



THE  
CLASS  
ACT.

## Introduction

This is the second in a planned series of embedding diversity projects developed by our Collections Community Panel, following on from 2022's *Here&Queer*, which explored our Collections through an LGBTQ+ lens. This time our focus is on Class and Identity.

Our identities are made up of a multitude of inherited characteristics, personality traits, beliefs and life experiences. The traditional British class system is a confusing one. Current survey trends indicate that class can be determined by your parents (or caregivers) job status when you were aged 14. However, in truth it is much more complex and harder to define than this. It can encompass a range of financial, social and cultural circumstances.

Education is often associated with social mobility, and therefore there is an ongoing perception that working class people must be illiterate and uneducated. Working class lives are rarely celebrated. Class is not a protected characteristic, and many feel that it should be. Privilege is a divisive word, but slowly we are getting better at identifying and acknowledging where our own privileges lie.

We chose to associate class in this project with a number of different factors, stemming from the panel's own lived experiences in relation to race, disability and sexuality.

We explored aspects of working class lives including the occupation of specific public spaces. We also could not avoid addressing the cost of living crisis and its effect on society, with growing poverty and a rise in the need for food banks.

Panel members also reflected on whether true wealth and value in society can actually be determined by monetary riches.

The interests and experiences of the Collections Community Panel are wide and varied: from working to provide cultural and integration opportunities for asylum seekers, to exploring the use of working class human remains in the public realm; to promoting women's empowerment, raising awareness around period poverty, and ruminating on the appeal of a simpler life and advocating for a back to basics approach being healthier and more fulfilling.

These are just some of the topics the group have discussed in planning this temporary exhibition. Here you will find the much-deliberated final selections of works from our Permanent Collection, referencing themes the panel are passionate about.

Some of the themes are universal, some personal, but hopefully will allow the opportunity to pause for thought and reflect on your own experiences and values, and what makes up your true self.

— *Julie Brown, Collections Curator*

## Pride&Privilege

We decided on this title *Pride&Privilege* after much debate, to be all-encompassing around our work this year on class and identity. Sometimes the panel have discussed having to mask, and hide their true selves, in order to fit in. We believe people should not have to hide their true identities. They should take ownership of their identity, and not be ashamed. They should be **proud** of their own identity. (Pride also follows on as an extension from the last project exploring LGBTQ+ identities).

**Privilege** can historically encompass a range of experiences and situations – from the colour of our skin, to our material wealth. We use this term to recognise the existence of privileges in society, and we are privileged to be able to share our stories and highlight important areas of interest for us.

*The Class Act* is the name of our public space or ‘house’ created on Floor 2 of the Gallery.

A traditional British public house has often been regarded as a safe space for working class people, to relax and be themselves, after a day’s graft.

The panel talked a lot about masking or hiding their true selves, and having to **act** like someone else to try to fit in, whether due to being working class, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+, or from a different cultural background.

The panel believes that everyone should be free to be their true authentic selves, and respect others who may come from different backgrounds. As our group’s diversity shows, we all have something to learn from each other.

The term **class act** also references something which is very good/important in colloquial language.

**Coppers** are an important theme in the exhibition, inspired by Gavin Turk’s *Found Coin* artwork. We have thought about the cost of living crisis, and the value of money. We have reflected on saving bags of coppers as children, as well as the terms to ‘spend a penny’ or ‘a penny for your thoughts’. We also related pennies, or small/loose change, to the idea of making change, being changemakers and encouraging positive activism.



from soil,  
to clay,  
to home



'We worked in co-creation over two months; sourcing clay from the local soil and building small clay houses to be fired in a pit, using the saggar technique. (Each little house has used all four elements from earth: soil, water, fire, and air.) While making we contemplated and shared thoughts about home, place and belonging. We discussed that 'home' is an emotional and flexible concept. Often connected to a building, it is the people, food, noise, and environment which actually influence the creation of a home. The resulting artwork reflects the fragile, limbo state asylum seekers are experiencing, the complex situation they are currently living in, and the new homes they are striving to create. Although this project questioned what home is, many have expressed how this project became their home.'

*sophia moffa of the travellers' tree CIC,  
and asylum seeker participants in the  
project 'from soil, to clay, to home.'*

*from soil, to clay, to home* project film  
by Amir Hossein Shahabi

**Artwork co-creators**

Amir Hossein Shahabi  
Araz Mahmood Ahmed  
BAHADORY  
Bashir Khan Bawar  
Fatemeh Najafi  
Fer Zambra  
Fthawi  
Hafsa Haydar  
Jainaba Leigh  
Mah Jabeen Bano  
Maria Alexandra Muzziotti Caldera  
Meteb Al-awwad  
Mohammed Akbari  
Nancy de Rivas  
Nwafenna Paul Nkechi  
Rawand Rashid Gurun  
Saidat Otubambo  
sophia moffa  
Wail Ali



John Fullwood (1855–1931)

*Charcoal Burner's Hut*  
Oil painting

'A home is a home even if you are living in abject poverty if you are surrounded by love and happiness.'

*from soil, to clay, to home*  
project participant



Susan Krejzl

*Jug and Bowl with Patchwork, 1984*  
Etching

'I relate to this one because for me home involves being in a comfortable place, with people I love, and preparing and sharing food together.'

