

Ben Uri PRESS RELEASE: For immediate release: 09 February 2017

## **REFUGEES: The Lives of Others: two exhibitions of works by German refugee artists**

### **Selected Works by Eva Frankfurter (1930–1959)**

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, Upper Gallery, 29 March – 18 June 2017



'West Indian, Irish, Cypriot and Pakistani immigrants, English whom the Welfare State had passed by, these were the people amongst whom I lived and made some of my best friends.'

**Eva Frankfurter** was born into an assimilated Jewish family in Berlin in 1930. Following the rise of National Socialism in Germany, she escaped to London with her family in 1939. From 1946–51 she studied at St Martin's School of Art, where her contemporaries included Frank Auerbach, who recalled her work as 'full of feeling for people'.

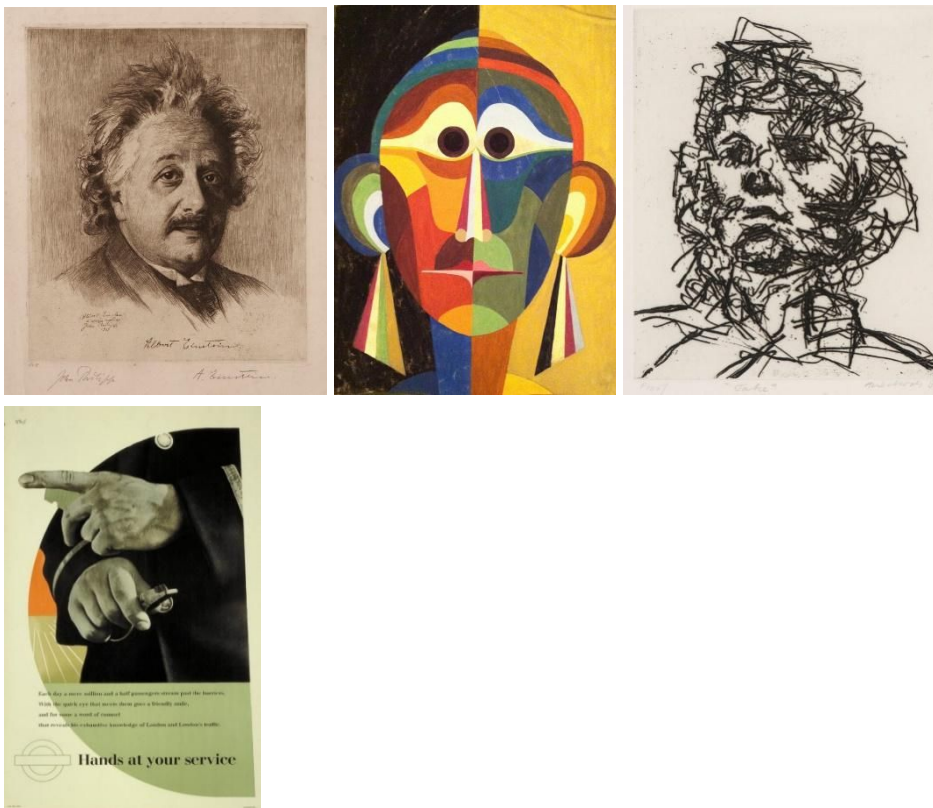
After graduating, disaffected with the London art scene, Frankfurter moved to Whitechapel in London's East End, home to successive waves of migrant communities. For the next six years, she

earned her living as a counter-hand working evening shifts at Lyons Corner House, Piccadilly, and, later, in a sugar refinery, leaving herself free to paint during the day. She took as her subject the ethnically diverse, largely immigrant population among whom she lived and worked, and her studies of the new communities of West Indians, Cypriots and Pakistanis, portrayed both at work and at rest, and with empathy and dignity, are her greatest achievement. Between 1948–58 Frankfurter also travelled extensively in Europe, and in 1958, spent eight months living and working in Israel, painting both Arab and Jewish sitters.

The exhibition brings together rarely-seen works, predominantly oils on paper, together with a selection of lively drawings from the artist's sketchbooks, the majority from private collections, covering all the major motifs of Frankfurter's brief career in 1950's Britain.

