

Related Events

Sculpture Symposium

Friday 24 May, 11am - 4pm

Join us for a day of talks and discussion around sculpture in public institutions, £8 (including refreshments and lunch)

Adult Workshop with Daniel Silver

Saturday 25 May, 2 - 4pm

£20 (£15 concession) all materials provided, and no previous experience necessary



Daniel Silver, Peter, 2018, onyx and marble, Image courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery

CONCURRENT SCULPTURE EXHIBITIONS

Daniel Silver

Floor 3, with interventions on Floors 1&2, until 2 June

Influenced by both ancient sculpture and Jacob Epstein, Silver's solo exhibition on Floor 3 includes his stunning *Rock Formations* series and mannequin sculptures, which include directly carved elements of marble. Silver quotes seeing *Jacob and the Angel* for the first time as a huge influence on his practice and exploration of direct carving.

Silver has also curated a selection of objects from Epstein's world object collection and photographs by Geoffrey Ireland, in displays on Floors 1&2.

Sketching Sundays

1st Sunday of every month, 12.30 - 3.30pm

Come and spend a relaxing afternoon drawing in the galleries! Sunday 2 June and 4 August will focus on *Jacob and the Angel*.

Feelgood Fridays 2nd Friday of every month

Come to a talk or activity inspired by our Collections programme

Friday 10 May

2pm Livestreamed *Jacob and the Angel* intro

Friday 14 June

11am Dementia Friendly Tour

2pm Audio Description Tour

Friday 9 August

10am Children's Tour

2pm Epstein Behind the Scenes Tour

For more information, ask at reception or visit: thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk

Kathleen Ryan

Floors 1&4, until 22 September

The first UK institutional exhibition of American sculptor Kathleen Ryan, who references the classical sculptural tradition and archaeology, whilst embracing the industrial age and contemporary found materials in her installations.

Sculpture in Focus

Floors 1&2, until 2 December

A trail of 10 sculptural highlights from our Permanent Collection, integrated into the Garman Ryan galleries, making connections between historic and contemporary art and the legacy of Jacob Epstein.

The New
Art Gallery
Walsall

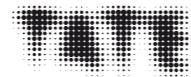
The New Art Gallery is delighted to bring Jacob Epstein's iconic *Jacob and the Angel* to Walsall for the first time, thanks to the generous support of Tate. One of Epstein's most famous and monumental works, we welcome it to Walsall as part of the Gallery's year-long celebration of sculpture, marking 60 years since Epstein's death.

The Gallery has over 100 works by Epstein in our Collections, as well as an impressive Epstein Archive featuring an array of letters, photographs and other family documentation, which came to us thanks to the support of the Epstein and Garman families.

Kathleen Garman, Epstein's widow, grew up locally, and in 1973 donated 365 artworks, collected with the couple's close friend Sally Ryan, to the people of Walsall. Amongst this collection were 45 works by Epstein himself, as well as others by close friends and family members, such as Lucian Freud, and items from his renowned collection of world objects.

***find out more about this remarkable collection on Floors 1&2**

This loan has been made possible through The Ferryman Project: Sharing Works of Art which is supported by National Lottery players through the Heritage Lottery Fund, the John Ellerman Foundation and Art Fund.



John Ellerman
Foundation

Art Fund

For further information contact
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www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk
#SculptureinFocus



Walsall Council

8 May – 29 Sept 2019

Epstein's

Jacob and the Angel

FREE
gallery guide

Jacob Epstein (1880–1959)

Jacob and the Angel 1940–41

Alabaster sculpture

Tate

Purchased with assistance from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund, Art Fund and the Henry Moore Foundation 1996

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Religion was a key theme in Epstein's work, and was one of 10 themes prescribed by Kathleen Garman for her collection, reflecting strands in Epstein's career. We show our collections thematically, rather than chronologically, since it was important to her that the collection should be used to make links between art from all periods. Currently on display in our Religion room is a selection of Epstein's beautiful watercolour sketches based on stories from the Old Testament.

Jacob and the Angel depicts a biblical story (Book of Genesis, Chapter 32, verses 24-32) where a stranger forces Jacob to wrestle with him throughout the night. In the morning his opponent reveals himself to be an angel, and blesses Jacob for not giving up the fight.



Epstein Archive photograph, The New Art Gallery Walsall

In the sculpture, the angel, with wall-like wings, supports an exhausted, slumping Jacob. The two figures are wrapped in an embrace, emblematic of the embrace of God. It can be seen to act as a metaphor for the conflict happening across Europe at the time during the Second World War, and the struggle of Jewish people. Epstein was Jewish, and often faced anti-semitism, which prevented him from being accepted by the art establishment. The work can therefore also relate Epstein's personal struggles to that of his namesake, as well as that of the sculptor wrestling with the material, in the act of carving directly from the stone.

Epstein's public commissions, such as his Strand statues on the British Medical Association building, unveiled in 1908, had caused controversy, due to aspects of nudity which were regarded as too indecent for polite society. This began what Epstein called his '30 year war' with the British public, to gain acceptance of his work. Epstein steadfastly refused to compromise, and bow down to criticism, and remained true to his art, showing his strength of character.

Jacob and the Angel was first exhibited in the Leicester Galleries, London, in 1942. Carved from a single block of alabaster and weighing almost 3 tonnes, the size and scale of the work has an immediate

impact. Epstein celebrates a truth to the natural material, showcasing the rough and smooth textures and ethereal translucency of the milky white, pink and brown rock, as the two figures emerge. Now regarded as a masterpiece of modern sculpture, the work proved shocking at the time of its creation. The sculptor's notoriety however provided a good business opportunity for London entrepreneur, Charles Stafford. He had already purchased Epstein's earlier work *Adam* (1939) and installed both as sensational objects of curiosity on the Blackpool promenade, charging members of the public for the privilege to view them. Hundreds of thousands of curious visitors were lured to see this scandalous show over the next three years, before the works moved post-war to take up residence on London's Oxford Street.

After a sojourn to a South African seaside amusement arcade, the sculptures returned to Blackpool in 1954, purchased by Louis Tussaud for his waxworks museum. *Jacob and the Angel* stayed here until 1961, when it was saved, alongside *Adam*, by Lord Harewood, who formed a consortium to rescue this work from becoming a joke of art history.

Its status was reprieved during the Epstein retrospective Harewood organised for the Edinburgh Festival that year, which then toured to the Tate Gallery. This exhibition

led to a complete re-appraisal of Epstein's work and offered recognition of his pioneering modernity. The work was then acquired by Granada television, and was on long term loan to Liverpool Cathedral, before being acquired by Tate in 1996.

Jacob and the Angel shows the influence of non-Western cultures and so-called 'primitive' sculpture on Epstein, soaked up in frequent visits to the British Museum. While during his lifetime it was his portrait busts which gained more commercial success, it is his direct carvings which are now the most critically revered, and continue to influence new generations of artists. Daniel Silver, also exhibiting at the Gallery until 2 June, cites Epstein as an influence, and seeing *Jacob and the Angel* for the first time inspired him to take up direct carving.

Epstein believed in his work and in his ability, and it had saddened him greatly that *Jacob and the Angel* went to Blackpool to be shown amongst the other notorious 'peep' shows of the time. As is so often the case, the artist's true talent was not fully appreciated until after his passing. Now 60 years on, the public of Walsall can view this masterpiece at first hand and celebrate the life and work of the man who made it, alongside the rest of his legacy, preserved for public benefit in collections such as The New Art Gallery Walsall and Tate.

