

Radical Women: Jessica Dismorr and her Contemporaries

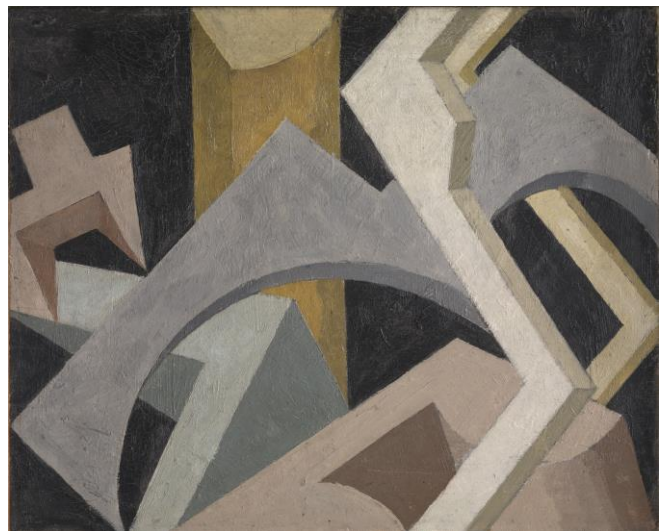
2 November 2019 – 23 February 2020

This autumn Pallant House Gallery explores a fascinating history of alliances and connections among the women artists of the early 20th century in a major exhibition centred on the pioneering work of Jessica Dismorr (1885 – 1939).

Jessica Dismorr was an artist at the forefront of the avant-garde in Britain involved in four key modernist movements: Rhythm, Vorticism, the modernist return to figuration post war, and 1930s abstraction shown with anti-fascist organisations. This exhibition, the first museum showing of Dismorr's work, aims to bring her out of obscurity whilst reappraising the contribution of women artists during what was a ground-breaking period in the history of modern British art.

The exhibition will explore how Dismorr and her female contemporaries, engaged with modernist literature and radical politics through their art, including their contributions to campaigns for women's suffrage and the anti-fascist organisations of the 1930s. Eighty works including paintings, sculptures, graphic art and archival materials, some of which have never been exhibited before, will be on show.

Artists included in the exhibition will be Dismorr's fellow Rhythmists, **Anne Estelle Rice and Ethel Wright**; **Helen Saunders**, the only other female founding signatory of the vorticists; **Paule Vézelay**, who showed with Dismorr with the London Group, and **Sophie Fedorovitch and Winifred Nicholson** who exhibited at the Seven and Five Society in the 1920s. Dismorr was one of only seven British women at D.O.O.D (de Olympiade onder Dictatuur) Amsterdam in 1936, the exhibition designed to counter Josef Goebbels' Nazi Art Olympiad, and her



Jessica Dismorr, Abstract Composition, c.1915, oil on wood, 41.3 x 50.8 cm © Tate, London 2019

work will be seen for the first time in the company of other women who exhibited with anti-fascist organisations in the 1930s, including **Edith Rimmington, Betty Rea and Barbara Hepworth**.

Dismorr pursued her work despite periods of debilitating mental illness, and died in London by her own hand in August 1939.

Exhibition Highlights

- Powerful images of radical modern femininity including Anne Estelle Rice's 1909-10 self-portrait, described by women's suffrage periodical 'Votes for Women' as 'marking an epoch in modern art'; and Wright's portrait of suffrage campaigner Una Dugdale Duval, scandalous author of 'Love and Honour but NOT Obey', not seen publically since the only exhibition held by

the Rhythm group, which opened at the Stafford Gallery, London, in October 1912.

- Dismorr's vorticist works including her only surviving vorticist oil painting, 'Abstract Composition' (c.1915), shown with the inventive work of her fellow vorticist and lifelong friend Helen Saunders.
- A little-known group of paintings by Dismorr, including self-portraits, following her return to figuration in the 1920s, with the work of **Paule Vezelay**, who showed alongside Dismorr with the London Group.
- Dismorr's abstract work in which her experimental modernist art and engagement with radical politics came together, including 'Related Forms' (c.1936-9), which was shown with the anti-fascist Artists International Association.
- Work by **Edith Rimmington**, **Betty Rea** and **Barbara Hepworth**, who also exhibited with anti-fascist organisations in the 1930s – Rea's sculpture 'Mother and Child' (1934) was shown alongside Dismorr's work at the Die Olympiade onder Dictatuur exhibition in Amsterdam in 1936.

Ends

Notes to editors:

- The exhibition is curated by Dr Alicia Foster, an art historian and novelist. Awarded her PhD in history of art from the University of Manchester, her books include *Tate Women Artists* (2004) and *Warpaint* (2013).
- A fully illustrated book published by Lund Humphries, including new research and artwork and writings never before reproduced, accompanies the exhibition. 'This book is a revelation – fascinating in the tracing of Jessica Dismorr's artistic development, and illuminating too about the careers of women artists in her day.' – Jenny Uglow

- Website Link: <https://pallant.org.uk/whats-on/radical-women-jessica-dismorr-and-her-contemporaries/>

Pallant House Gallery

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About Pallant House Gallery:

Pallant House Gallery in Chichester is a leading UK museum that stimulates new ways of thinking about British art from 1900 to now. As well as an original and critically-acclaimed exhibition programme and a public programme with inclusion at its heart, the gallery houses one of the best collections of Modern British art in the country - all within the distinctive setting of an 18th century townhouse and a 21st century gallery.

pallant.org.uk

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