## German refugee artists to Britain since 1900

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, Lower Galleries, 29 March – 04 June 2017

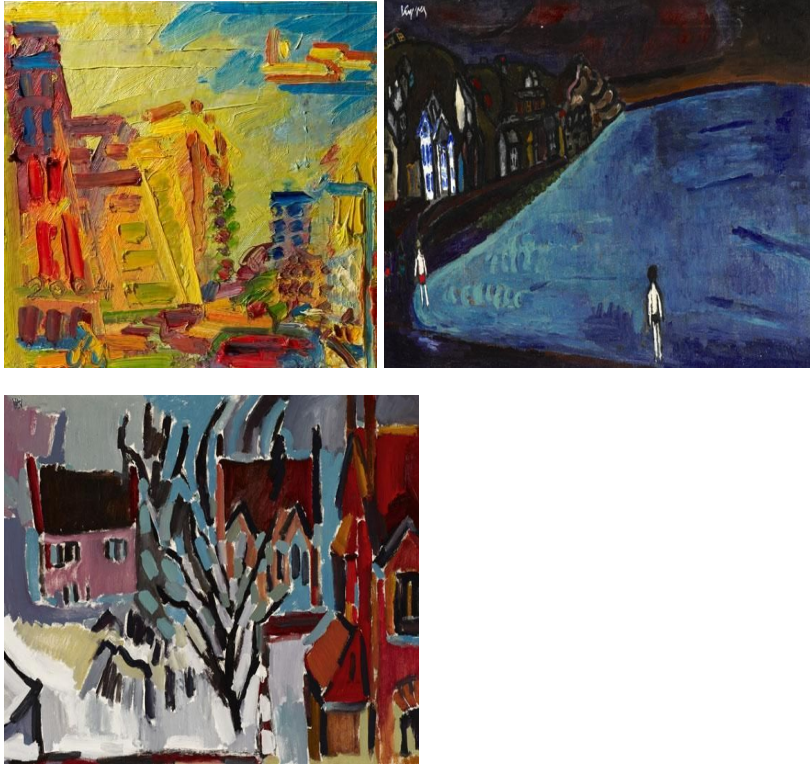


**About the exhibition:** With an introductory text by Dr. Andrea Hammel (Reader in German, Aberystwyth University), exploring the broader cultural context of German migration to the UK since 1900, the exhibition *The Lives of Others* brings together art works and archival material by an array of both celebrated and lesser-known German-born refugee artists, principally from the Ben Uri Collection. Paintings, posters, prints, drawings, cartoons, book illustrations and sculptures explore issues of identity and migration via the German refugee experience in England, supported by oral testimonies from three generations of German migrants, and displayed alongside the work of a contemporary German immigrant artist (to be confirmed).

Featured artists include: **Siegfried Solomon Alweiss (Alva), Frank Auerbach, Jack Bilbo, Martin Bloch, Dörte Bürgner (Dodo), Milein Cosman, Hans Feibusch, Else Fraenkel, Hilde Goldschmidt, Paul Hamann, Heinz Koppel, Fred Kormis, Pamina Liebert-Mahrenholz, Alfred Lomnitz (Lom), Grete Marks, Ludwig Meidner, Klaus Meyer, Erna Nonnenmacher, Erna Pinner, Adèle Reifenberg, Julius Rosenbaum, Hans Schleger (Zero), Elisabeth Tomalin, Harry Weinberger, Victor Weisz (Vicky) and Erich Wolfsfeld.** Works by non-emigres **Albrecht Dürer** and **John Philip** have also been included to illustrate further stories of migration. Following the election of Adolf Hitler to the Chancellorship of Germany in 1933 and the introduction of anti-Semitic legislation, artists including Feibusch and Meidner, were declared 'degenerate', and forbidden from practicing. The majority, owing either to their Jewish ethnicity or political opposition to National Socialism, made 'forced journeys' (the subject of an earlier Ben Uri exhibition in 2009, but not the focus of the current show) to England in the years 1933–39. Some, including Auerbach, Frankfurter and Weinberger came as children, others like Cosman and Koppel, as teenagers. Their experiences contrast with those of established artists, such as Bloch, Marks, Meidner and Wolfsfeld, stripped of their livelihoods in Germany and attempting to re-establish their careers in a new host country, where the knowledge and appreciation of German art remained low.

Many were interned – the subject of Alfred Lomnitz's *Girl Behind Barbed Wire* (he also went on to pen his own account of the experience) – but afterwards, continued with their careers: the irrepressible Jack Bilbo, writer, self-taught painter and gallerist, founded the Modern Art Gallery (1941–48) following his release from Onchan Camp on the Isle of Man, and a brief spell in the Pioneer Corps. Bloch (who taught Koppel and his cousin, Kindertransportee, Harry Weinberger), Reifenberg and Rosenbaum were among those who started art schools; others including Einzig, Koppel, Kormis, Meyer and Weinberger became highly respected teachers. Designers went on to work for prestigious British firms including Elisabeth Tomalin (Marks and Spencer), and most famously, Hans Schleger (Shell, London Transport, John Lewis and Penguin Books), designer of the iconic British bus-stop sign. Although the majority of artists remained in England post-war, both Bilbo and Ludwig Meidner returned to their native Germany in the 1950s; and Hilde Goldschmidt, to Austria. The cartoons of Vicky (Victor Weisz), inventor of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's alter-ego 'SuperMac', reflected not only the face of post-war British culture but the wider consequences of war in Europe.