*from soil, to clay, to home*  
project participant



**Mark Power (b.1959)**

*Walsall 03/2011 Hole in the Wall*  
Colour photograph

'I really liked the combinations of colours and textures and the reflection of how a home deteriorates if we do not give it care and heat.'

*from soil, to clay, to home*  
project participant

'Hole in the Wall is where we buy fabric to make clothes. This skill has been important in order to be thrifty, as well as to be able to express your cultural identity. We would also prioritise mending our clothes, rather than throwing away and replacing with something new.'

*Aaina Women's Centre group,*  
*led by Zarida Kayani*

*(Top of Floor 1 staircase, next to lifts)*

Henri le Jeune (1819–1904)

*Children at the Stream*

Oil painting

'I like this image because I identified with the mother and her three children, since a home without children is really empty, they are the joy of our lives.'

*from soil, to clay, to home  
project participant*



Arthur Hopkins (1848–1930)

*Blackberrying by the Sea*, 1891

Watercolour (not pictured)

'I selected these works showing women and children, collecting fresh spring water from a well, and picking fruit from the countryside. The panel talked a lot about contemporary society. We are a rich country, but there is so much poverty. It made me reflect on the life my mother had in Pakistan. They did not have much money, but their life was rich with love and family, and healthy due to intense physical activity, for example collecting water, cooking fresh food from scratch, and living at one with the environment. There was a sense of community and togetherness. In Western societies health is deteriorating, due to a reliance on fast and processed food, screens and technology. Maybe a more traditional way of life is not so poor after all?'

*Zarida Kayani*

## Aaina Women's Centre

'I work at Aaina Women's Centre in Walsall because I am passionate about empowering women. I enjoy working with all types of women from different backgrounds. For me, women's empowerment covers things such as listening to and accepting women's viewpoints and improving the lives of women through education and training. This allows women to make positive decisions and gives them freedom of choice, building the confidence they need to have a successful life.'

A group of women from the centre came with me to explore the Collections at The New Art Gallery Walsall. We have selected these works to demonstrate different aspects of women in society.'

*Zarida Kayani*

*Aaina Centre Women's Group leader*

**William Powell Frith (1819–1909)**

*Portrait of a Lady with Fan*

c.1890

Oil painting

'We learned this beautiful painting was the first to enter Walsall's Collection. It shows a traditional Victorian representation of a woman and beauty, with her porcelain skin, flushed cheeks, and hiding her modesty with a fan. At this time, women were seen more as objects to be owned, rather than independent people with thoughts and opinions of their own. Society has now changed greatly, and this would no longer represent the ideal beauty today.'

*Aaina Women's Centre group*







**Soheila Sokhanvari**

*The Guests*

2015

Egg tempera on calf vellum

'This work spoke to us of erasure, perhaps being ostracised from a family or being excluded in society due to choices or beliefs. It also represents women being hidden away in traditional cultures, and not truly seen or heard. We wonder why they are missing, why are they hiding? We also love the use of bold colour and pattern in the work to highlight the contemporary figures, now visible and seen, contrasted with the white, ghostlike absent figure, and makes us think of the women missing in our lives.'

