

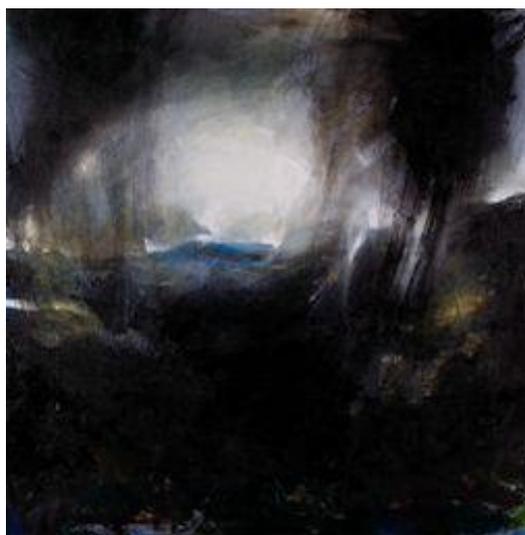
PRESS RELEASE

Yasmin David: Into the Light

12 March – 10 October 2021

<https://thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk/>

Press previews by appointment



The New Art Gallery presents an exhibition of atmospheric landscape paintings by Yasmin David. David was the niece of Kathleen Garman, benefactor to the Gallery, and daughter of poet Laurie Lee. Her brother, Michael Wishart, was an acclaimed painter, but his sister's work has never before been exhibited to the wider public.

This Spring, The New Art Gallery Walsall presents the first solo exhibition by British painter **Yasmin David** (1939-2009). Yasmin was one of few women working in landscape painting during the post-war period and produced a body of work which is both intimate and dramatic, emotional and turbulent, and captures the molten qualities of sky and land.

While Yasmin was compelled to paint (and write) continuously throughout her life, producing a significant body of work over 50 years, she did not exhibit her work publicly. Since her death her daughter, the filmmaker Clio David, has discovered some 100 unseen paintings and over 150 drawings and notebooks, hidden in cupboards and in her mother's studio at the family home in rural Devon; many of these only uncovered during last summer's lockdown. **A selection of these will be seen for the first time in the exhibition at The New Art Gallery which runs from 12 March until 10 October.**

Yasmin David was the daughter of Lorna Wishart (née Garman), the youngest of the beautiful and unconventional Garman sisters, and muse and lover of both Laurie Lee and Lucian Freud. Yasmin was brought up by Lorna and her husband Ernest Wishart, but was in fact the biological daughter of Laurie Lee. Lee dedicated his first published book of war poetry, *The Sun My Monument (1944)*, to Lorna and Yasmin was so named as the Y can be seen as two conjoined Ls. She only became aware of her natural father's identity when she was 19.

Yasmin's aunt, Lorna's sister, was Kathleen Garman (the 2nd wife of sculptor Jacob Epstein) whose art collection The New Art Gallery Walsall was built to house. Epstein and Kathleen's daughter, Kitty, was the first wife of Lucian Freud, and had been introduced to him by her aunt, following their own liaison. (Laurie Lee would also go on to marry another of Lorna's nieces.)

Yasmin's older brother, Michael Wishart (1928-1996), was a celebrated painter, who had been taught by Cedric Morris, and was friends with Francis Bacon. Wishart, whose work features in his aunt Kathleen Garman's collection at the Gallery, exhibited widely during his lifetime, and his work also belongs to both the Government and Arts Council Collections. However his younger sister, though also extremely talented and with art world connections, remained unknown as an artist, despite her distinctive and accomplished body of work.

After attending a year of art school in Sussex and a brief time in London, Yasmin met and married the Jungian Analyst Julian David, and moved to Luscombe in Devon at the age of 23 (her husband took up a teaching post at nearby Dartington Hall), where she raised three children, and lived for the rest of her life.

David's work explores the beauty and light of the South Devon landscape near Dartmoor, as well as being a cathartic outpouring of emotional intensity. As her daughter Clio notes, "She loved to watch the windy, watery, ever-changing light and seasons, which she painted mainly from her memory, but also kept a notebook which she wrote in nearly every day. *6 Jan: Soft, cooler wind from the South-West, rain smelling – sky over the sea pale duck-egg blue washed with yellow – the sea itself murmuring gently, and behind the house (deeply, out of the bushes) a wood pigeon softly bubbling and re-winding down long deep chambers of the inner ear.*"

This new exhibition at The New Art Gallery aims to bring Yasmin David's incredible artistic output into the spotlight, and to place her work in the context of her wider family in the Garman Ryan Collection. The timing also coincides with the recently

published report by the Freelands Foundation*, which looks at the representation of female artists in Britain, and the public attention on the impact of lockdown on women's careers, having taken on the lion's share of childcare, adding to the debate that still today we live in a gendered society. The role of art in health and wellbeing during times of isolation has also been recently well documented, as many people used creativity as a coping mechanism during lockdown in 2020.

It is hoped the exhibition will open up the debate around undiscovered female artists, and bring the hidden work of this overlooked 20th century painter to the public's attention, so that it can now receive the critical acclaim it deserves.

*<https://freelandsfoundation.imgix.net/documents/Representation-of-female-artists-2019-Clickable.pdf>

Note to Editors

An events programme is due to coincide with the exhibition, which, it is hoped, will have both physical and digital outputs.

Clio David will join Collections Curator Julie Brown, for an informal public tour of the exhibition to launch the exhibition on Friday 12 March, at 2pm.

A British Art Network Post War British Painting subgroup event will take place at the Gallery on the afternoon of Thursday 11 March. This will preview the exhibition, and examine David's work in the wider context of post-war female painters, and investigate the barriers faced by women artists in the 20th century in getting their work recognised.

For further information or to get involved contact Collections Curator, Julie Brown julie.brown@walsall.gov.uk

About The New Art Gallery Walsall

The New Art Gallery Walsall presents, collects and interprets historic, modern and contemporary art in innovative and challenging ways, welcoming visitors from all over the globe as well as their immediate locality. The New Art Gallery Walsall is funded by revenue support from Walsall Council and Arts Council England.

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For opening hours, visitors are advised to check with the gallery before visiting

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