

Tristram Hillier 1905 – 1983

Fécamp

1939

Tempera on panel

On Loan from a Private Collection (2019)

Surrealism and abstraction were dual influences running through British art of the 1930s and 1940s. Hillier joined the forward thinking modernist group Unit One in 1933, founded by Paul Nash and formed of artists and architects. He moved to France at the end of the decade and painted many seascapes and harbour scenes, inspired by the work of fellow artist Edward Wadsworth.

John Armstrong [1893 – 1973)

The Open Door

1930

Oil on canvas

On Loan From a Private Collection (2004)

In addition to his career as a painter, Armstrong worked in theatre design and this informed his surreal paintings that often combined strange landscapes and ruined or partial buildings. In 1933 he was invited by Paul Nash to join the short-lived avant-garde art group *Unit One*, alongside Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Edward Wadsworth.

John Tunnard [1900 – 1971)

Cat's Cradle (Sphere and Wall)

1940

Oil on board

The George and Ann Dannatt Gift (2011)

The art critic Herbert Read described Tunnard as a 'dream-landscape painter'. During the 1930s he was influenced by both the work of European surrealists and the sculptures of Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore. He claimed: 'I work more, I think, like a sculptor than as one generally imagines a painter to work'. Tunnard was also a jazz musician, and created several artworks suggestive of stringed instruments.

Henry Moore [1898 – 1986)

Suckling Child

1930

Alabaster

Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council (1985)

Moore considered the mother and child theme a universal subject through which to explore the formal relationship between a larger form and a smaller form. Moore, along with Barbara Hepworth, was a leading figure among modern British artists in the 1930s. He pioneered carving directly from materials, evolving his signature abstract forms derived from the human body informed by his interest in non-western sculpture and surrealism.

Paul Nash [1889 – 1946)

Skylight Landscape

1941

Oil on canvas

On Loan from Jeremy Greenwood and Alan Swerdlow
(2015)

This is a view through the attic window at the Gloucestershire home of Nash's friends Charles and Clare Neilson, which became a refuge from London for Nash and his wife during the Second World War. In this painting Nash combines his fascination of flying and an aerial perspective - although his asthma prevented him every going up in an aeroplane - and his personal response to the landscape.

Barbara Hepworth [1903 – 1975)

Single Form, Nocturne

1968

Irish black marble

Hussey Bequest, Chichester District Council (1985)

Hepworth was a leading figure in the modernist movement in Britain in the 1930s and 1940s. Her preoccupation with the pierced form, began in the 1930s and remained a central concern into her later career. Her single-form sculptures have a connection to the elemental forms of nature and often prompted comparison with standing stones and the Neolithic menhirs of Cornwall, while the piercing of a solid form and the prominence of the circular cavity is also a formal exploration of space and form.

Ben Nicholson [1894 – 1982)

1936 (white relief)

1936

Oil and pencil on carved board

On Loan from a Private Collection (2015)

For some years Nicholson had been incising and scratching into the paint and gesso surfaces of his paintings. The experience of sharing a studio with Hepworth gave him insight and the tools to investigate further the potential for a greater materiality and physical depth in his work. During the 1930s, Nicholson produced a series of 'white reliefs' that became emblematic of the ideas of purity and order of the modern movement.

John Armstrong [1893 – 1973)

Feathers Conclave

1946

Tempera on board

On Loan From a Private Collection (2016)

Tristram Hillier [1905-1983)

Ship Propulsion (Beach Scene with Lighthouse)

1950

Oil on canvas

On Loan From a Private Collection (2013)

Hillier developed his distinctive style in the mid-1930s, combining a precise style of painting with a sense of stillness, which led him to be associated with surrealism. The meticulously arranged foreground acts as a stage for Hillier's assortment of nautical machine parts and ship's rigging, through which he plays with a sense of scale and perspective.