*Aaina Women's Centre group*



**Glenn Brown (b.1966)**

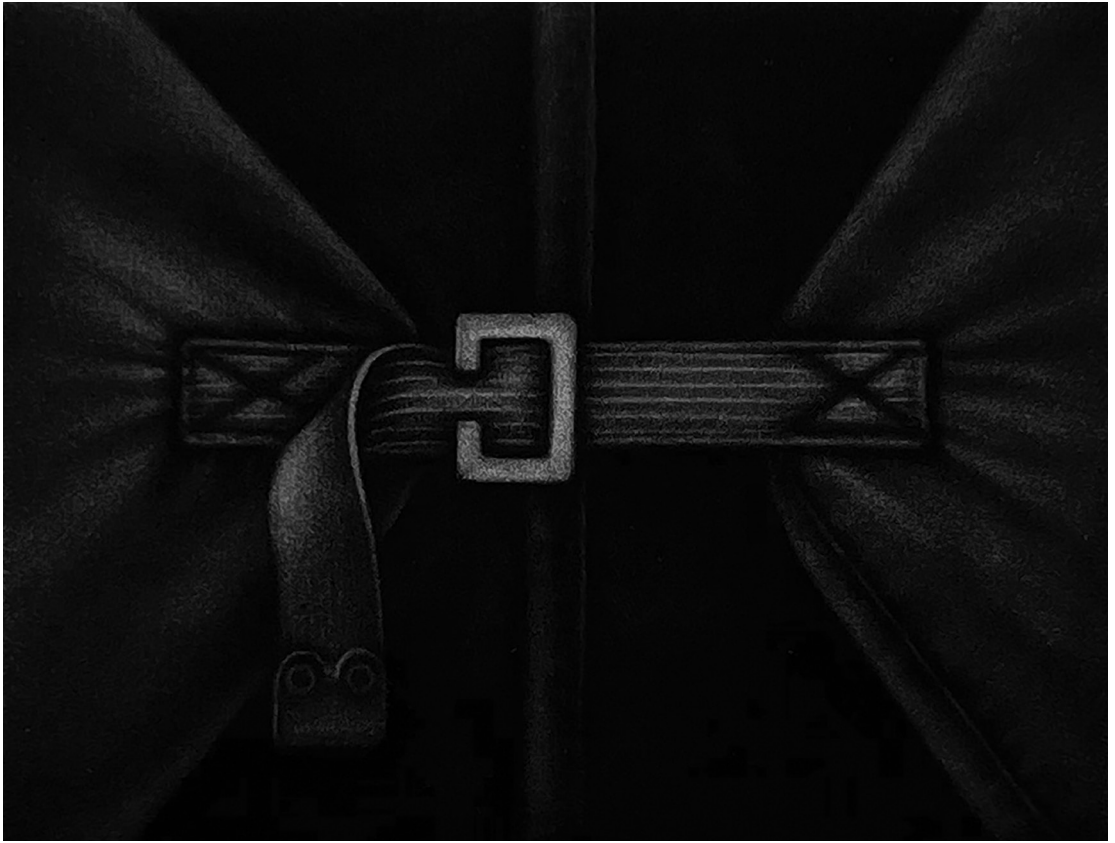
*Layered Portrait (after Lucian Freud)*

2008

Etching

'When I saw this series of prints in the store at first glance I wondered if they were portraits of Muslim women wearing head coverings. This prompted an interesting discussion with the curator around different types of coverings, and the fact that they often have negative connotations in Western culture, with perceptions that Muslim women are forced to dress this way, ruled by the patriarchy. For me I dress in Abaya, Jilbab or Hijab because my religion is important to me, and it is my choice. I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me, take pity on me, or believe that someone is controlling me. For many young Muslim women we enjoy wearing this as fashion and celebrating our religion. I am proud to be Muslim and female. I don't think we should make presumptions about people based on how they dress.'

*Sheyma, from Turkmenistan,  
member of Aaina Women's Centre group*



**Marc Balakjian (1938–2017)**

*Strap/Pull (above)*

1996

mezzotint

*Flag*

1993

Drypoint and watercolour on paper

'I worked with Marc on a retrospective of both his work and the work of his late wife, Dorothea Wight. Both were leading practitioners in the complex medium of mezzotint and master printmakers for a number of high-profile artists. Printmakers were often not given the same appreciation as other fine artists and Marc was frustrated that quality alone was not enough to find success. Marc's family were from Armenia but had to leave to escape the country's genocide and he grew up in Lebanon. He moved to London, but never felt that he quite belonged anywhere. He endured racism and anglicised his name from Mardiros. In his position as an artist immigrant he sat outside the class system, and was more of an observer. This helped him build close working relationships with fellow immigrant artists Frank Auerbach and Lucian Freud.'

*Julie Brown*



**Eugene Palmer (b.1955)**

*Sister Smith III*

Oil painting

'I felt a kinship with this painting as soon as I saw it. It reminded me of being surrounded by whiteness as I grew up; on the council estate, the teaching faculty, at school, on TV. It was just my sister and I that looked like us. As the only brown kids, born to a white, single-parent mum, surviving on free school meals and providence loans, our existence felt like no other kids' experience in our traditional English seaside town. It didn't feel oppressive at the time, there was a lot of joy in our bubble, but privilege was everywhere. I decided to make a response; me aged 10, ready for the school disco, wearing my Mum's plastic pearls, to represent my mixed race working class joy. It seemed appropriate, to complement *Sister Smith's* knowing smile.'

***Yasmin Agilah***



## Corinne's Doll's House

containing objects  
from the Collection

**Tracey Emin (b.1963)**

*Be Faithful to Your Dreams*, 1999

Textile with embroidery

**Elizabeth LeMoine (b.1958)**

*Pyjamas, Y-fronts,*

*Oxblood Stilettos*, 1998

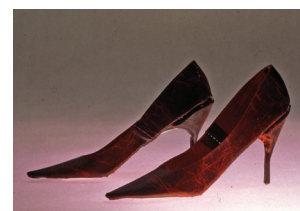
Miniature sculptures

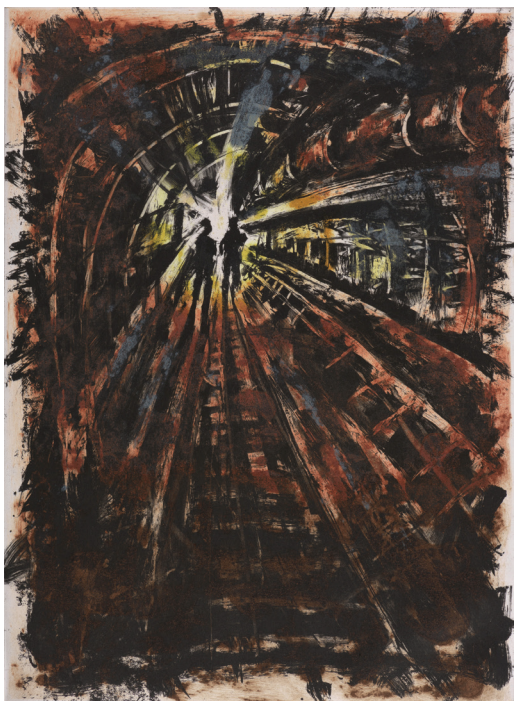


'My childhood imaginary friend Daisy helped me transform a vintage doll's house into a recreation of our home. As a teenager I didn't have easy access to menstrual products. Period poverty affects girls, women and people who menstruate all around the world. This could be not having access to menstrual products, not having access to toilets or clean water, or not having the knowledge and education about menstruation. I'd often make do with tissues and handkerchiefs, which is why I chose to include the work by Tracey Emin. The blood coloured shoes remind me of experiencing leaks. I dress more masculine during my period, and wearing pyjamas and big pants can be a comfort. These tiny works by Elizabeth Lemoine fit perfectly into the doll's house and with this theme.'

