

Press Release 2020



Barnett Freedman: Designs for Modern Britain

14 March – 14 June 2020

Press View: 13 March 2020

Pallant House Gallery is pleased to announce the first major exhibition on the life and work of Barnett Freedman (1901 – 1958). A peer of Eric Ravilious and Edward Burra, Freedman was a pioneering artist at the interface of modern art and design in 20th century Britain. The exhibition will trace Freedman's life and career, from his humble beginnings in East London to his subsequent rise to become one of the UK's most sought-after book illustrators and commercial designers who brought art to the masses.

Featuring never-before-seen works from the Freedman estate, the exhibition will display Freedman's fine art practice with his book illustration, printmaking and commercial projects, enabling an understanding of his design process through unique lithographic stones and rare proofs. It will also include works from his time as an Official War Artist during the Second World War, including his first-hand illustrations of the aftermath of the D-Day landings.

Born in East London to Jewish immigrants from Russia, Freedman showed an early talent for drawing which led to him working as an architect's draughtsman from the age of 16 where he developed his typographic design skills. Recognising his talents, William



Barnett Freedman, London Transport poster, 1936, Private Collection © Barnett Freedman Estate

Rothenstein gave Freedman a place at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in 1922, after he had initially been rejected. There he met fellow artists Eric Ravilious, Edward Bawden, Edward Burra and Enid Marx. The group studied under Paul Nash, who would later refer to this period at the RCA as 'an outbreak of talent'. A related display will show works by these contemporaries from Pallant House Gallery's significant collection of Modern British art.

Freedman's career took off in 1931 after his first major commission, for book publishers Faber & Faber, to design and illustrate Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. He

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went on to illustrate dozens of book covers for British and American publishers, titles including Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1939), Charlotte Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1941) and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1938) and *Anna Karenina* (1951) - the latter recognised as two of the finest examples of 20th century book design.

Freedman was an outstanding commercial designer, considered a world expert in colour auto-lithography for machine production. He produced a huge output of mid-century graphic design for clients such as Ealing Studios (including their logo), the Post Office, Shell-Mex and British Petroleum, Wedgwood, London Transport and Lyons' Tea Houses, many examples of which will be on display. Most notably, Freedman worked for Guinness in the 1950s as their 'man of art and letters', advising them on advertising campaigns for the 'Guinness Lithographs' series of prints for pubs. Freedman's commercial designs championed the depiction of ordinary Londoners on city streets, and he created artworks that anyone could encounter in their everyday lives: from book jackets in local shops to posters on the London Underground and beer advertisements in pubs.

Freedman's skills at typography led him to design the Baynard Claudia typeface, named after his Italian wife Beatrice Claudia Guercino. In 1935 Freedman was chosen to design 'The King's Stamp', a postage stamp to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of HRH King George V and later he made designs to celebrate the Coronation of HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Freedman was appointed as an Official War Artist with the British Expeditionary Force in France along with Edward Ardizzone and Edward Bawden, later painting coastal defence subjects in Sheerness and the Isle of Sheppey. In 1941 he worked onboard HMS *Repulse*,

producing a popular print for the National Gallery, and in 1943 recorded submariners aboard HMS *Tribune*. In June 1944 he travelled to France to record the aftermath of the D-Day Landings.

After the war, Freedman taught at the Royal College of Art and Ruskin School of Art. He received a CBE in 1947 and made Royal Designer for Industry in 1949. He is still widely regarded as one of the most influential artist lithographers of 20th century Britain.

Freedman had a lasting legacy on British book illustration, printmaking and graphic design, and this is the first major reappraisal of his work since his 1958 Arts Council retrospective at the Tate Gallery.

Barnett Freedman: Designs for Modern Britain opens on 14 March 2020 and continues until 14 June 2020.

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Notes to editors:

The exhibition is curated by Emma Mason, a specialist in Modern British prints, with support from Louise Weller, Curator at Pallant House Gallery.

A new book published by Pallant House Gallery featuring essays on different aspects of Freedman's life by Emma Mason, Gill Clarke, and Ian Rogerson with a foreword by the Director Simon Martin will accompany the exhibition.

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

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country - all within a distinctive setting of an 18th century townhouse and a 21st century gallery.

Opening Hours

Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 5pm (excl.

Thursday: 10am – 8pm)

Sundays/Bank Holidays: 11am – 5pm

Mondays: Closed

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