for the British Pavilion at the Paris World Fair and showed at the Venice International Exhibition in 1939. During the Second World War years 1940–5 Hermes lived in Canada and the USA where she worked on various commissions and drafted drawings of battleships and tanks. Hermes taught at the Camberwell School of Art 1945, and went on to teach wood engraving and animal engraving at Central School of Arts 1948 and later life drawing and wood engraving at St Martin's School of Art. From 1966 Hermes taught at the Royal Academy Schools, focusing on wood and lino block printing.

Her career was abruptly curtailed in 1969 by a stroke, which also tragically ended the flow of the large carved wood pieces that she was making on her own account.

SELECTED UK EXHIBITIONS:

- London, Ben Uri Gallery, *Uproar! The First 50 Years of the London Group 1913-63*, October 2013 - March 2014.
- London, Royal Academy of Arts, Gertrude Hermes R.A., September - October 1981.
- London, Whitechapel Gallery, *Gertrude Hermes: Bronzes and Carvings, Drawings, Wood Engravings, Wood and Lino Block Cuts, 1924-1967*, October - November 1967.
- London, New Burlington Galleries, *The London Group Thirty-sixth Exhibition of Painting & Sculpture*, October - November 1937.

ENDS

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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IMAGE REQUESTS:

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EXHIBITION FACTS:

Press Preview:	11 November 2015
Title:	Wild Girl: Gertrude Hermes, Sculptures & Prints
Dates:	13 November 2015 – 24 January 2016
Address:	The Hepworth Wakefield, Gallery Walk, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 5AW
Telephone:	+44 (0)1924 247360
Admission:	Free
Website:	www.hepworthwakefield.org
Email:	hello@hepworthwakefield.org
Opening Hours:	10am - 5pm Tuesday – Sunday 10am - 9pm Third Thursday of the month Closed Mondays (except local school holidays and bank holidays)
Travel:	By Train: the nearest stations are Wakefield Westgate and Kirkgate By Car: the gallery is situated off the A61, with nearby links to the M1 motorway. A pay & display visitor car park is located on Thornes Lane, WF1 5QJ, with free blue badge car parking on site By Bus: the gallery is situated on main bus routes and the FreeCityBus route (Mon-Sat, 9.30am-3pm) By Bicycle: bicycle racks are located by our main entrance By Air: the nearest airport is LeedsBradford
Polite Request:	The gallery should be cited in full, as The Hepworth Wakefield
Twitter:	@HepworthGallery
Facebook:	TheHepworthWakefield
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EDITOR'S NOTES:

THE HEPWORTH WAKEFIELD

The gallery is at the heart of Wakefield's regeneration. Designed by the internationally acclaimed practice, David Chipperfield Architects, it is funded by Wakefield Council and Arts Council England and an increasing number of charitable trusts, private individuals, Patrons and Members. The gallery opened on 21 May 2011 and welcomed its millionth visitor on 5 December 2013.

THE CALDER

The Calder is The Hepworth Wakefield's new contemporary art space which opened to the public on 30 August 2013. Located on the ground floor of a 19th century former textiles mill, the new contemporary art space is situated adjacent to the main gallery site, on the banks of the River Calder. The Calder adds 600 square metres of exhibition and event space to the existing 10 gallery spaces within The Hepworth Wakefield and presents a mixed programme of art, music and events that runs in parallel to the visitor offer at the main gallery.

The Calder, Gallery Walk, West Yorkshire, WF1 5AW
Free admission (except for ticketed events)
Open Tuesday – Sunday, 12 – 4.30pm
Open Third Thursday of every month, 12 – 8.30pm, as part of After Hours late nights
Open for the Wakefield Art on Wednesdays every other month, 12 - 8.30pm
Closed Mondays (except for Bank Holidays and school holidays)

www.hepworthwakefield.org
01924 247360
Twitter: @HepworthGallery #TheCalder
Instagram: [instagram.com/thecalder](https://www.instagram.com/thecalder)

YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE TRIANGLE

The Hepworth Wakefield, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Henry Moore Institute and Leeds Art Gallery are four of the UK's leading visual art organisations, situated within 30 minutes' drive or train ride from one another. They build on West Yorkshire's unique artistic legacy as the birthplace of two of the most important 20th Century artists, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore.

This long-term partnership works to promote contemporary art and sculpture in inspirational settings to grow visitor numbers for all four institutions and to raise the profile of West Yorkshire as a major centre for the appreciation and study of sculpture.

For details on Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle:

Visit www.ysculpture.com
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END OF ALL