### **Corinne**

*The Doll's House was hatched through a remote Nest residency, with Talking Birds Coventry and adapted for this exhibition*





**John Keane (b.1954)**

*Out of the Dark*, 1991

Print



**John Fullwood (1855–1931)**

*Lake, Trees and Church*

Etching

'*Out of the Dark* felt familiar to me - stuck in a tunnel and slowly coming out of it, unpeeling the layers of years of societal limitations. I had previously felt I needed to hide the real me to survive, especially being working class and growing up during Section 28.

*Lake, Trees and Church* spoke to me as nature has always helped me in life. I love trees and water, and being in nature helps heal me and has always enabled me to stay connected to my true self.

I was inspired to create my own response to these works in the form of a poem and an expressive painting, *Can You See Me?*'

**Kathryn O'Connor (they/them)**  
**Genderfluid (non-binary to female)**  
**Gay Artist, Author and Performer**



**Kathryn O'Connor**

*Can You See Me?* 2023

Expressive painting and poem (detail)



**Dod Procter (1890–1972)**

*The Quiet Hour*, 1935

Oil painting

‘What are your memories of childhood? This painting reminds me of precious family holidays in the Welsh countryside and the rare moments of quiet and reflection, maybe reading a book or watching the clouds go by, in the middle of holiday chaos. We glimpse a calm domestic interior and get a sense of tenderness and intimacy through the care with which this young girl has been depicted. The background is reminiscent of working-class interiors displaying their best crockery in pride of place on the dresser.’

**Em Langridge**

**Suzanne Valadon (1865–1938)**

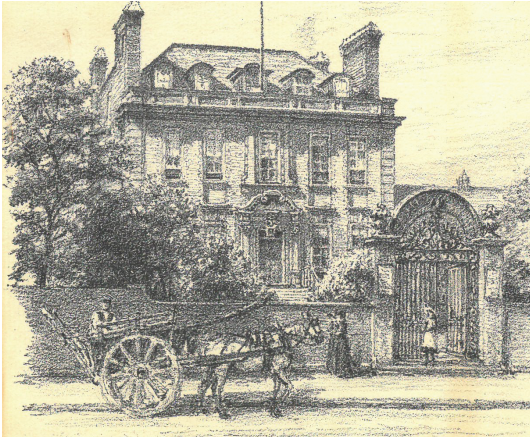
*Maid Bathing*, 1908

Etching

‘I’ve chosen Valadon’s print alongside Procter’s painting as an example of women representing women in domestic spaces. These subjects have historically been rare in the history of art. We are looking in on private, intimate moments. This raises questions of the spaces working-class bodies (particularly women) are allowed to be seen in, as well as working-class entitlements to privacy, and the voyeurism of an intimate scene being watched and recorded.’

**Em Langridge**





**Thomas Robert Way (1861 – 1913)**  
*British Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb*  
 Etching

'We communicate using British Sign Language. One of us is deaf, and one hearing. We were interested to find this print in the Gallery's collection. Research shows that this particular building in Clapton, London was for Deaf Mute Females, established in 1851.

The prospectus read: *'There are nearly 15,000 Deaf and Dumb women in the United Kingdom, the majority of whom are of the poorest class of society, uneducated, without the means of earning their living, and whose thoroughly pitiable condition is overlooked by the public.'*

Those who attended the institution were known as 'inmates'. In Victorian England, Deaf people were often stigmatised as childlike and incapable of normal activities like working or raising children. In the 1880s many hearing people believed oralism (lip reading and speaking in an attempt to fit in with the hearing world) was preferential over sign language. Unfortunately still today deaf people face discrimination in many walks of life. The ear sculpture is placed next to the print to give visibility to an often invisible disability.'

**Alex Vann and Gary O'Dowd**



**Dean Kelland**  
*Living Room Series: Episode One*  
 – *The Man Who Never Was I*, 2013  
 Mixed media collage

'In this work the artist takes on the persona of comedian Tony Hancock. Hancock was born in Birmingham and gained fame in the 1950s for his radio programme *Hancock's Half Hour*. It was said streets would empty and families would gather together indoors when it was broadcast. Hancock's comedy would often parody the British class system. Hancock used humour to unmask the social realities of post-war Britain. The collage also plays with the norms of traditional masculinity, the phrase 'The Best A Man Can Get' being from a famous Gillette shaving commercial.'

**Alex Vann and Gary O'Dowd**



**Christian Marclay (b.1955)**  
*My Bad Ear*, 2004  
 Sculpture



### Gerry Rice

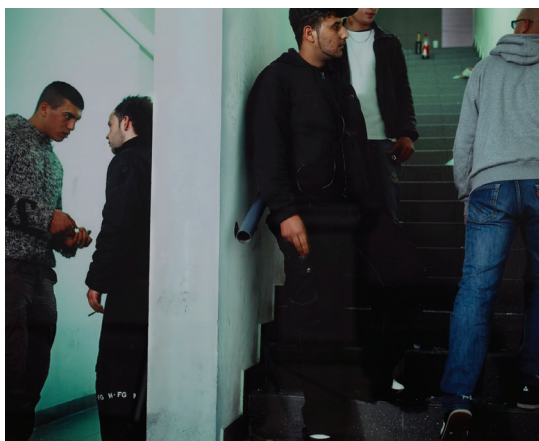
*Lloyd House (Near Wolverhampton), 1978*  
Screenprint

‘This depiction of a grand house, with saturated colours and darkly atmospheric outlines, creates an uncanny viewing experience, possibly commenting on the darker side to wealth and status in the nation’s past. Once a stately home to the gentry, a clergyman, and a nouveau-riche ironmaster, the remains of the property now make up a care home and private residence. The print came into the collection as part of the Clive Beardsmore Gift, and relates more personally to themes of home and memory, with the collector having talked about his own experience visiting the house with his mother shortly before her passing. Time, memory, unease and class all come together in the visually striking print.’