All but three of the featured art works were created in England, illustrating the artists' interaction with the new culture of their adopted homeland via portraiture, including self-portraiture (Dodo Bürgner's self-portrait reflects the experience of Jungian psychoanalysis) of both British and émigré sitters. The latter include Adèle Reifenberg's portrait of her sister-in-law, the exiled writer Gabriele Tergit, who became secretary of the PEN centre of German Language Authors Abroad, and Grete Marks, who created haunting portraits of both the Ukrainian-born pianist and composer, Leff Pouishnoff (in both charcoal and ceramics), the MP for Stoke, Barnett Stross, and his wife Olive. Landscapes, both in the UK and abroad, touch on concepts of *heimat* or the homeland, culminating in Auerbach's *Mornington Crescent, Summer Morning II*, the artist's studio home for more than sixty years. The exhibition concludes with a short film, *Nowhere is Home*, by German-Syrian contemporary artist Manaf Halbouni, a partner piece for Refugee Week 2015, co-commissioned by the V&A and Counterpoints Arts.



#### Editors notes

**About Ben Uri:** Ben Uri Gallery and Museum was founded over 100 years ago in the Jewish East End. It is the only art museum in Europe whose *raison d'être* is to address universal issues of identity and migration through the visual arts. Its collection of more than 1,300 works by 400 artists from 35 countries, across a variety of media, continues to grow. It principally reflects the work, lives and contribution of British and European artists of Jewish descent, two-thirds of them émigrés, interpreted within the context of twentieth and twenty-first century art history, politics and society.

#### Image Credits:

1. Eva Frankfurter, *West Indian Porters*, c. 1955, oil on canvas, Private Collection © The Estate of Eva Frankfurter
2. Eva Frankfurter, *West Indian Waitresses*, c. 1955, oil on paper, Ben Uri Collection © The Estate of Eva Frankfurter
3. Eva Frankfurter, *Card Players*, c. 1951–56, oil on paper, Private Collection © The Estate of Eva Frankfurter
4. Eva Frankfurter, *Woman with Two Children*, c. 1955, oil on paper, Private Collection © The Estate of Eva Frankfurter
5. John Philipp, *Albert Einstein*, 1929, etching on paper, Ben Uri Collection
6. Elisabeth Tomalin, *Head*, c. 1920s, gouache, Ben Uri Collection © The Estate of Elisabeth Tomalin
7. Frank Auerbach, *Jake*, 1990, etching, Ben Uri Collection © The Artist/ Marlborough Gallery
8. Hans Schlegel (Zero), *Hands at Your Service*, 1946, lithographic poster in colour, published by London Transport, printed by Baynard Press, Ben Uri Collection © The Estate of Hans Schlegel
9. Frank Auerbach, *Mornington Crescent, Summer Morning II*, 2004, oil on canvas, Ben Uri Collection © The Artist/ Marlborough Gallery

10. Heinz Koppel, *Sennen*, 1960, oil on canvas, Ben Uri Collection © The Estate of Heinz Koppel
11. Harry Weinberger, *In Winter, Manchester*, oil on canvas, Ben Uri Collection © The Estate of Harry Weinberger

**Curator:** Sarah MacDougall is the Eva Frankfurter Research and Curatorial Fellow for the Study of Émigré Artists/ Head of Collections at Ben Uri Gallery and Museum.

**Text author:** Dr. Andrea Hammel (Reader in German, Aberystwyth University) is a specialist on German-speaking refugees in literature and culture.

**Events:** the exhibition will be accompanied by a series of related events including curatorial tours, lectures and a panel discussion (to be confirmed) on German migration. Speakers include Dr. Jonathan Black, Prof. Charmian Brinson, Rachel Dickson, Dr. Sibylle Erle, Dr. Anthony Grenville, Dr. Katie McGown, Sarah MacDougall, Dr. Anna Nyburg and Dr. Ines Schlenker.

**For high-res images:** please contact Cristina Lago [admin3@benuri.org](mailto:admin3@benuri.org)

**For further information:** please contact Sarah MacDougall on [sarahm@benuri.org](mailto:sarahm@benuri.org)

Ben Uri Gallery & Museum, 108a Boundary Road, London, NW8 0RH.

Opening times: Mon–Fri 10 a.m –5.30 p.m., Sat–Sun 11a.m. –5 p.m.

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