*Emily Beynon*

### Mohamed Bourouissa (b.1978)

*The Corridor, 2007*  
Photograph



‘This photograph simmers with tension. It’s an artificial tension because the photograph has been staged, but they are real people who live in the northern *banlieues* of Paris. These housing estates have traditionally been home to many African and Algerian immigrants, following government policies which encouraged immigration to help rebuild the country after the second world war. However, as with similar policies in Britain, this model of integration has not always been successful, creating tension and division, and pushing immigrants to the periphery, with high levels of poverty and unemployment. The photograph shows how working-class youth often congregate, gathering around bus stops, on park benches – the in-between places free to hang out in, that they can take ownership of.’

*Em Langridge*





**Philip King (1934–2021)**

*Brick Piece I*

Mixed media sculpture

‘This sculpture for me is symbolic of the relationship between different classes.’

*Jayne-Edgar*



**Graham Chorlton (b.1953)**

*A Short History of Concrete series*

Acrylic on canvas

‘I love the concrete buildings depicted in the painting series *A Short History of Concrete*. Many represent for me the type of blocks of flats found in working class areas.’

*Jayne-Edgar*



**Gordon Herickx (1900–1953)**

*An Unemployed Man*

Stone sculpture

‘This was the first work to come into Walsall’s collection which addressed current social issues in the post-industrial Black Country, with growing levels of unemployment. The artist taught at Walsall College of Art and was starting to receive national recognition when he passed away suddenly following the opening of his first solo show in London. 2023 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.’

*Julie Brown*



**Mark Leckey (b.1964)**

*Artwork for Jack Too Jack  
(You Were Young Once), 2006*  
Photographs

'I only discovered these works in the store fairly recently. They both repulsed and intrigued me. They reminded me of characters in the film *Trainspotting*, an intimidating yet sad sight. Even in real life on encountering these individuals my initial reaction would be to look the other way. Are they wasted after a night out, or homeless? Have they been mugged, or are they begging for change? As a society we are quick to judge others based on appearances. These individuals would not normally be given the chance to prove and improve themselves. They would just be regarded as a waste of space. As a society I think we are sometimes lacking in compassion and too quick to judge.'

**Julie Brown**



**Myfanwy Kitchin (1917–2002)**

*At The Bus Stop, 1969*  
Oil painting

'I can't decide whether I like this painting or not, but its title and theme are associated with the working class experience for me. Growing up I did not notice any difference from my peers, however once reaching my late teens, slowly acquaintances would start passing their driving tests, and getting their first cars, meanwhile I resolutely remained on public transport. Connotations of shelters covered in juvenile graffiti and the 'tough kids' congregating at the back or upstairs, as the bus made its way through the rougher areas of town, and not always feeling completely safe as a young person.'

**Julie Brown**

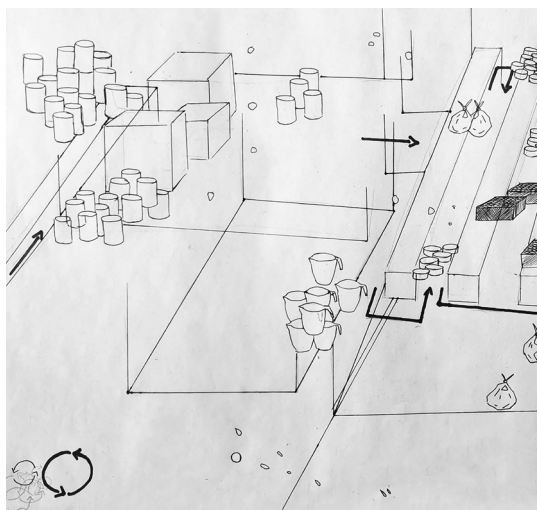


**Hew Locke (b.1959)**

*The New Art Gallery Walsall  
10<sup>th</sup> Birthday Card*  
Decorated envelope (detail)

‘Hew Locke’s work was a discussion point across the panel, in particular his use of found, low value, brightly coloured objects to make sculptures depicting the head of the late Queen Elizabeth II, a symbol the artist saw regularly while growing up in the British colony of Guyana. He lived there when Guyana gained independence, before moving to England to study in 1980. I chose this smaller work in the collection; produced on an envelope, from the ‘House of Commons’, it features the repeated motif of Her Majesty surrounded with bold patterns in the colours of Guyana’s national flag. (The Queen officially opened the Gallery in 2000.) For me, this object represents concerns around colonialism, the class system and role of the monarchy in contemporary society.’

**Julie Brown**



**sophia moffa**

*an unnecessary figure, 2020*  
drawing (detail)

‘In 2021 the Gallery did a call out for artists responses to key events in 2020, our 20th anniversary year, which was curtailed by a global pandemic. As well as works exploring Covid and Lockdown, Brexit and Black Lives Matter, we acquired this drawing made while the artist was working in a Birmingham foodbank. While sculpture is their usual practice, drawing is used as their way of trying to process difficult situations. With this work they were trying to comprehend why, in one of the richest countries in the world, there is so much food poverty.’

**Julie Brown**

## Vicky Roden

*Hand of Glory: In Absentia*, 2023 (detail)

'I grew up in Walsall and *The Hand of Glory*, which had been found concealed in the chimney of *The White Hart* public house, was proudly on display at the entrance to the old museum. Presented in a wooden and glass case and resting on velvet, it absolutely fascinated me. Over recent decades this, and similar objects, have been quietly removed from display, often regarded as problematic.

While I share the concerns of ensuring remains of the once living are treated respectfully; if we shy away from the unseemly parts of our history, we risk forgetting the struggles and pain that have brought us to the point where equality of gender, class and race are a right, rather than a privilege. When we start to look away from that which we would prefer to forget, we open the way to being blind to the inequalities of the present.

I've been working on a project investigating anonymous human remains existing within museum collections. Many of these are of working class origin - the source of bodies for medical science was often the gallows or the workhouse. As a working class artist I want to show these remains the respect that they may not have experienced in life.'

## Sharmila Samant (b.1967)

*Hand-Picked Rejects – Lee Cooper Man's Shirt Metropolis 1908, 2010*  
Installation (on mannequin)

'When I was growing up I couldn't afford to go to New Look or the other shops on the High Street, so I bought all of my clothes from charity shops, repairing them and embellishing them myself. I took a lot of heart in knowing that nobody would ever be dressed just like me, and that although I was priced out of the fashionable stuff, I was at least absolutely unique.' **Vicky Roden**

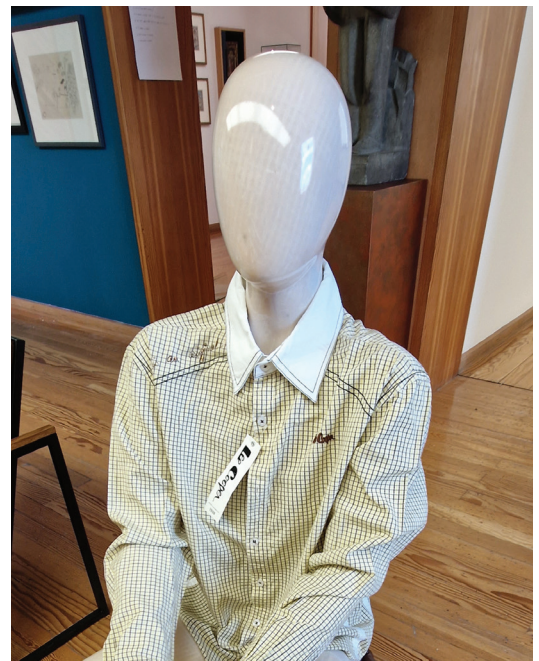


## Rev. John Louis Petit (1801 – 1868)

*The White Hart, Caldmore, Walsall*  
Watercolour

'There are many representations of *The White Hart* in the Gallery's collection, however the ghostly figure in the foreground in this painting helps associate with the metaphysical history of the building.'

**Vicky Roden**





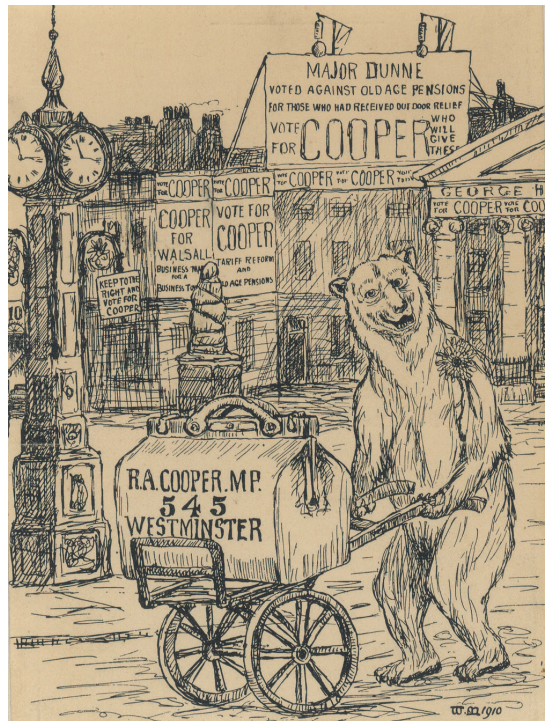
## William Meikle (1858– 1943)

*Seven Stars Inn, 1918*  
Watercolour

*Political Cartoon (Dunne&Cooper), 1910*  
Lithograph on menu card

‘William Meikle was a local historian, artist and a founder of the Walsall Photographic Society - his photographs are in the Walsall Local History Centre. The portrait of him in a pub, smoking his pipe, represents him as a friendly character, always with a story - he was reportedly also a bit of a practical joker. He did the painting of the Seven Stars Inn, said to be the oldest pub in Walsall. He also did political cartoons for newspapers; this one is criticising a candidate for voting against giving old age pensions.’

*Jayne-Edgar*



**B. Neville**

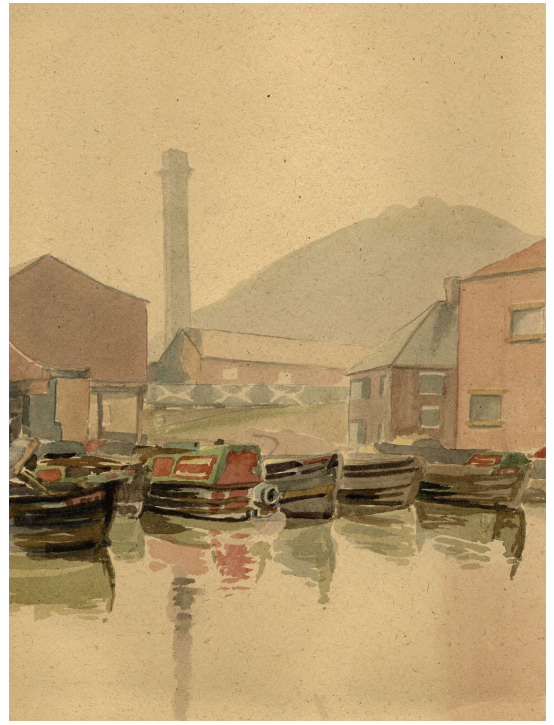
*Portrait of William Meikle, 1942*



**Mollie Orgill**  
*Looking Down the Town  
from the Church, 1958*  
Watercolour

'I was drawn to these 1950s representations of Walsall by Mollie Orgill. How clean, bright and quiet Walsall looks, with no cars, a neighbourly community spirit, and the canals still playing a prominent role in local industry.'

**Jayne-Edgar**



**Mollie Orgill**  
*Canal Boats*  
Watercolour



## The Singh Twins

*Walsall Market: Past, Present and Future*

1999

Watercolour

‘Walsall Market began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and originally celebrated religious feast dates. It has more recently been associated with The Mop Fairs (where people would go looking for employment, hiring labourers for trade and fun fairs). I like the Singh Twins perspective of the Market at the turn of the Millennium and how they have captured the busy carnivalesque nature of local markets too. I used to work on Walsall Market when I was 16 for £1 an hour!’

*Tess Radcliffe*

## Myfanwy Kitchin (1917–2002)

*Factory Scenes, Walsall, 1968–1975*

Pencil and watercolour

‘I was drawn to these works without knowing anything about the artist, who it turns out was an industrial nurse who worked in local factories. These repetitive variations of the same scene, probably done out the window of their office, at Wellman’s in Darlaston, are reflective meditations on the working class 9–5 in a busy factory.’

*Tess Radcliffe*





## Victor Alan Harper (1952–2022)

*Views of Walsall from Rycroft across the Butts*  
1980s–2000s

'Victor Alan Harper was pals with my Dad. We knew him either as Alan or 'Happy Harry', which his friends called him due to his melancholic disposition. He lived a mostly private and solitary life. He was a self-taught, working-class painter who came from a large and incredibly poor family, from Goscote (a large council estate in North Walsall with significant levels of economic and social disadvantage.) He lived in Walsall most of his life, apart from a brief spell in the army, from which he went AWOL, ending up serving six months in a military prison.

His meticulous, repetitive studies of Walsall are poetic meditations of the artist's surroundings. His favourite painter was Monet, who also painted the same scenes at different times of the day and year, to capture the different light effects. Sadly Victor Alan Harper passed away in December 2022. We discussed as a group the status of art and artists in society – the romantic notion of poverty and devotion to their work, often only becoming publicly celebrated posthumously. We should value and appreciate artists more when they are alive.'

*Tess Radcliffe*



## People's Shows

### Colour photographs



*Maureen King Collection of Blue Glass, 1990*

'*The People's Shows* took place at the old Walsall Art Gallery in the 1990s. In the lead up to fundraising for a new building to house the Collections, people were encouraged to think about their own collections and what they valued to be on display at home.

As well as exhibiting their actual objects at the gallery, photographers were commissioned to document a selection of local people with their collections.

We all have items which, though not necessarily of much monetary value, are valuable to us. In particular, working class people may have been more likely to display their 'best' ornaments proudly in their homes, or find comfort in material possessions.

Do you like to collect things? What is valuable to you? What would you choose to put on display at the Gallery?'

### *Collective Choice*



*Eileen Webb Collection of Cats, 1992*



Alexandra Grocott Collection of Carrier Bags, 1990



Margaret Yates Collection of Toby Jugs, 1994



Ranbir, Jaspreet, Prabinmeet and Kirandeep  
Collection of Dolls of India, 1992



Virginia Joyce Collection of Snow Globes, 1994



Tom Holmes Collection of Ties, 1994



Alan Hoult Collection of Tetley Tea Folk, 1994

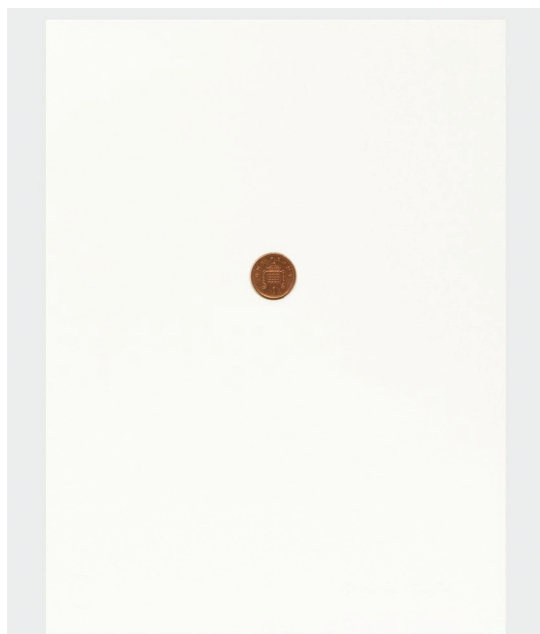
## Gavin Turk (b.1967)

*Found Coin*, 2011

Artist Multiple

'What is the value of a penny? A single penny found by itself is usually dismissed or maybe picked up as a symbol of luck, but it is usually deemed as insignificant and discardable. By designating this penny as a work of art, Turk makes the humble 1p seem important and gives it status normally afforded to seemingly more valuable items. When I first saw this work I was immediately reminded of the 'penny jar' at home, and of our family collecting spare change to accumulate. Amid the cost of living crisis where each day a penny feels like it's worth less than it was the day before, and the increase in homelessness and begging, seeing a penny framed makes us reflect on how much things are actually worth.'

*Em Langridge*



Also in space:

Case featuring a selection of Martin Parr photographs representing aspects of working class life in Walsall, from jumble sales and birthday parties, to football matches and funfairs.



## Martin Parr (b. 1952)

*Black Country Stores,  
the Walsall Archive*

2010—2013

## LGBT youth group artwork

Facilitated by Yasmin Agilah, May 2023

This artwork was created following several group sessions held at The New Art Gallery over the Spring. Inspired by the *Here&Queer* exhibition, the young people worked with artist Yasmin Agilah to create an artwork exploring their identity. This will be used to produce posters and postcards to show where young people can go to discuss aspects of their own identity in a safe space.

*Violence Reduction Partnership funded art based consultation with young people to discuss their identity – delivered by Walsall Childrens Services, in conjunction with The New Art Gallery Walsall*



Floor 2 lift space

Melanie Carvalho (b.1969)

*Rhodroponicum*, 2005

Collage

'The artist was inspired to make this collage while walking in the West Coast of Scotland and charting the non-native plants she found, raising questions around displacement, belonging, and migration.'

*Aaina Women's Centre Group*



Floor 1, Main Hall

Yinka Shonibare (b.1962)

*Diary of a Victorian Dandy 19:00 hrs*, 1998

Colour photograph

'This photograph is from a series in which the artist plays the role of a Victorian dandy – a man who uses his wealth and style to situate himself at the highest levels of society. The panel recognised it as a key work in the gallery's collection in relation to issues of class and privilege. The artist has inserted himself - a disabled black man - into an

aristocratic narrative to highlight the construction of class and identity in traditional British society. This work explores themes of class, race, and disability together – a concept called intersectionality, that is important for our *Pride&Privilege* project.'

*Collective Choice*





**Sarah Taylor Silverwood**

*Portraits of Sally and Kathleen,  
Snappy Clothes, Somewhat Awesome  
Energy Commanded Respect*

Ink, drafting paper over  
Continental Film Review with Tippex

'In celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Garman Ryan Collection the panel chose to include these works from a series by Sarah Taylor Silverwood. These works celebrate the women co-founders of this collection, Kathleen Garman, who had grown up locally, and Sally Ryan, a rich American, who was openly gay, wore masculine clothes, and sometimes went by the name Tim (when it was unusual in those days to go against traditional gender norms.) These two women formed this remarkable collection, which has dysfunctional families, mental health, gender and the treatment of women, privilege, and queerness at its heart.'

**Collective Choice**

*(Case of archival material relating to Kathleen Garman and Sally Ryan selected by Em Langridge.)*



This is the second in a planned series of embedding diversity projects, developed by our Collections Community Panel. It follows on from 2022's *Here&Queer*, which explored the Gallery's Collections through an LGBTQ+ lens.

The Collections Community Panel (right) have used their own lived experiences to identify artworks they relate to, focusing on intersectionality, class and identity.

You can contribute your views and values in relation to this exhibition and the works in the Collections, by sharing a #PennyForYourThoughts on social media, or in our collections jar in the gallery space.

Collections Community Panel members who contributed to this exhibition:

Alex Vann (he/him)

Corinne (they/them)

Gary O'Dowd (he/him)

Jayne-Edgar (she/her)

Kathryn O'Connor (they/them)

sophia moffa (they/them) – with a group of asylum seekers supported by AMAL

Tess Radcliffe

Vicky Roden (she/they)

Yasmin Agilah (she/her)

Zarida Kayani (she/her) – with members of the Aaina Centre Women's Group

With work placement students from The University of Birmingham:

Em Langridge

Emily Beynon

Jack Tsai

Produced in June 2023 by:

Julie Brown, Collections Curator (Julie/they)

julie.brown@walsall.gov.uk

@JulieNAGWalsall on Twitter

Design: Kerry Leslie (they/she)

Please get in touch with Julie for any questions/comments, or if you would like to join the Collections Community Panel. We meet roughly monthly, both online and in-person at the Gallery. All welcome.



[www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk](http://www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk)



Walsall Council



Made possible with

Heritage Fund

The New  
Art Gallery  
Walsall